

How do principals make hiring decisions from a pool of teacher candidates?

High-quality teachers are vital for students' academic success. Principals have a better chance of hiring high-quality teachers if the average quality of the teacher candidate pool is high and they have a good sense of which candidates are likely to be high-quality teachers. Do principals select candidates using the same characteristics that predict high-quality teaching? And do differences in candidate pools across schools make a difference? This project evaluated how principals in a metro-Atlanta school district made hiring requests for teacher candidates.

What did we learn?

Some candidate characteristics, including undergraduate GPA and earlier applicants, were positively related to teacher quality but unrelated to the likelihood of being selected for a hiring request.

Pool size and pool quality didn't vary systematically across schools with different quality grades or varying school body characteristics.

Principals' characteristics, including their experience as a principal and their performance rating, were unrelated to the likelihood that a teacher candidate received a hiring request.

A lack of information, inside information held by principals, or imperfect decision-making may drive the discrepancies.

What are the policy implications?

Policies that provide more information about candidates, such as highlighting key characteristics in application materials, pre-screening, or pre-ranking candidates, could improve teacher quality. It would also be worthwhile to explore the efficacy of the screening tools used by the district, such as the TeacherInsight screener and the Hire-Vue video interview tool.

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What questions did we answer?

1. Were observable teacher candidate characteristics statistically related to the likelihood of receiving a hiring request or measures of teacher quality?
2. Which of the characteristics used to select candidates were aligned with teacher quality and which were misaligned?
3. Did differences in pools of teacher candidates across schools, school levels, or subjects explain misaligned characteristics? For example, was candidate GPA related to differences in candidate pools?
4. Did principals' characteristics relate to the candidates they requested to hire? We focused on two characteristics of principals: their experience as a principal and their performance rating.

What data did we use?

We used application and hiring decision data from December 2015 to May 2018. The data included the applicants' education, work history, teaching experience, and certification status. We focused on general education, math, ELA, science, and social studies candidates. Candidates were linked to principals in the hiring decision.

Why is this issue important?

Teacher quality has substantial and enduring effects on overall student achievement, and variation in access to high-quality teachers can exacerbate achievement gaps across students. Given the difficulty in enticing existing teachers to transfer to low-performing schools, an obvious policy lever to promote the equitable distribution of teachers is to improve the initial selection of teachers.

Want to learn more?

A report and working paper are available at gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications

The **Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE)** is a component of the **Georgia Policy Labs (GPL)**, a research collaboration between Georgia State University and a variety of government agencies committed to leveraging the power of data to drive policy and programmatic decisions that lift children, students, and families—especially those experiencing vulnerabilities.

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