

## **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL - THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT -**

The goal of SMHC is to dramatically improve student achievement in large, urban public school districts by restructuring their human capital management systems. SMHC reforms aim to recruit top teacher, principal and central office talent and to performance-manage those individuals to improve the effectiveness of instruction in all classrooms. As part of this effort, SMHC is conducting case studies of effective SMHC practices in leading-edge districts and organizations. The case studies focus on the three major elements of all human capital management practices: talent acquisition, talent development and motivation and talent retention, as discussed in the foundational paper defining SMHC by Odden and Kelly (2008).

SMHC case studies have been completed in the following districts:

1. Boston
2. Chicago
3. Fairfax County
4. Long Beach
5. Minneapolis (local district Q Comp program)
6. Minnesota
7. New York City

SHMC case studies have been completed for the following organizations:

8. Teach For America
9. The New Teacher Project
10. New Leaders for New Schools

This paper is available in the Resources section of <http://www.smhc-cpre.org>.

**September 2008**

The research reported in this paper was supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Grant No. BD07164.R02) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Grant No. 49915) to the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the institutional partners of CPRE, or the Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

## **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL: THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT<sup>1</sup>**

Anabel Aportela and Michael Goetz

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to increase the number of high-quality public school teachers and create environments where all educators can maximize their impact on student achievement. Founded by teachers in 1997, the organization has partnered with school districts, state education agencies, colleges and universities, and other educational entities to accomplish these goals. To date, TNTP has trained or hired a total of approximately 28,000 teachers, worked with more than 200 school districts, and established more than 55 programs or initiatives in 26 states. The organization is currently active in more than 25 cities nationwide.

TNTP was originally created to address the problems of acute teacher shortages and low teacher quality in inner city schools. The organization built its reputation on its trademarked “Teaching Fellows” programs, which recruit, select and train career changers and recent college graduates to become teachers for low-income students. Specifically targeting individuals eligible to teach shortage-area subjects such as mathematics, science and special education, these programs now bring thousands of new teachers every year to schools in New York City, Baltimore, Chicago, Oakland, New Orleans, Washington DC, and other major urban centers. They have been recognized as models in the field by the U.S. Department of Education, the bipartisan Teaching Commission, the National Center for Alternative Certification, and other organizations.

---

<sup>1</sup> The case is based on a review of documents (including the website: <http://www.tntp.org>) and interviews with key organizational leaders.

Today TNTP provides its school district and state clients with a broad range of human capital-focused services, all of which share the goal of increasing the concentration of highly effective teachers in disadvantaged schools. In addition to Teaching Fellows programs, TNTP works with school districts to improve their school staffing practices and build effective human capital development strategies. It also conducts independent policy research and is approved to train and certify new teachers in lieu of a traditional school of education in four states.

A revenue-generating organization, TNTP works with its clients on a fee-for-service basis and often under performance-based contracts. TNTP believes this model keeps them focused on outcomes and pushes them to meet the changing needs of districts. Some of the overall work of TNTP, including its policy analyses, is supported by grants from foundations and other sources.

The organization takes a highly collaborative approach to its partnerships with urban school systems; TNTP staff, most of whom work from district offices and side-by-side with district personnel, become well-versed in district operations. This affords them a thorough understanding of the challenges each district faces in recruiting and developing teacher talent. Through these partnerships, TNTP gains an opportunity to improve district practices and raise the overall quality of teachers in the system, as well as important insights that often feed its policy research projects.

## **1. THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT'S PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY OF ACTION**

TNTP leadership considers America's public education system to be in transition. Public schools have successfully shifted from partial to universal educational access for children, but have not yet completed the transition from universal educational *access* to universal educational *quality*. The shift to universal access has been characterized by a focus on standardization of

instructional delivery and the use of a civil service model in attracting and managing the teacher workforce. This approach led to standards for accrediting schools and licensing teachers primarily against minimum eligibility standards (with no guarantee of quality of instruction). TNTP believes that the education system is now in the process of moving toward investigating and initiating universal quality for all classrooms. The organization believes, however, that this transition is incomplete and that the most significant roadblock preventing a transition to the new phase is teacher quality. TNTP sees itself as an organization dedicated to dramatically increasing the number of highly effective teachers in high-need classrooms and thereby advancing this transition.

From the perspective of TNTP, the leverage points to improving the quality of instruction are not created equal. For example, TNTP believes that the initial selection of teachers is more important than ongoing professional development; professional development is important, but TNTP does not believe it is possible or efficient to take a “2” quality teacher and through professional development make them a “10” quality teacher. The pool of teachers is extremely important and looking to different sources of talent (e.g. mid-career individuals) to recruit to the teaching profession is a critical part of the TNTP recruitment strategy and process.

However, TNTP believes that a teacher’s performance in the classroom is best measured by the academic growth of his or her students. Although the organization recognizes that student academic outcomes cannot be the only measure of teacher effectiveness or quality, it maintains that such a metric offers the most objective method yet of assessing and comparing teacher performance. Accordingly, TNTP is prioritizing services and innovations that incorporate student achievement data as a primary measure of teacher effectiveness.

TNTP highlights the fact that, unfortunately, many districts do not adequately monitor or address this metric – instead focusing only on inputs such as selection or professional development. The organization points to the fact that districts grant tenure to almost all teachers—in other words, they determine that almost no one is unable to provide quality instruction. Similarly, TNTP points to research showing that, even at chronically failing schools, teachers often are awarded “satisfactory” performance ratings. This, TNTP believes, makes it difficult for the system to argue that it is dedicated to real quality and evidence of effective performance in the classroom. The self-selection out of the system that occurs in the initial years may or may not lead to higher overall quality of those that remain as some that leave may be good teachers. But, TNTP does believe that, without better monitoring and oversight, a portion of the individuals who remain are not as effective as they could be in attaining the core goal of increasing student performance.<sup>2</sup>

As an organization, TNTP believes that the pipelines producing teacher talent for many districts are fundamentally misaligned and do not deliver top teaching talent to the system. Underlying this presupposition is the finding<sup>3</sup> that many districts, particularly urban districts, have not had an active teacher recruitment policy or rigorous selection model and simply take whoever applies and remains in the applicant pool far into the summer (often into September, when many of the top teacher candidates have taken jobs elsewhere). TNTP believes that districts need to manage teacher quality comprehensively, at all steps of the process: from recruitment, screening, hiring, and placement, to evaluation, promotion, and dismissal. Some argue that insufficient funding or union policies and practices are the culprits behind low teacher quality in many urban districts, but TNTP sees the true barrier as much more fundamental: as a

---

<sup>2</sup> TNTP is currently engaged in a national study of teacher dismissal policies and practices, which it expects to publish in June 2009.

<sup>3</sup> See the TNTP report *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers out of Urban Schools*.

function of the way school and district organizations behave. No single entity is to blame; rather, a “conspiracy of dysfunction” keeps urban schools from succeeding. Before TNTP was created, the founders could not point to a large urban district that could serve as a model for others in terms of human capital management practices. TNTP was born to help districts fill this void.

## **2. WHAT THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT DOES**

TNTP works primarily with low-performing schools in large urban districts. It is best known for establishing and operating teacher recruitment, hiring, and training programs that seek to have a direct impact on schools (for example, by attracting and training large numbers of new math and science teachers). In some cases districts request that TNTP provide services to a specified number of the lowest performing schools in a district.

In addition, much of the work of the organization is to collect and make known data on teachers, teacher staffing, teacher quality, etc. in order to help districts understand the areas that need improvement. For example, if TNTP surveys principals and teachers and analyzes transfer patterns between schools and districts, the organization can identify problems and recommend realistic interventions. There is a strong belief within TNTP that unbiased data is of the utmost importance to understanding which areas in the human capital system are in most need of improvement and to advocating successfully for reform. TNTP believes that its policy studies have gained respect and resulted in real changes largely because they brought hard data to discussions previously dominated by myth, rumor, politics and anecdotes.

TNTP delivers its services through four core lines of business: Teaching Fellows Programs, Staffing Initiatives, Training and Certification programs, and Policy and Research. School districts have different issues related to recruiting, training and placing top teacher talent

into low-performing schools; however, TNTP has observed that the issue areas are quite common across their client districts and that lessons learned can be generalized across sites.

### **Teaching Fellows Program**

TNTP's Teaching Fellows programs focus on recruitment, selection, training and placement of teachers in low-performing schools and shortage-area subjects. Unlike Teach For America (TFA), which recruits only recent graduates from elite colleges and universities, Teaching Fellows programs seek out a wider range of candidates; while many high-achieving graduates do apply, these programs also attract large numbers of accomplished mid-career changers. The organization also emphasizes that Teaching Fellows consider teaching a longer-term career change, which contrasts with TFA's focus on a limited two-year commitment for all corps members. TNTP believes that having a few years of experience under a person's belt gives them a valuable perspective. Although TFA is slightly more selective, TNTP receives more than ten applications per position on average, and its leaders suggest that they do not know if the resulting difference in "qualifications" makes a significant difference in student learning.

The organization typically partners with local universities to deliver state-required education coursework over the course of the Fellows' first two years in the classroom. Some districts pay a portion of these certification costs for participants; TNTP itself does not. The district of New York City, for example, pays \$8,000 for a teacher to complete the certification process and the individual pays about \$4,000. In other districts, the participants pay for the full tuition costs.

In 2007, the Teaching Fellows programs had an average acceptance rate of 15 percent of initial applicants. From 2000 to 2001, the number of programs tripled from five to 15 districts, as did the total number of teachers TNTP recruited and trained, from 500 to over 1,800. By 2002,

TNTP reported that its programs were placing 3,500 to 4,000 Fellows each year in school districts nationwide. In 2007, these programs served 18 cities and recruited and trained approximately 3,100 Fellows – reflecting TNTP’s shift to filling primarily high–need subject area vacancies and declining vacancies in its district partners as stability increased.

### **Staffing Initiatives**

The second strategy is TNTP’s staffing initiatives, through which TNTP helps districts build capacity at the school level for hiring high-quality teachers. TNTP sees the match between teachers and schools as extremely important and believes that districts typically preclude or bargain away the opportunity to match teachers with schools effectively (e.g., central office placement of teachers or union contracts that require seniority-based staffing over “mutual consent” policies that require agreement between each school principal and teacher). This problem is huge, but once identified, can be resolved, according to TNTP leadership. Areas of specialty include principal trainings in recruitment strategies, screening and selection, placement and hiring practices, and technology solutions.

TNTP’s most prominent service in this area are its “Model Staffing Initiatives,” which focus intensive staffing support and training on 20-40 of a district’s lowest performing schools to ensure they start the school year fully staffed. Through these initiatives, TNTP supports districts in their efforts to eliminate or minimize policy barriers that impede early, efficient hiring and placement of teachers. They help principals and other school-based staff to hire teachers early and selectively. Some of the ways in which they build principal capacity is helping principals identify school vacancies early, developing rubrics for identifying quality candidates and conducting successful interviews

## **Training and Certification.**

The third strategy is TNTP's training and certification projects. Through these projects, TNTP offers assistance to clients in pre-service preparation, professional development and certification of new teachers. TNTP believes that all new teachers, regardless of prior experience, should take part in an intensive pre-service training program, and all participants in its Teaching Fellows programs complete this training prior to becoming full-time teachers. The training occurs over the course of six weeks and includes a summer school teaching component and sessions on curriculum, classroom management, special education, if appropriate, and literacy supplements, if appropriate. TNTP-trained individuals deliver this training.

To meet certification requirements, teachers typically work towards certification or a master's degree at a local post-secondary education institution (e.g., ten colleges and universities in NYC partner with TNTP in the certification process). TNTP points out that, unfortunately, many of the available certification options are either too costly, too lengthy, or too unfocused on the needs of alternate route teachers to be effective in preparing new teachers from nontraditional backgrounds for the rigors of urban classrooms. TNTP leadership believes traditional certification programs are, too often, poorly administered and/or the content is substandard. Thus, in states such as Louisiana, Texas, Maryland, and California, TNTP has applied for and been recognized as an approved certification provider, giving Fellows an option to earn their teaching license directly through the TNTP training program. TNTP mandates that teachers finish any certification program within approximately three years.

In its Practitioner Teacher Programs (through which TNTP can certify teachers), TNTP covers some of the launch costs for the certification program with state or philanthropic funding, districts pay a portion of implementation costs, and participating teachers pay the difference. The

total cost of the certification program is approximately \$5,000 per teacher, depending on size and subject areas.

## **Policy and Research**

The fourth strategy is TNTP's policy and research studies, through which they offer assistance in education policy analysis and data collection, specifically with regard to human capital management practices in districts. To date, TNTP has focused on teacher hiring and school staffing issues, with an eye towards identifying the organizational barriers that keep schools from hiring the best teachers.

TNTP disseminates its findings and recommendations for reform through a series of reports which began when TNTP staff began to note similarities among school districts in their approach to new teacher hiring. In particular, TNTP realized that urban districts could build a high-quality applicant pool with relative ease, but inevitably lost large numbers of their best applicants to hiring process inefficiencies and delays. This resulted in the publication of *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms* in the fall of 2003. The report documents the impact of such delays, which caused the five urban school districts studied to lose 30-60 percent of all applicants each year.

Following their first publication, TNTP released *Unintended Consequences: The Case for Reforming the Staffing Rules in Urban Teachers Union Contracts* in 2005, which illustrates that as many as 40 percent of all teacher vacancies in urban schools are filled by teachers over whom principals had little or no choice in hiring. This, in turn led to the publication, in April 2008, of *Mutual Benefits: New York City's Shift to Mutual Consent in Teacher Hiring*, which examines the "...impact of New York City's 2005 school staffing policy reforms on teachers. These reforms replaced rigid staffing rules that often gave teachers and principals little or no input over

teacher placements with a more open policy that required the ‘mutual consent’ of both teachers and principals in all teacher hiring decisions.” Through its Policy and Research projects, TNTP has gained a reputation for independent and data-driven analysis that illuminates obstacles and offers realistic policy solutions.

### **3. THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT AS AN ORGANIZATION**

TNTP employs 185 people in an organization that is primarily ‘virtual’; only 15 employees work full-time in its corporate office in Brooklyn, New York. TNTP feels this structure opens up a corporate talent pipeline that is not geographically bound. Most staff members are based within district offices, which allows for face-to-face relationships with the districts with which TNTP partners.

The leadership team is comprised of CEO Ariela Rozman, who assumed this position in 2007 after TNTP founder and longtime CEO, Michelle Rhee, was appointed Chancellor of the Washington, DC public schools; President Timothy Daly, who previously ran TNTP's New York City Teaching Fellows Program and launched the organization's Policy and Research team; and seven Vice Presidents who, along with their staffs, work on the teacher staffing initiatives, training, certification, research, technology, and human capital. These Vice Presidents oversee 15 TNTP Partners and a number of Directors who coordinate the organization’s site-based projects and provide support in specific areas. Site Managers work on district-specific projects and have job responsibilities that vary depending on the district and may include recruitment, placement, or training, depending on the parameters of TNTP’s contract with the district and what the client<sup>4</sup> requests. TNTP’s Partners and other national staff typically work from home offices.

---

<sup>4</sup> For TNTP, “Client” means what a for-profit business would mean by having clients for whom the organization works.

While TNTP began as a spin-off of Teach For America,<sup>5</sup> there are important differences between the two organizations. In its Teaching Fellows programs, TNTP is involved primarily with identifying multiple new pipelines of teacher talent and working with districts to screen, select and place such talent in schools. The organization does not maintain strong contact with TNTP alumni, as does TFA. TNTP works in many of the same districts as TFA, but sees itself as an adaptive, client-based service—much like a consulting firm. They seek out opportunities and adapt their model to the needs and dynamics of each site. Similar to TFA, TNTP supplies talent to high need areas, but it seeks to find individuals who will consider teachers as a permanent rather than temporary job.<sup>6</sup> TNTP also works within districts to change district HR processes and policies in order to recruit, better manage, and retain teachers. The average age of TNTP teachers is about 30 years vs. 22 years for TFA teachers.

TNTP leadership believes in a holistic approach to human capital management, meaning that all the components of human capital – recruitment, screening, selection, placement, professional development, etc. – must be addressed comprehensively in order to put top teacher talent into low-performing schools. TNTP strongly supports the prerogative of school sites to select teachers, and has worked to eliminate central office placement of teachers in schools as well as altering, but not eliminating, seniority-based teacher staffing rules. These approaches can put TNTP at odds with various groups or interests within a district. For example, unions often take issue with some policies and practices recommended by TNTP. Although this sentiment is not universal, TNTP considers it a real issue that must be continually addressed. In some districts, TNTP is seen as “anti-union” despite its efforts to be unbiased through its emphasis on data-driven decision making and its inherently pro-teacher stance. Other issues that have an

---

<sup>5</sup> Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach For America, is on TNTP’s board.

<sup>6</sup> TNTP leadership suggests that TFA has a 44% retention rate in year 3 vs. TNTP which has about the same rate in year 8 (TNTP Leader Interview 1, 2008). However, only a two-year commitment is part of TFA’s program model.

impact on relationships and TNTP effectiveness within the district can emerge when, for example, the superintendent hires the organization without telling the Human Resources Director, which puts TNTP in the position of needing to repair and/or build a relationship with the Human Resources Director and HR staff.

Typically, TNTP works with a university to provide a route to teacher certification for those accepted into the TNTP program. As previously noted, however, TNTP provides teacher certification in some states.<sup>7</sup> This strategy grew out of TNTP's district-based experience and findings, which suggested that traditional teacher education programs often did not give new teachers practical knowledge of how to deliver instruction or be effective in an urban classroom (vs. what they would gain from a philosophy of education course, for example). Consequently, TNTP's one- to two-year certification program ("Practitioner Teacher Program") is practice-based. For example, former or current math teachers teach participants how to teach math in an urban setting. The program attempts to maximize training time,<sup>8</sup> and is focused on outcomes.

Original funding for TNTP was provided by a loan from the Fisher Fund, which has since been repaid. TNTP has been in the black (revenue-generating) for six years but still looks for national funders (e.g., the Carnegie Corporation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) to support its growth strategy and specific initiatives. The majority of TNTP's revenue is derived from fees that the organization assesses to its client districts and states in return for TNTP's services. TNTP's clients pay the organization based on the number of teachers it recruits or trains, the number of schools it staffs, or the scope of its research projects. As a revenue-generating non-profit, the organization focuses primarily on revenue generation from its clients.

---

<sup>7</sup> In these cases, TNTP competes with the typical certification process—TX LA, Maryland, and California. In CA and Maryland, TNTP has to partner with a district; the district applies to certify its own teachers and TNTP helps it to do this.

<sup>8</sup> TNTP has less but a similar quantity of classroom "seat" time compared to typical certification programs.

However, recognizing that under resourced districts should not bear the brunt of TNTP's research and development or policy work (from which they may not immediately benefit), TNTP seeks national funding for some projects.

The cost to TNTP of recruiting, selecting, training, and placing a teacher in a classroom ranges from \$1,800 to \$6,000 per teacher, depending on the district, and excludes the cost of certification and stipends. TNTP is interested in knowing how much districts spend on these same functions, but few reliable cost studies have been conducted. TNTP believes that districts tend to underestimate their actual costs in recruiting and placing teachers, and that the costs of its own programs are generally less than those of many district and university programs. Leaders of TNTP believe that it is relatively inexpensive to place teachers of any talent level into a school, but that it is not inexpensive to find, train and place good teachers. The organization is proud of the 15 percent average acceptance rate of its Teaching Fellows programs as a sign of its commitment to quality.

#### **4. LESSONS LEARNED**

TNTP has reached several hard-edged conclusions about what it will take for districts to develop the capacity to recruit, train and place top teacher talent into low-performing schools. Although TNTP initially focused its strategic consulting efforts on building the capacity of urban school districts to bring better teachers into low-performing schools more efficiently, the organization has concluded that "building capacity" is not an effective strategy. TNTP believes that most large urban districts do not prioritize teacher quality, other than at the rhetorical level. When a district does have talented staff in human capital management positions, the process works well. However, turnover of district staff is constant in many large districts' human resources departments, which typically leads to a roll-back of successful processes and practices

that might have been implemented. Thus, TNTP now believes that it cannot guarantee capacity building by simply handing over newly implemented programs and policies to districts after a few years, as it initially intended; the districts, for whatever reasons, cannot or do not sustain them, and therefore such guarantees are unrealistic.

Further, TNTP believes that the typical Human Resources Director position is outdated in most districts, structured under a paradigm that emphasizes transactions and administrative functions – ensuring that a teacher is licensed, finger printing new staff, etc. TNTP has found few large district HR departments to be talent-seeking organizations and, unfortunately, TNTP has concluded that it has been unable to change this dynamic thus far. For example, in one district TNTP pulled together a dynamic database of talent, but could not train district staff to use it well. “Districts must have a human capital strategist – someone who oversees everything from who gets hired, how the district finds new talent, and who stays in the district -- in addition to a person who gets the train in on time,” stated one TNTP Leader we interviewed.

TNTP believes that for districts to recruit, place and retain quality teaching talent, the district superintendent must make an investment in human capital and implement a comprehensive talent and human capital management strategy. In recent years (if not historically), superintendents have tended to spend only a small percentage of their time on human capital issues; TNTP believes that the time investment should be much higher to effectively deal with human resources. TNTP has also seen movement among union leaders in partner districts who are beginning to recognize that they have to change their approach to teachers and teacher quality to be talent seeking.

Though TNTP believes that placing talented teachers in classrooms is a first step towards improving student learning in low performing schools and classrooms, it also recognizes that

doing that alone does not produce immediate results. The organization is wrestling with the issue of how long it should take (three or four years?) to produce increased teacher and student performance and whether there are meaningful on-the-job interventions that accelerate teacher development.<sup>9 10</sup>

Scale appears as a frequent topic of conversation within TNTP. The organization believes that the problem of inadequate teacher talent cannot be solved unless it is addressed “at scale.” The organization’s efforts to recruit and hire one-quarter of New York City new teachers, for example, are a result of TNTP’s emphasis on the need to scale up its programs as well as its success in doing so—today, more than 10 percent of *all* active New York City teachers are Teaching Fellows. This is even starker in the district’s high need areas – one of every four New York City math teachers is a Fellow. The importance of scale will likely play itself out in future decisions regarding expansion into other sites or states.

## 5. CONCLUSION

TNTP has observed that too many individuals currently in the education system, as well as many outside of it, have accepted the notion that high academic achievement for poor and minority students in large urban districts is close to hopeless. TNTP, however, has concluded that producing large achievement gains is possible, but that it will take relentless effort and changes in deeply ingrained approaches to talent and human capital management. TNTP believes that the first step is finding and placing top talent in all classrooms and then engaging in strategic

---

<sup>9</sup> Similar to Teach For America, TNTP has found that their teachers produce gains in student math performance when compared to the impacts of other teachers, but impacts on performance in other content areas has been harder to document..

<sup>10</sup> In 2007, a study by the Urban Institute (Boyd et al. (2007). “The Narrowing Gap in new York City Teacher Qualifications and Its Implications for Student Achievement in High-Poverty Schools.” Working Paper 10, September 2007. The Urban Institute) shows that TNTP has had a positive impact on the quality of teachers in high-need districts.

management of that talent so that improvements in student performance emerge as quickly as possible and over time. A case in point is Washington, D.C., where the new chancellor (The New Teacher Project's founder, Michelle Rhee) has closed several schools, moved about one third of principals out of schools, and not renewed the contracts of close to 25 percent of teachers. By the opening of school in September 2008, the district hopes to have dramatically changed the talent level in the system and can begin related efforts to improve the instructional performance of the teachers and their effectiveness in producing gains in student academic achievement..

**APPENDIX**  
**(Source: TNTP, March 2008 Presentation)**

**In New York City:**