

SMHC District Reform Network Follow Through Implementation Plans

Human Resource Alignment Assessment

The link between human resource management (HRM) practices and organizational performance has been well established by private sector research, which suggests that the HRM system has strategic potential as a driver of organizational effectiveness. To capitalize on this potential the organization must design and deliver HRM that focuses on the performance competencies employees must have (teaching expertise for teachers, for example) in order to contribute to organizational performance. One way to help districts design such HRM systems is to conduct an HR alignment assessment. The SMHC project team has developed and piloted a process for conducting this assessment. This process engages district central office and school staff in a detailed examination of HRM practices for key jobs (for example, teacher or principal), an assessment of vertical and horizontal alignment of these practices (across recruitment, selection, induction, mentoring, professional development, performance management, and compensation, etc.) with a model describing the competencies people in the key jobs need to have to help the district succeed, and the generation of ideas for improving alignment of all the key HR programs.

Building on our previous work on teacher HR alignment, SMHC is also interested in extending our model to principals as well. We would use the alignment assessment process to help a set of districts analyze and improve the alignment of their HRM practices for both teachers and principals.

This follow through work would involve helping districts develop or adapt a performance competency model first for teachers and second for principals, consistent with its strategies for improving student achievement and its vision of instruction. We also would help districts develop overviews of their HRM programs (at both the central office and school levels); facilitate the assessment, which would be done by district staff themselves in order to share understanding of HRM practices and build district analytical capacity; and develop options for improving alignment. We would be able to work with 2-3 districts, beginning in the Spring of 2010. We would also be interested in helping districts evaluate the success of any changes in their HRM practices made to improve alignment.

Recruitment

After the recruitment session at the March SMHC Reform Network Conference, the project intends to provide Recruitment Webinars during 2009. The Webinars will be accessible on the SMHC website, www.smhc-cpre.org. At this time, SMHC does not plan to provide additional assistance for recruiting teacher and principals.

We would recommend to any district that would like recruitment assistance to contact The New Teacher Project (TNTP) for assistance. Tim Daly, who will be leading the conference's session

on recruitment, is President of TNTP and a member of the SMHC National Task Force. Project staff believe TNTP is an experienced national organization providing quality assistance, and it is already working under contract with over a dozen urban districts. TNTP can not only help districts with recruitment issues, but it is also developing expertise in restructuring other aspects of the overall HR system in the district.

Measuring Teaching Performance

A key part of effective SMHC for teachers is a system or method for assessing teaching performance. Performance measurement is needed for key human capital management functions such as new teacher induction, mentoring, professional development needs assessment, performance evaluation, making tenure decisions, and also for a knowledge- and skills-based compensation schedule. Our case studies have suggested that many districts need an efficient, usable method of assessing teacher performance that goes beyond test scores. The development and implementation of such a system could be an opportunity for a district to connect its district-wide strategies for improving student achievement and its vision of instruction to the “day-to-day” work of teachers and principals.

Based on our Ford Foundation study of seven promising instructional measurement approaches, we will develop a roadmap for a comprehensive instructional assessment system that could be used by districts for teacher human capital management (HCM) purposes. We see the next stage of our work as using this roadmap to work collaboratively with 3-4 districts to modify their existing evaluation system or adapt another system. This process would be conducted hopefully between the end of the March conference and the beginning of the 2009-10 school year. Districts would then pilot the system over the next 2-3 school years for teacher development, evaluation and/or tenure decision making. Over this time period, we would help these districts conduct a formative evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the system (which we have done for several districts in the past). This would include an assessment of the relationship between teaching practice measurements and student achievement.

Principal as Human Capital Manager

Principals are a key part of SMHC because of their many influences on the acquisition, development, retention and rewarding of successful and effective teachers. However, principal pre-service training can gloss over the knowledge, skills and expertise principals need for this site level strategic human capital management. School districts also frequently leave principals to their own devices, providing little support or oversight on school human capital management policies and practices.

To stimulate further work on the role of the principal (and other school leaders) in SMHC, our project has launched a study of the human capital management (HCM) practices used by leaders in schools with high concentrations of students from low income and minority backgrounds AND with increasing student achievement trends. The goals are to identify practices that are associated with success in high needs schools and to identify the competencies and skills principals need in order to attract and retain teacher talent, and develop a balanced, cohesive staff. We will be sharing the results of this study at the next SMHC Network meeting.

Building from this district network conference, we propose three areas of focus for our work with districts on school leadership over the next 2-3 years.

- The first is to use the results of our study on effective human capital management practices and our review of current principal performance standards to develop a set of HCM competencies for principals. These could be used to develop training programs at the district or national level for school leaders, and as a basis for district efforts to assess their current programs to support principals in their HCM role.
- Second, we would like to work with districts interested in revising their current principal evaluation processes to introduce better ways of assessing school leadership performance. We would begin by developing model standards and rubrics for assessing principals' HCM performance. The project would then expand to include other dimensions of leadership practice (e.g., instructional leadership) that could be assessed on a pilot basis for principal performance evaluation.
- Third, a comprehensive human resource alignment assessment could also be carried out (as mentioned above in HR Alignment Assessment) so districts could see how well their human resource programs for principals are aligned with existing or revised principal leadership competencies.

Policies and Procedures Surrounding Human Resource Transactions

As school districts work to develop and implement system wide human capital initiatives, Human Resources divisions need to streamline and create user-friendly systems that support all aspects of finding and keeping great talent. However, a number of barriers exist that challenge both the strategic and transactional functions of Human Resources, such as:

- Contractual issues that restrict the surplussing and assignment of teachers,
- Absenteeism that impacts student learning,
- Grievance and arbitration policies that protect underperforming teachers,
- And other issues that must be addressed to achieve the human capital best practices we need.

Districts will agree to participate in an analysis of their current human capital landscape. This might include an analysis of their major HR policies and contract provisions, their approach to customers, the state of their transactional capacity, and the barriers (either locally or at their state level) that prevent reform in human capital management. This task would be completed by the end of the summer or early fall.

Districts would then be benchmarked nationally in terms of ease/difficulty in implementing reform efforts. This activity would be completed by November 2009.

Districts would then select 3-5 focus areas to initiate reform efforts such as:

- Surplus/excess teacher policies,
- Sick leave/leave of absence management,
- Tenure/dismissal processes, or
- Succession planning,

and develop implementation plans that would be launched in January 2010.