

March 2015

Second Year of Teacher Hiring Initiative Is Underway

Based on the principle that good teachers have the greatest impact on student learning

With the first posting on March 6 of open teaching positions in the Boston Public Schools (BPS), the second year of a strategic teacher hiring initiative is underway. Believing that good teachers have the greatest impact on student learning, the BPS in 2014 instituted a new hiring strategy that started the hiring early in March and gave schools the flexibility to hire teachers who are the best fit for them from inside and outside the BPS. BPS permanent teachers not selected were assigned to substitute or co-teaching positions, but those same teachers not selected by schools in the second year will pose an added challenge that will require a legislative remedy.

Early hiring was necessary to be competitive with suburban schools in hiring effective new teachers. Previously, the BPS would fill less than 10% of its open teaching positions from March through June and 85% in July and August. After the 2014 hiring season, 75% of the positions were filled from March through June and only 13% in July and August.

School flexibility in recruiting teachers outside the BPS was possible by utilizing an “open posting” provision in the Boston Teachers Union contract that allowed schools to recruit from outside the BPS by paying the teacher a stipend of \$1,250 for additional responsibilities.

To assist teachers and the schools, the HR computerized hiring system was upgraded and aligned with a more effective and supportive teacher evaluation system. Each school could recruit and select teachers following the principle of “mutual consent,” thereby

eliminating the practice of administratively placing teachers in schools without each school’s approval.

Suitable Professional Capacity (SPC)

At the start of last year’s hiring season, 443 permanent teachers were without positions. Most were hired into permanent positions, while others retired, resigned, left on a leave of absence or were terminated. That left 77 permanent teachers who by state law were required to be placed in positions of “suitable professional capacity.” A few SPC teachers were assigned as long-term substitutes with the rest placed in classrooms as co-teachers with experienced teachers in their same certifications. The salaries and benefits of these teachers totaling about \$6M are included in the BPS budget. These teachers were able to strengthen their skills through mentoring, observations and feedback, and by utilizing available professional development. They are expected to apply for positions in this hiring season for which they are qualified.

Second Year

SPC teachers who do not secure a permanent position in this second hiring season will be placed in a SPC position again and the total numbers and costs may be higher due to the closing of two BPS schools. A process must be established whereby a teacher not selected for two consecutive years can be dismissed. Because of existing state law (MGL c.71, s.42), this situation will require a legislative solution and will not be successfully accomplished through collective bargaining. The students have one shot at each grade and deserve the very best teachers in their classrooms.