



STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL

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ANALYZING HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ALIGNMENT

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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL (SMHC)

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ABSTRACT

The link between HR practices and organizational performance has been well established by research in the private sector, suggesting that the HR system has great strategic potential as a driver of organizational effectiveness. This result suggests that school districts may want to move toward designing and delivering HR practices that focus on the necessary employee performance competencies, creating an HR system with vertical and horizontal alignment around those competencies. To create an aligned HR system, a school district must first assess the current state of alignment of its district-level HR practices, and develop ideas for HR practice improvement that will be alignment-enhancing. This paper provides the template for a process for assessing human resource alignment (HRA) that we have successfully field tested in a large public school district for the strategic job of teacher. We also provide some caveats to consider prior to deciding to do an HRA analysis.

INTRODUCTION

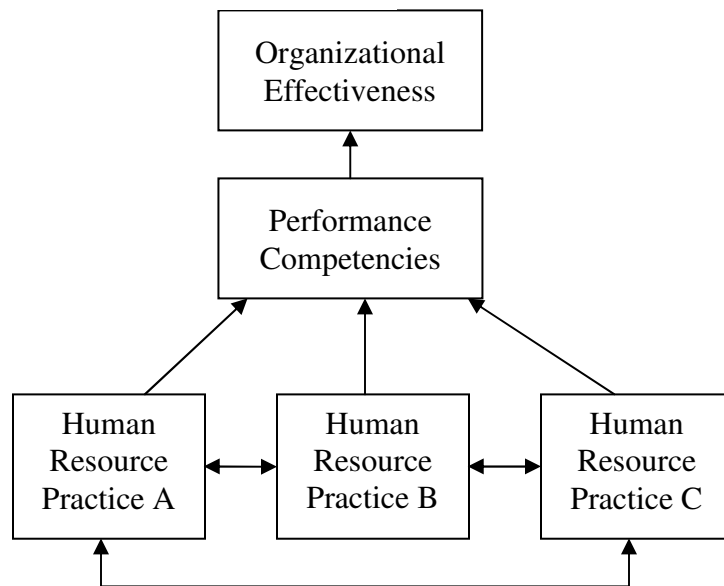
Strategic human resource management focuses on identifying and choosing among human resource (HR) actions in pursuit of the organization's strategic objectives. It goes beyond the more common focus on transaction efficiency, cost reduction, or human resource process improvement. In organizations with substantial numbers of employees and with labor costs that are a high percentage of total costs, arguably the most important focus for efforts to improve organizational performance should be on the HR system (and its individual HR practices) and the employee performance competencies driven by the system. It is these performance competencies that create value and improve organizational performance. The HR management system that really drives performance is the one that delivers the employee competencies needed to achieve strategic objectives.

Considerable research supports the link between HR practices (or the total HR system), performance competencies, and organizational effectiveness. To capitalize on this documented strategic potential for the HR system to contribute to organizational performance, the organization must design and deliver HR practices that are explicitly focused on employee performance competencies. The ultimate strategic HR goal is to have a set of HR practices that acquire, develop and motivate necessary performance competencies in a consistent and supportive manner.

It is generally agreed that achievement of this goal requires an aligned set of HR practices, ones that exhibit both vertical and horizontal alignment. Figure 1 illustrates both types of HR alignment. The vertical arrows show specific HR practices driving performance competencies, which in turn drive organizational effectiveness at various levels. To create such alignment, the organization must ensure that the performance competencies are embedded in the

HR practices themselves, so that the practices reflect and communicate the competencies. In a school district, for example, if a desired performance competency is instructional planning, the district's recruitment practices should seek to communicate this desired competency to teacher candidates, and to source candidates who will likely possess some degree of this competency. Horizontal alignment is shown by the horizontal arrows. Such alignment seeks to mesh the various HR practices together so that they are mutually supportive and reinforcing. Recruitment for instructional planning competence, for example, must be synchronized with a more formal analysis of that competency during selection and it must be a key competency focused on for professional development and performance management purposes as well.

Figure 1: Vertical & Horizontal Alignment



HUMAN RESOURCE ALIGNMENT ANALYSIS

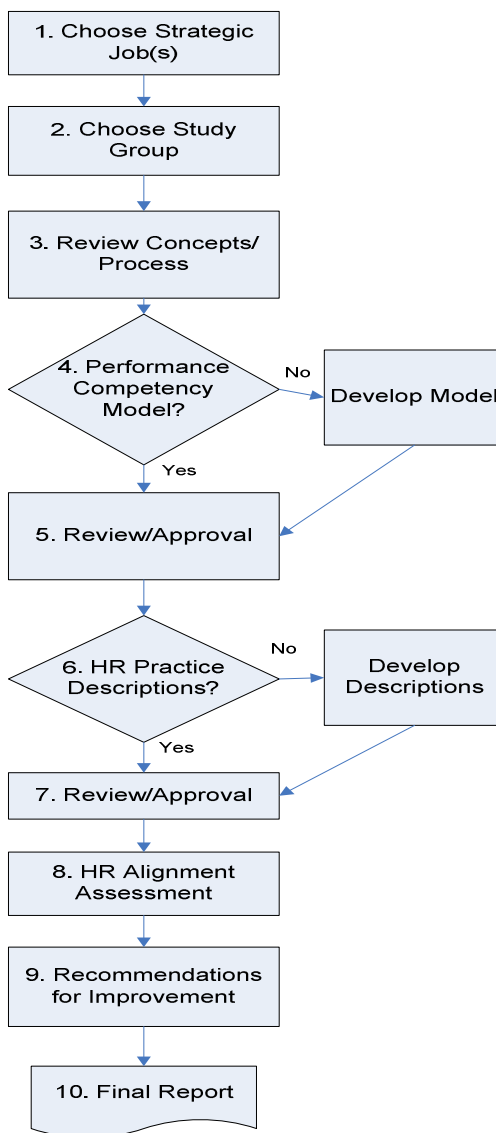
To create an aligned HR system, the organization must first determine the current state of its HR system's alignment. Such a diagnosis will allow the organization to get a realistic idea of how well each HR practice is aligned, and provide the opportunity to develop ideas for HR

practice improvement that will be alignment-enhancing. This diagnostic process is called Human Resource Alignment (HRA) analysis. An overview of the process is shown in Figure 2, the HRA Analysis Process Map. This is followed by a step-by-step description of the process. Lastly, some caveats about HRA analysis are presented.

THE HRA ANALYSIS PROCESS MAP

There are 10 major steps in the process, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: HRA Analysis Process Map



The process begins with choices about the job(s) to be the focus of the alignment analysis, the composition of the study group to conduct the HRA analysis, and the performance competency model that will serve as the foundation for the HR system. The remaining steps constitute the HRA analysis itself, ending with a report recommending steps to take to improve HR alignment. Our description of how to conduct an HRA analysis follows these steps. It is important to note we focus on HR practices at the district level for the purpose of describing the process.

THE HRA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Step One: Choose Strategic Job(s)

The process begins by choosing one strategic job for which the district wants an aligned district-level HR system. We recommend beginning with either the teacher or principal job. Since research shows that teacher effectiveness is the most important driver of student achievement that the district can directly influence, and because teachers are by far the largest occupational group in most districts, and their compensation a major expense, most districts will probably want to start with teachers. We focus on the teacher job in describing the process below, but similar steps would be involved if the focus were on principals or any other job.

Step Two: Choose Study Group

An HRA analysis study group must be chosen. It should be small in order to facilitate meeting schedules, sharpen group discussion, and allow for relatively short (2 hour maximum) meetings. It should include a cross section of administrators as job and HR experts and represent both Instruction and HR. All members should be knowledgeable about the teacher performance competency model (described below) and one or more of the seven HR practice areas (described below) in the district. It is imperative that some members have experience in the job for which

alignment is being assessed. There should also be a study group facilitator to guide and coordinate the study group.

Step Three: Review HRA Analysis Concepts and Process

The first meeting of the study group should begin with the facilitator explaining the general purpose of the study and the roles of the study group members. Timelines and meeting times and dates should also be established. Multiple meetings will be needed, and each should be limited to 2 hours. The facilitator should review the teacher performance competencies and the concepts of vertical alignment of HR practices to those competencies, and the horizontal alignment among HR practices. A full discussion should be conducted so that study group members are familiar with these concepts.

Step Four: Finalize the Performance Competency Model

The competency model will be the basis for the alignment analysis, so it is important that it be reflective of what the district sees as the key competency drivers of student achievement. In general, performance competencies are stated in terms of behaviors that teachers would be expected to perform. However, sometimes competencies are stated in terms of knowledge, skills, or abilities, such as ability to acquire knowledge of students. The important point is that performance competencies need to be outcome-focused, meaning that they are thought to lead to the accomplishment of student achievement goals. The district can proceed to specify its teacher performance competency model in three different ways: it can use an existing model, adopt a generic model, or develop a district-specific model.

A. Existing Model

Most districts will have some semblance of a teacher performance competency model already in place, though they likely do not refer to it as such. Implicitly or explicitly, the district

has specified the behaviors and performances required of teachers in job descriptions, induction and mentoring materials, professional development materials, curriculum frameworks, performance evaluation systems, and so forth. These materials could be collected, reviewed, and modified, and then the behaviors and tasks they involve could be summarized to formalize the implicit teacher performance competency model.

This approach has the obvious advantage of capitalizing on the district's current thinking about teacher performance requirements, as well as the ease and speed of specifying the final teacher performance competency model. There are two major downsides to this approach—oversight of potentially important competencies, and inclusion of too many marginally important ones. These downsides could lead to a teacher performance competency model that does not emphasize the most important influences on student achievement, and ultimately result in the district aligning its HR practices to this flawed model.

B. Generic Model

Considerable effort has been devoted to the development of generic models of teacher performance competencies, models that apply to almost all regular K-12 teachers. Two well-known and carefully developed models are the Praxis III analysis for beginning teachers and the *Framework for Teaching* for both novice and experienced teachers. The two models share considerable competency content.

The Praxis III model was developed by the Educational Testing Service and is commercially available from it (ets.org). The model forms the foundation for making licensure decisions by states and local agencies. The model contains four "domains" of teaching (planning to teach, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities), and 19 more specific criteria or components. The Framework for Teaching was developed by Danielson

(1997) and subsequently revised by her (see Danielson, 2007). The Framework includes a broader range of competencies and goes into more depth in some areas than the Praxis III model. The Framework partitions teacher performance competency domains (planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities). Each domain in turn contains more specific performance "components," and components in turn contain even more specific "elements." Each element also has descriptions (called rubrics) of four performance levels: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. The domains, components and elements are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Domains, Components, and Elements of the Framework for Teaching	
<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation</p> <p>Component 1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of content and the structure of the discipline • Knowledge of prerequisite relationships • Knowledge of content-related pedagogy <p>Component 1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of child and adolescent development • Knowledge of the learning process • Knowledge of students' skills, knowledge, and language proficiency • Knowledge of students' interests and cultural heritage • Knowledge of students' special needs <p>Component 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance • Suitability for diverse learners <p>Component 1d: Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for classroom use • Resources to extend content knowledge and pedagogy • Resources for students <p>Component 1e: Designing Coherent Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure <p>Component 1f: Designing Student Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruence with instructional outcomes • Criteria and standards • Design of formative assessments • Use of planning 	<p>Domain 2: The Classroom Environment</p> <p>Component 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interaction with students • Student interactions with other students <p>Component 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of the content • Expectations for learning and achievement • Student pride in work <p>Component 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of instructional groups • Management of transitions • Management of materials and supplies • Performance of non-instructional duties • Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals <p>Component 2d: Managing Student Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations • Monitoring of student behavior • Response to student misbehavior <p>Component 2e: Organizing Physical Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources

<p>Domain 3: Instruction</p> <p>Component 3a: Communicating with Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations for learning • Directions and procedures • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written languages <p>Component 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of questions • Discussion techniques • Student participation <p>Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities and assignments • Grouping of students • Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing <p>Component 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning • Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring of progress <p>Component 3e: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence 	<p>Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities</p> <p>Component 4a: Reflecting on Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy • Use in future teaching <p>Component 4b: Maintaining Accurate Records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completion of assignments • Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records <p>Component 4c: Communicating with Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the instructional program • Information about individual students • Engagement of families in the instructional program <p>Component 4d: Participating in a Professional Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with colleagues • Involvement in a culture of professional inquiry • Service to the school • Participation in school and district projects <p>Component 4e: Growing and Developing Professionally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill • Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession <p>Component 4f: Showing Professionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity and ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy • Decision making • Compliance with school and district regulations
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Danielson (2007) suggests that the Framework has several desirable features. It is comprehensive, grounded in research, public, generic, coherent in structure, and independent of any particular teaching methodology.

The district must decide whether to use one of the generic models intact, or to adopt it with modification. The modifications would likely involve changing language to be consistent with district terminology, or adding or deleting certain components or elements. Occasionally it may be necessary to combine domains or add a new one. Development of modifications will require additional time and effort. The advantages will be that the performance competency model is tailored to the local context, and that there will likely be greater acceptance of the model by teachers and administrators.

If there are to be modifications, they should occur prior to the beginning of the HRA analysis. A group other than the HRA study group should make the modifications. The modification group should include individuals from the ranks of teachers, administrators, instructional specialists, HR representatives, and teacher association staff. Experience suggests that the modification process can be quite time consuming as the group "digs in" and discusses what constitutes the important teacher performance competencies. Of course, this discussion should always center around student achievement goals and the competencies most likely to drive attainment of those goals.

C. New Model

A final option for the district is to create its own teacher performance competency model from scratch. This alternative should not be undertaken lightly, as it will involve a substantial amount of work and likely overlap with both the district's existing model and generic models. If done properly, however, the new model will identify performance competencies derived directly from strategic instructional programs of the district, yielding a tailor-made set of competencies. Deriving these competencies should be guided by expert sources on job analysis and competency modeling, such as Brannick, Levine and Morgeson (2007), Lucia and Lepsinger (1999), Heneman and Judge (2009), and Schippmann (1999).

D. Supporting Validity Evidence

Whatever teacher performance competency model is to be used, the district should consider evidence as to the model's validity. Such evidence will indicate reason to believe that the teacher performance competencies are linked to (aligned with) the district's student achievement goals. Both content and empirical validation evidence could be considered. For example, Danielson (1996, 2007) described content validity evidence for the Framework, and

Milanowski, Kimball & Odden (2005) reported empirical evidence that teachers rated higher on the performance competencies in the *Framework for Teaching* had higher levels of student achievement in reading and math.

Step Five: Review and Approve the Performance Competency Model

The study group should approve the teacher performance competency model that emerges. The choice of the model is a critical decision for at least two reasons. First, the model will serve as the benchmark against which HRA will be assessed and HR practice improvements will emerge. Second, the model will become the embodiment of the district’s vision of instructional practice and through the district’s HR practices the model will become embedded in the district’s culture.

Step Six: Develop HR Practice Descriptions

There are seven areas of HR practice that apply to teachers: recruitment, selection, induction, mentoring, professional development, performance management, and compensation. Table 2 describes these seven HR practice areas and their components.

Table 2: The Seven HR Alignment Areas and Their Components for Teachers

<u>HR Areas</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<u>1. Recruitment</u>	
<i>Applicant Pools</i>	Sources of applicants (e.g., traditional teacher training programs, alternative certification programs, other districts)
<i>Information</i>	Information provided to applicants about the job’s requirements and rewards
<u>2. Selection</u>	
<i>Licensure</i>	Licensing requirements and the basis for them
<i>Assessments</i>	Methods of assessing job applicants’ knowledge and skills and predicting future performance
<i>Standards</i>	The hiring requirements and “cut scores” for accepting applicants

3. <u>Induction</u>	
<i>Pre-service</i>	Assistance and information provided to teachers prior to the start of school
<i>On-the-Job</i>	Assistance and information provided to teachers during the first years of teaching
4. <u>Mentoring</u>	
<i>Content</i>	Subject areas, pedagogy, social support, and school and classroom procedures
<i>Participants</i>	Who provides mentoring & their qualifications
5. <u>Professional Development</u>	
<i>Content</i>	Subject areas, activities (e.g., courses, in-service projects)
<i>Teacher Planning</i>	Mechanisms for focusing and assisting teachers' choices of professional development content
6. <u>Compensation</u>	
<i>Base Pay</i>	Regular salary for teaching duties during a contract period
<i>Variable Pay</i>	Supplements on top of base pay for additional duties or performance (e.g., bonuses for performance, base pay increases linked to skill development)
<i>Hiring Packages</i>	Financial inducements over and above normal starting base pay (e.g., hiring bonus, loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, housing assistance or higher placement on schedule) provided to high potential job candidates or those teaching in shortage areas or high-need schools
7. <u>Performance Management</u>	
<i>Teacher Evaluation</i>	System for appraising teacher's performance
<i>Feedback/Coaching</i>	Information given to teacher about results of the appraisal; assistance to teacher in how to maintain and improve performance
<i>Goal Setting</i>	Formal setting of specific goals and time periods to guide performance planning and improvement
<i>Remediation</i>	Activities for intervention and assistance to low performing teachers, outplacement and termination

The study group members should review this typology and modify it if necessary. Then written descriptions of the district's HR practices within the typology should be prepared. The descriptions should focus in particular on practices that pertain to the teacher performance competency model. The intent is to capture how (if at all) the performance competencies are supported or developed by the HR practices. For example, for recruitment applicant pools there should be a description of the district's practices with respect to sources of applicants (such as teacher education programs, the district web site, job fairs, employee referrals, and internal transfers) and the degree to which applicants from each source received training in, or information about, the performance competencies. Much of the information needed to develop the HR practice descriptions is usually readily available from HR policy and procedure documents, the district web site, the professional development course catalog, and the labor agreement. Interviews with HR and instructional staff should be done to fill in the gaps. Descriptions of each of the seven areas should be concise, perhaps two to three single spaced pages in length.

Step Seven: Review and Approve the Descriptions

Study group members should next review the draft descriptions of the HR practices and suggest modifications. After any required rewrites, final drafts should be submitted to the study group for final approval. The final descriptions are the information the study group members use to make their HRA analysis.

Step Eight: Make HRA Analysis

Separate judgments are made by the study group for vertical and horizontal alignment. For each type, the study group members make alignment ratings. After ratings are made, members suggest ideas for alignment improvement.

Vertical Alignment

A rating scale is used to allow study group members to indicate their judgment about the degree of alignment between each of the 21 HR practice components and the competencies. An example of a rating scale for the recruitment area is shown in Figure 3 on the next page. For illustration, the rating form was constructed using the four domains of the *Framework for Teaching* as the competency model. Using a four point scale, the rater is asked to indicate the degree to which the two recruitment components (applicant pools, information) incorporate each of the four teacher performance competency domains. Note that space is provided for both an initial and a final rating.

Figure 3: Vertical HR Alignment Rating Form for Recruitment

Use the scale below to provide both the initial and final ratings for recruitment: applicant pools and recruitment: information. Provide ratings for each teacher performance competency domain.

Vertical HR Alignment Rating Scale

1	The HR practices in this area rarely incorporate the teacher performance competencies from this domain.
2	The HR practices in this area sometimes incorporate the teacher performance competencies from this domain.
3	The HR practices in this area often incorporate the teacher performance competencies from this domain.
4	The HR practices in this area almost always incorporate the teacher performance competencies from this domain.

Vertical Alignment Ratings for Recruitment

<u>Performance Competency Domain</u>	<u>Applicant Pools</u>		<u>Information</u>	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Planning & Preparation	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
The Classroom Environment	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Instruction	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Professional Responsibilities	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

To rate vertical alignment, each study group member receives a copy of the teacher performance competency model, a description of the HR practices for each component of an HR practice area, and the rating scale. Each rater then makes an independent initial rating for each HR practice component (e.g., for recruitment, separate ratings are made for applicant pools and

for information). Raters then share their ratings and the reasons behind them. Raters can change their ratings based on the discussion, though changes are not required. The raters then record their final ratings. To summarize the final ratings, average ratings for each HR practice area component are computed across domains and raters.

Study group members next focus on possible alignment improvement. The facilitator should lead the group in brainstorming whether improvement in vertical HR alignment is desirable, and if so, in developing suggestions for changes in practices to improve alignment. The facilitator should record the ideas to create a suggestion list across the seven HR practice areas. The suggestion list, along with the vertical alignment rating results, will serve as key inputs for the development of specific recommendations for vertical alignment improvement in step nine.

Horizontal Alignment

Analyzing horizontal alignment requires rating two HR practices at a time in terms of how well they support and reinforce each other. After the vertical alignment ratings have been done, the horizontal alignment ratings should be made at a separate meeting. We have found it is easiest to assess horizontal alignment by grouping the seven HR areas into pairs and considering each pair in turn. For the seven areas, there are 21 pairs to be considered. Again, the study group members should be given a copy of the teacher performance competency model, descriptions of all the HR practices, and a horizontal alignment rating scale. Figure 4 on the next page shows an example scale for recruitment. Again, ratings should be done independently, discussed, and final ratings made. The facilitator should then calculate average horizontal alignment between each of the areas. After completing the ratings, study group members should discuss ways that horizontal

alignment of HR practices might be improved. Again, the facilitator should record the suggestions for further consideration.

Figure 4: Horizontal HR Alignment Rating Form

Horizontal alignment refers to the degree to which the District’s HR practices are internally consistent and mutually reinforcing. It relates to the question “Are HR programs working together to support the same competencies?”

Examples of horizontal alignment include:

- Starting pay high enough to recruit candidates with the needed competencies
- Induction programs providing information about the performance expectations to which new hires will be held through performance evaluation
- Professional development programs that cover areas in need of improvement as documented by performance evaluation

For each pair of practices shown below, please rate the degree to which you believe the two are aligned.

Pair 1

Teacher Recruitment : information, applicant pools.		Teacher Selection : certification, assessment, standards		
Not aligned				Highly Aligned
0	1	2	3	4

Pair 2

Teacher Recruitment : information, applicant pools.		Teacher Induction : pre-service, on the job		
Not aligned				Highly Aligned
0	1	2	3	4

Pair 3

Teacher Recruitment : information, applicant pools.		Teacher Mentoring : content, participants		
Not aligned				Highly Aligned
0	1	2	3	4

Step Nine: Develop Recommendations for Alignment Improvement

In a separate meeting of the study group, the facilitator should ask members to focus on developing recommendations for improvement in vertical and horizontal HR alignment. To aid the discussion, members can be provided with summaries of the final alignment rating results and the list of suggestions for improving alignment generated in past meetings. The suggestions should be discussed to ensure understanding, and to solicit additional suggestions. To then prioritize the suggestions and provide guidance for action, each suggestion can be rated by the group on the basis of two criteria: (a) degree of likely impact on teacher performance competency if adopted (high, medium, low) and (b) time frame for action (do now, do within a year, study further). At this point each suggestion is considered a possible recommendation from the study group. Finally, the study group should decide (by vote or consensus) which tentative recommendations will be included in the final study group report. Example suggestions developed during an HR alignment analysis we facilitated are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples of HR Practice Change Recommendations

I. High Potential Impact – Begin Implementation Now

- a. Have Superintendent lead top management in being more proactive in performance management and accountable for effective performance management (*HR area – Instructional Leaders*)
- b. Inform job applicants about the teacher performance competency model on the website and during site visits (*HR area – Recruitment*)

II. High Potential Impact – Implement Within 1 Year

- c. Develop standard interview questions/answer rubrics based on the teacher performance competency model (*HR area – Selection*)
- d. Evaluate current professional development and in-service courses in terms of their content relevance to the teacher performance competency model (*HR area – Professional Development*)
- e. Provide teachers more feedback (both written and oral) from their teacher evaluations relative to the teacher performance competency model (*HR area – Performance Management*)

III. High Potential Impact – Study Further

- f. Lengthen the probationary period from 1 to 2 years (*HR area – Performance Management*)
 - g. Provide movement on the salary schedule only for approved coursework that is relevant to the teacher performance competency model (*HR area – Compensation*)
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Step Ten: Develop Final Report

The facilitator should develop a draft of a final report from the study group. It can then be reviewed by study group members, and suggested changes made. The final report should include:

- an executive summary,
- a brief description of the HR alignment concept,
- a synopsis of the seven HR practice areas,
- descriptions of the HRA analysis process and rating results, and
- the HR practice changes recommended to improve alignment.

The report can then be presented to decision makers such as the superintendent or school board, and become the basis for planning changes to improve alignment.

SOME CAVEATS

HRA alignment analysis, and subsequent follow through, is not for the faint of heart. It requires a commitment to large scale analysis and change in HR practices and the HR system at the district level. This will be quite different from HR transactional process improvement or the design and implementation of a single HR program. To commit to such potentially wide ranging change, district decision makers must fully understand the potential for the HR system to be a major driver of performance competency improvement. Such an understanding may in fact not be fully realized until the organization has actually begun the HRA analysis process.

In a related vein, the district level focus leaves questions about HR practices at the school level in the background. For example, where the school principal and other school leaders have the responsibility to implement district-mandated HR practices, to what extent do they effectively do so? Another example: if given the latitude, do school leaders themselves design and implement aligned HR practices at the school level, such as teacher selection or professional development? Such questions raise the possibility of doing HRA analysis at the school level. While the HRA analysis process described here is focused at the district level, we think it could be applied at the school level, though this has yet to be field tested.

Another major caveat is that the district must recognize that a performance competency model is absolutely essential to the HRA analysis process. The model is the benchmark against which HR practice is judged: to what extent does each practice contribute to acquiring and developing the competencies that are needed to improve student achievement? The competency model frames, focuses, and shapes all discussion of current HR practices and recommendations for change.

A caveat that follows from this is that pursuit of HRA analysis implies the district desires to move toward distinctive and formalized HR practices for each strategic job, at least in part. That is, there is a desire to customize performance-driving HR systems for separate strategic jobs. The performance-enhancing potential of such customization must be weighed against the additional cost and structural burdens that will likely flow.

Since the focus of HRA alignment is on employee performance, it does not initially address other important criteria for gauging and delivering HR effectiveness. These criteria include operational and structural features of HR systems such as transactional efficiency, HR process improvement, service quality, and degree of centralization. However, study group

discussions of HR practice change for performance improvement might well move on to concerns for these other criteria. Such an expansion should be anticipated, and it may well lead the organization to also consider HR practice changes that will address these other criteria. In short, what started as a focus on simply HR alignment may blossom into an even more transformative analysis of HR practices, structure, and delivery.

The final caveat pertains to the performance competencies of those in the district HR office and other departments who will be responsible for leading the HRA analysis and HR practice changes. Such activities will require special competencies to create, design, implement and manage HR practice changes. Current HR or other central office staff members may lack the competencies needed for these tasks. Accordingly, some combination of training, replacing current staff, and importing new external talent in the form of technical assistance providers or consultants, may be necessary.

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