

Hiring and Keeping the Best

How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High-Quality Teachers?

Concern over teacher turnover in Bridgeport

Ten years ago, BCAC released its study of teacher turnover in the Bridgeport schools during the 1999-2000 school year. BCAC's Education and Early Care Task Force undertook this current study because of their concern that, while lower than in years past, there are still too many classroom teachers leaving the Bridgeport School District each year.

The Bridgeport school system was not able to supply computerized data showing teacher hirings, resignations, and retirements. The information in this report was compiled from Bridgeport Board of Education monthly agendas from January 2005 through September 2010. The data was supplemented with information obtained from the Connecticut State Department of Education and other local school districts.

Bridgeport students deserve high-quality teachers

Research clearly shows that the quality of classroom teachers is one of the most important school-related factors in student learning and achievement. To help close the achievement gap and provide the best possible education to every student, Bridgeport must be able to attract, hire, and retain high-quality teachers at every grade level and in every subject area.

Bridgeport's teacher recruitment and retention efforts yield mixed results

- **Fewer teachers resigned or retired in the last three years.** In 1999-00, 11.5% of classroom teachers left Bridgeport. Since 2007-08, fewer teachers have left, with 8% leaving in 2007-08, 5% in 2008-09, and back to 8% in 2009-10.
- **Far too many teachers leave after spending only a few years teaching in Bridgeport.** In 2009-10, nearly 9 of every 10 teachers who resigned taught in Bridgeport for four years or less.
- **Retention of special education teachers has improved over the last decade with turnover decreasing by 50%.**
- **Turnover remains highest among math, science, and world languages, with almost one out of every five teachers in these subject areas leaving in the 2009-10 school year.**
- **Too few highly qualified candidates apply for positions in math, science, and world languages.**
- **Bridgeport hires a large and growing number of long-term substitute teachers each year to cover for teachers out on paid and unpaid leaves, as well as vacant positions.**

Hiring and Keeping the Best:

The high cost of teacher turnover

There are significant costs associated with teacher turnover. First, recruiting, hiring, and supporting replacement teachers can be expensive. The Connecticut Center for School Change has estimated that it costs about \$10,000 to recruit and hire a new teacher and an additional \$5,000 to provide that teacher with mentoring and professional development support. The expense of replacing teachers consumes valuable resources that could be better spent on meeting other education needs. In the last four school years, the turnover costs associated with replacing the 307 Bridgeport teachers who resigned between 2007 and 2010 may have totaled as much as \$4.6 million dollars.

Secondly, and most importantly, teacher turnover can result in even higher costs to students. National research has shown that turnover has an adverse effect on student performance – schools with higher teacher turnover rates have fewer students meeting standards on statewide assessments in both reading and math. Urban school districts, in particular, have the highest teacher turnover rates and percentages of students being taught by teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience. The constant revolving flow of teachers takes a serious toll on student learning.

In the last ten years, teacher retention has improved

Nearly ten years ago, BCAC, in its report, “Help Wanted: Classroom Teachers,” found that more qualified teachers were leaving the Bridgeport Public Schools each year than teachers in other urban school districts across the country. A high proportion of teachers left Bridgeport to accept positions in surrounding school districts.

More teachers left Bridgeport in 1999 than in other similar districts

Reasons Teachers Left 1999-00	% Teachers Leaving Bridgeport 1999-00	% Teachers Leaving High Poverty School Districts in 1999
Total Leaving	11.5%	8.4%
• Retired	2.0%	3.1%
• Took other positions/ left for other reasons	9.5%	5.3%

Sources: BCAC, “Help Wanted: Classroom Teachers,” June 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2008

Compared to other high-poverty districts across the country, Bridgeport was losing more teachers. In fact, Bridgeport was losing teachers faster than it could recruit replacements. Often, vacant positions weren’t filled until later in the school year, leaving many classrooms staffed by long-term substitute teachers.

Since 2005-06, the percentage of classroom teachers leaving Bridgeport each year has declined and is comparable to the percentage of teachers who leave other urban districts across the country.

Further reductions in teacher turnover since 2005-06

Reasons Teachers Left	% Teachers Leaving Bridgeport 2005-06	Number Leaving in 2005-06	% Teachers Leaving Bridgeport 2009-10	Number Leaving in 2009-10
Total Leaving District	11.0%	147	8.4%	108
• Retired	2.4%	32	2.6%	33
• Took other position	3.6%	48	1.0%	13
• Other reasons	5.0%	67	4.8%	62

Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Reports and Agendas, 2005-06 and 2009-10

While we do not know exactly what factors have helped improve teacher retention in Bridgeport in more recent years, it is highly likely that the recent economic downturn has played a significant role in reducing teacher turnover. Uncertainty about the economy and job market in general may have caused some teachers who might have resigned, retired, or left teaching to retain their jobs.

How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High-Quality Teachers?

Why teachers leave their jobs

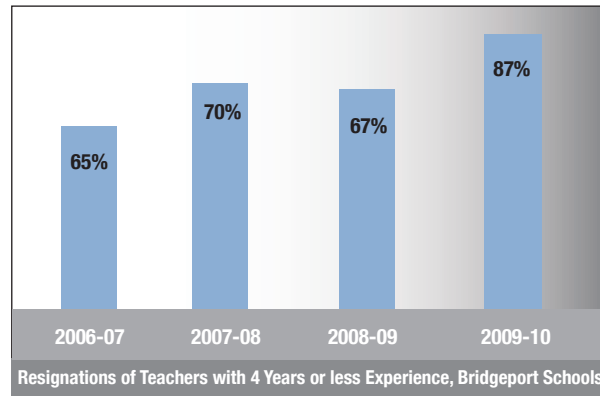
National studies have shown that teachers leave jobs in urban school districts for a number of reasons: low salaries, large class sizes, lack of support or recognition from school leadership, lack of student discipline, low parental involvement, fewer opportunities for advancement, inadequate classroom resources, and poor building conditions.

Issues related to salary and advancement opportunities may be important in improving the retention of Bridgeport teachers, particularly for those with more experience. Since Bridgeport's education funding is extremely tight, it will take creative approaches to develop incentives to help retain its experienced teachers.

The revolving door: Most teachers who resign from their positions leave after spending only a few years in Bridgeport

Teachers undergo a steep learning curve during the first few years they spend in the classroom. By the end of their third or fourth year, most teachers are far more effective than at the start of their careers.

Most teachers who resign have taught in the Bridgeport schools for four years or less



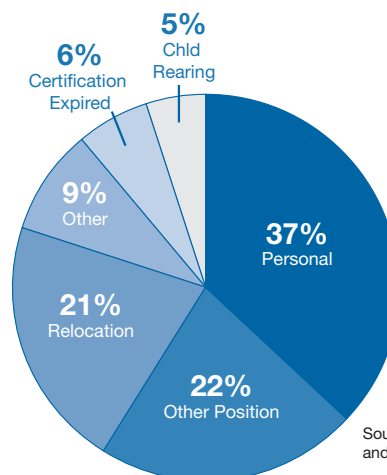
Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Reports and Agendas, 2006-07 through 2009-10

In 2009-10, nearly 90% of the teachers who resigned had spent four years or less teaching in Bridgeport. The difficulty with Bridgeport losing so many teachers so soon after they are hired is that it results in burdensome cycles of hiring and then soon thereafter replacing many of these same teachers. As a result, Bridgeport must expend more resources each year on orienting, training, and mentoring new teachers. The cycles of hiring and replacement can also worsen school staffing problems if newly hired teachers do not have the same level of experience and qualifications as those of the teachers being replaced.

Why do teachers leave Bridgeport?

Almost four out of every ten teachers leave the district for personal reasons without providing a concrete reason for their departure. To improve retention, it is important to gather specific information about why teachers decide to leave and then implement improvement plans that seek to address the problems identified.

Reasons teachers give for leaving the district



Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Reports and Agendas, 2006-07 through 2009-10

Hiring and Keeping the Best:

Bridgeport has done a good job keeping special education teachers

Bridgeport's success at retaining special education teachers during the past few years is particularly noteworthy because there is a shortage of special education teachers in Connecticut, and it is getting worse.

Shortage of special education teachers statewide is getting worse

School Year	Special Education Shortage Area Ranking*
2006-07	5
2007-08	3
2008-09	3
2009-10	2

Source: CT State Department of Education, Fall Hiring Surveys, 2007-2010
 * Shortage areas are ranked from 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest shortage area.

Across the state, 12.3% of special education positions were not filled at the start of the 2009-10 school year. During that same year, only 6.4% of Bridgeport's special education teaching positions needed to be filled.

The good news: Retention of special education teachers has improved

In its earlier study of teacher retention in 1999-00, BCAC found that a large and growing number of special education teachers did not return to teach in Bridgeport each year. In fact, Bridgeport was losing a higher percent of its special education teachers (13%) than all other types of teachers (10%). Since that time, turnover among special education teachers has declined significantly.

Turnover of special education teachers has declined over the past 10 years

School Year	% of Special Education Teachers Who Resigned or Retired
1999-00	13%
2007-08	7%
2008-09	4%
2009-10	6%

Sources: Bridgeport BOE Reports and Agendas, 2006-07 through 2009-10; BCAC, "Help Wanted: Classroom Teachers," June 2001

Changes made by Bridgeport schools in its special education program, as well as requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), have helped reduce teacher turnover among special education teachers. Special education services have been decentralized, with school principals assuming responsibility and accountability for students identified as having special needs. In addition, by hiring more special education teachers than were needed to replace all those who resigned or retired in recent years, Bridgeport has reduced the number and expense of hiring long-term substitute special education teachers. Fewer open positions filled by substitutes have resulted in a more stable complement of teachers, which has helped foster a more positive teaching environment.

Increased hiring of full-time special education teachers has reduced use and cost of hiring special education substitute teachers

Special Education Teachers	Resignations and Retirements	New Hires	Special Education Substitute Expense
• 2006-07	16	27	\$400,000
• 2007-08	14	24	\$225,000
• 2008-09	8	16	\$6,000

Sources: Bridgeport Board of Education Reports and Agendas, 2006-07 through 2008-09; Bridgeport Board of Education Budgets, 2006-07 through 2008-09

How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High-Quality Teachers?

Fewer math, science, and world language positions are funded in the education budget

The Bridgeport school budget does not include funding for all the teaching positions in math, science, and world languages that are listed by the State Department of Education (SDE).

2009-10 Teaching Positions	2009-10 Bridgeport Education Budget	October 2009 State Report of Certified Teachers
Math	68	81.3
Science	69	86.3
World Languages	26	31.0

Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Budget 2009-10; CT State Department of Education: http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/StaffSnapshot.aspx

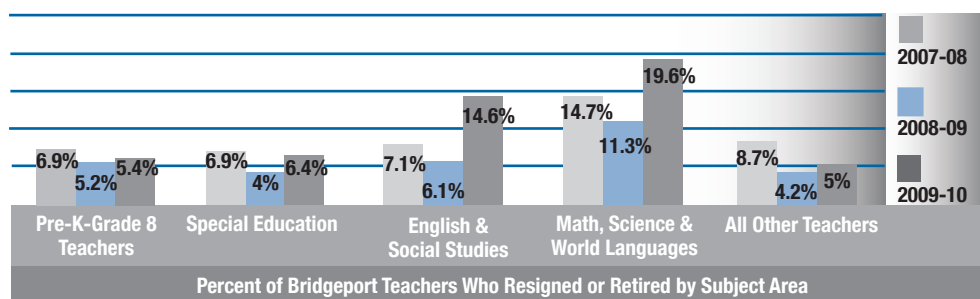
For example, in the 2009-10 school year, the Bridgeport education budget listed 68 funded teaching positions in math. However, when the district reported the number of certified math teachers to the state, it included substitutes, thus raising the total number of math teachers to 81.3. This means that as many as 15-20% of the teachers of these academic subjects may be substitute teachers.

The bad news: Teachers of core academic subjects are the hardest ones to retain

Math, science, and world language teachers leave Bridgeport at much higher rates than do all other teachers. These positions are among the hardest to fill not only in Bridgeport, but also in Connecticut and many other states across the country. These positions, in addition to others, have been designated as subject shortage areas by the Connecticut Department of Education. This designation gives local districts several incentives to use when hiring teachers in these areas, such as loan deferment and mortgage assistance benefits.

In addition, school districts may also take advantage of the subject shortage area designation to rehire retired teachers to fill positions for up to two years at 45% of the maximum salary level for the position being filled. A retired teacher may be reemployed to teach a shortage area subject, continue to receive pension income, and have the same health insurance benefits as provided to other teachers in the school system. It is not clear whether, or to what extent, Bridgeport has used any of these programs to fill shortage area positions.

Teachers of core academic subjects more likely to leave the district than those teaching other subjects



Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Reports and Agendas, 2007-08 through 2009-10

Bridgeport has far fewer math, science, and world language teachers than Hartford or New Haven

Not only do math, science, and world language teachers in Bridgeport leave at high rates, but the district has far fewer teachers of these subjects per student than do Hartford and New Haven.

Fewer positions than Hartford and New Haven

Subject Area	Bridgeport Teacher Positions 2009		New Haven Teacher Positions 2009		Hartford Teacher Positions 2009	
	Number	Teachers/1000 Students	Number	Teachers/1000 Students	Number	Teachers/1000 Students
Math	81.3	4.0	115.3	5.8	108.5	5.1
Science	86.3	4.3	105.2	5.3	95.0	4.5
World Languages	31.0	1.5	68.4	3.4	39.0	1.8
Total	198.6	9.8	288.9	14.5	242.5	11.4

Source: Certified Teachers in October 2009, http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/StaffSnapshot.aspx

Hiring and Keeping the Best:

Enhance professionalism by creating career ladders for teachers

To retain their most effective and experienced teachers, some districts have begun to differentiate teacher roles and pay, creating leadership positions for teachers who take on additional responsibilities and increasing the pay of these teachers for their added responsibilities. Eligibility for leadership positions is based only on the teacher's demonstrated performance and not on seniority or other factors.

School reform in New Haven: A focus on building teacher professionalism

The school reform initiative and contract with the teachers' union, approved last fall in New Haven, have been called potential models for the country. Key provisions call for the establishment of role-based bonuses for teachers who are eligible to assume leadership positions based on evaluations of their performance. Teachers who receive the highest performance rating, the exemplary level, will be eligible for leadership positions. Leadership roles include master teachers, peer assistants, evaluators, and other positions yet to be determined. New Haven may also pay differentiated compensation to exemplary teachers who agree to teach in certain schools, such as schools that are being reconstituted to improve student academic performance.

Best practices to improve teacher retention

Research studies show that giving newly hired teachers the support they need to succeed, and providing programs that teach effective instructional practices, will increase teacher retention and improve student learning. A comprehensive training, support, and assessment program for new teachers should include the following:

- Frequent opportunities for teachers to meet with and learn from one another at the school and district level. New teachers find that their colleagues are their most valued resource.
- School-based professional development.
- Increased opportunities for new teachers to be observed and have the opportunity to observe their colleagues.
- A mentor in the same school and/or subject and formal release time to support mentoring.
- Training for all new mentors and ongoing support for all mentors.
- Oversight by principals to ensure that mentors fulfill their responsibilities and time commitments. Principals should also serve as an instructional resource to the teacher being mentored.
- Evaluations to identify new teachers' strengths and weaknesses, identify future professional development needs, and determine whether individual teachers should move forward in the profession.

The cost of providing new teacher training, support, and assessment programs is less than what it costs to recruit new teachers.

Connecticut's mentoring program

Connecticut recently changed its mentoring program for new teachers, which is now called the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program. Under TEAM, mentors will receive a stipend of \$500 annually for each of the two new teachers assigned to them and must provide 50 contact hours of support to each of these teachers during the school year.

Connecticut's stipend for teacher mentors provides small incentive for teachers to devote the time needed for effective mentoring. In the Boston Public Schools, for example, mentors receive a stipend equal to 5% of their annual salary. In a recent survey of the Boston schools, 80% of new teachers reported being satisfied with the mentoring support they receive.

How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High-Quality Teachers?

Bridgeport has had to rely on short-term solutions to fill positions in math, science, and world languages

To fill shortage area teaching vacancies, especially those in math, science, and world languages, Bridgeport has turned to international recruitment and Teach for America. While there are many positive reasons for using these programs, the greatest difficulty with these initiatives is the short-term nature of the commitment these teachers make to Bridgeport, which eventually leads to increased teacher turnover.

International Recruitment

- Created by the State Department of Education (SDE), teachers are granted non-renewable visas for three years.
- Beginning 2007-08, Bridgeport hired 5 math and 7 science teachers from India. When visas expired in 2009-10 for 11 of the 12 teachers, they returned to India.

Teach for America (TFA)

- Recent college graduates are selected competitively and receive 5 weeks of intensive teacher preparation training. TFA members make a two-year commitment to teaching.
- In 2009-10, TFA had 13 math and science teachers and 2 world language teachers in Bridgeport schools. Most TFA corps members fulfill their two-year commitment in Bridgeport, but few have remained beyond that.

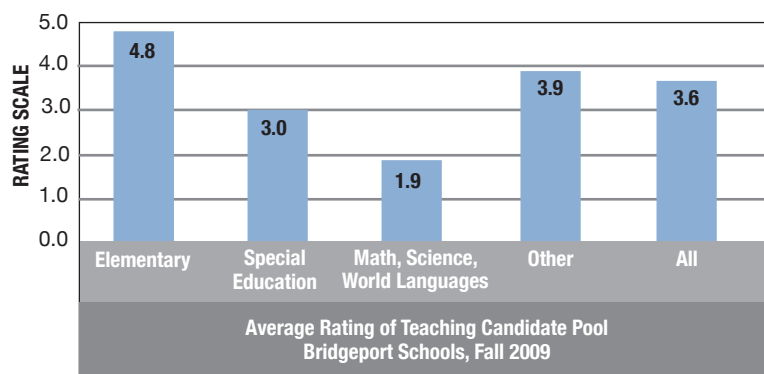
Too few qualified applicants for teaching positions, particularly in critical academic subject areas

The State Department of Education (SDE) developed a rating system to monitor the quality of teaching applicants across all Connecticut school districts each year. In the SDE rating system, a rating of 1 means there were few or no minimally qualified applicants for available teaching positions, while a rating of 5 means there were many high-quality applicants for open positions. District personnel responsible for hiring rate the quality of the applicant pool for each available position each year.

At the end of the 2009 school year, Bridgeport had 70 teaching vacancies to fill and received approximately 400 applications for these positions. One-quarter of those applications were for 6 elementary teacher vacancies, leaving a pool of 300 applicants for the remaining 64 positions. A review by Bridgeport school personnel of the applicants for these 64 positions found few high-quality candidates.

Not only is turnover highest among teachers of math, science, and world languages, but it is difficult for the district to recruit high-quality applicants to teach these critically important academic subjects. Last year, applicants for elementary teaching positions in Bridgeport received an average rating of 4.8 using the SDE rating system, which means there were many high-quality applicants. In contrast, applicants for math, science, and world language teaching positions received an average rating of only 1.9, meaning that most applicants were only minimally qualified for positions teaching these core academic subjects. While all the teachers hired were qualified, there was a much smaller pool of high-quality candidates from which to choose.

Wide variation in quality of Bridgeport's teacher applicant pool



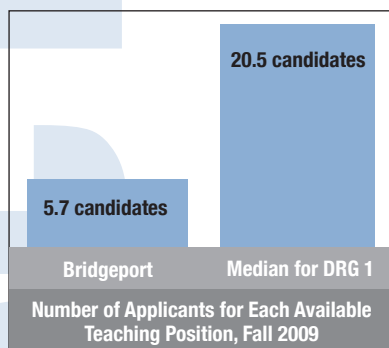
Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Fall Hiring Survey, 2009
NOTE: A rating of 5.0 means there were many high-quality applicants; 4.0 = some high-quality applicants; 3.0 = many acceptable applicants; 2.0 = some acceptable applicants; and 1.0 = few or no minimally qualified applicants.

Hiring and Keeping the Best:

Fewer candidates apply for positions in Bridgeport

In the fall of 2009, the median number of applicants for open teaching positions was 20.5 for Connecticut school districts in DRG I, the State Department of Education-designated school district grouping that includes Bridgeport along with the state's other major urban cities. This means that half the districts in DRG I attracted more than 20.5 applicants for each available teaching position and half the districts attracted less. Bridgeport was able to attract far fewer applicants than the median number: only 5.7 applicants per open teaching position, despite fewer teaching positions being available throughout the state.

Bridgeport attracts far too few applicants for teaching positions compared to similar districts statewide



Sources: CT SDE, Data Bulletin, Fall Hiring Report, April 2010; Bridgeport Board of Education, Fall Hiring Survey, 2009

Why so many substitute teachers?

Long-term substitute teachers are hired to fill gaps when recruitment has not been successful or when vacancies arise unexpectedly during the school year. In addition, long-term substitutes fill positions of teachers who are out on paid leave or unpaid leaves of absence. According to the district, about 25 to 30 teachers are absent from their positions each year on 12-week family medical leaves or unpaid leaves of absence that are granted for child rearing, continuing education, or personal reasons. In Bridgeport, teachers may be granted a leave for child rearing, without pay or benefits, for up to one additional year after giving birth, adopting, or fostering a child.

Bridgeport's leave of absence policy for child rearing allows teachers to apply after only one year of service. In other districts, including Hartford and New Haven, eligibility for child rearing leave is limited to teachers with tenure.

Growing use of long-term substitutes in Bridgeport classrooms during the last three years

Effective Date Hired	Number Hired August	Number Hired September-December	Number Hired January-May	Total Long-Term Substitutes Hired for School Year
2007-08	3	7	10	20
2008-09	11	15	17	43
2009-10	18	18	16	52

Source: Bridgeport Board of Education Reports and Agendas, 2007-08 through 2009-10

Bridgeport pays long-term substitute teachers who are certified \$180 for each day spent working in a classroom. This amount is 22% less than the current starting salary for a full-time teacher with a bachelor's degree and no prior teaching experience. A few uncertified long-term substitutes are sometimes hired each year and paid only \$100 a day. Substitutes are not eligible for employee benefits, such as health and dental insurance.

In 2009-10, the 52 long-term substitutes hired taught approximately 1,300 Bridgeport students, or about 7% of the student population. There will always be a need to hire long-term substitute teachers; however, they should have the necessary qualifications for the positions being filled. Bridgeport should also identify and address policy changes that might help minimize the use of long-term substitute teachers.

How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High-Quality Teachers?

Salaries are not competitive

Bridgeport's starting salaries are not competitive with nearby districts

	2009-10 Bachelor's Degree	2009-10 Master's Degree
Bridgeport*	\$42,022	\$43,123
Fairfield	\$44,528	\$48,981
Norwalk	\$47,048	\$49,343
Stratford*	\$44,261	\$49,438
Trumbull*	\$45,820	\$49,438

Source: Teacher Salary Schedules for Bridgeport, Fairfield, Norwalk, Stratford, and Trumbull

*Teacher salaries start at Step 2 of the salary schedule, while Fairfield and Norwalk start at Step 1.

Salary levels for Bridgeport teachers with four years experience lag behind nearby districts

	2009-10 Bachelor's Degree	2009-10 Master's Degree
Bridgeport*	\$46,306	\$47,938
Fairfield	\$48,981	\$53,432
Norwalk	\$50,491	\$52,786
Stratford*	\$50,682	\$55,370
Trumbull*	\$51,705	\$56,844

Source: Teacher Salary Schedules for Bridgeport, Fairfield, Norwalk, Stratford, and Trumbull

*Teacher salaries shown at Step 5, while Fairfield and Norwalk are at Step 4.

Bridgeport's teacher recruitment process needs improvement

Outdated human resource systems and practices

- The vacancy list posted on the Board of Education website is often not current, is not updated frequently, and does not always list all vacant teaching positions.
- There is no automated applicant tracking system.
- Candidate interviews are held late in the year.
- There are no clear timelines or transparency about the hiring process.
- Only paper employment applications are used.

Bridgeport is the only large school district that still requires applicants to submit paper applications. Many districts use automated application tracking systems, which speed up the distribution of applicants' paperwork to schools and allow for better application management.

Late notice from teachers regarding their retirement plans or resignations leads to late hiring

- Teachers wait until late in the school year to notify the district that they will not return to their positions in September.
- Replacement teachers are not hired until July, and even as late as September.

Late deadline for teachers to voluntarily transfer to other schools

- Certified Bridgeport teachers who apply for teacher vacancies within the district must do so by the end of the school year. If approved, teachers are notified by August 1st. This leaves less than one month before the start of school to hire replacement teachers.

Competition from nearby districts

- Salaries for both new and experienced teachers in Bridgeport lag behind those of neighboring districts.

Beginning in 2008, Bridgeport eliminated the first step on the teacher salary schedule and the district began offering teachers with no prior teaching experience approximately \$1,000 more per year by hiring them at the second step as a recruitment incentive. Even with this incentive, Bridgeport's starting salary for teachers remains far below those of other Fairfield County school districts, particularly since several other local districts also start teachers at the second step.

In teacher recruitment, timing is everything...

The quality of school districts' applicant pool steadily declines from April through September. The trend is similar for all types of teaching positions. Districts that hire later in the year will have a lower quality applicant pool from which to select.

Connecticut Center for School Change

Hiring and Keeping the Best:

A Tale of Two Cities: Two Approaches to Teacher Recruitment

Recruitment Process	New Haven		Bridgeport	
	Timing	Action	Timing	Action
Notification of Teacher Resignation	Throughout the year	Provides incentive for early notification. Benefits are carried through August 31st if teacher notifies Human Resources (HR) during school year that s/he will not return in September.	July/August	No incentive for early notification. Teachers required to give only 30 days notice.
Application Process	Throughout the year	On-line application on school district website. Automated tracking system facilitates communication with applicants and schools. Nearly half of all new hires' initial contact comes through the on-line application. Timeline for each step in the hiring process available on district website.	Throughout the year	Paper application available on website. Applicant will have to print out hard copy and mail it. No automated tracking system. No description of process on website.
Teacher Vacancy List	Throughout the year	Posted on school district website and updated continually with all current and future openings.	Published May through August only	Out-of-date vacancy list remains on website for much of the year with many schools showing "No Positions Available." This could be misleading to potential candidates when, in fact, there are or will be vacancies in the future.
Recruitment Target Set	January	Expected hiring target is set based on data from prior years and early notice of resignations/retirements already received.	June-August	Rolling target based on adoption of school budget, after notice of teacher resignations/retirements, and after voluntary internal transfers completed.
Recruitment Kick-off for Next School Year	January	District job fair. HR staff attend recruitment fairs at local universities.	February	HR staff attend 20 teacher recruitment fairs in- and out-of-state where initial interviews are conducted with potential applicants.
Candidate Interviews	Mid-January	On-site interviews held at schools; 100 to 200 candidates attend.	March-August	Candidate second interviews held at schools with vacancies.
Special Efforts	Throughout the year	Applicants in key shortage areas receive response to applications and all communications within 48 hours.	March-August	Little effort made to provide rapid response to candidates for positions in shortage area subjects.
Hiring Process	Throughout the year	Applicants are hired once decision is made. School assignments made on a "to be determined" basis.	July-September	Applicants hired and school assignments made.

How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High-Quality Teachers?

The district must do more to improve teacher retention and recruitment

Recommendations

- Develop a more comprehensive hiring plan each year that contains clear hiring goals, priorities, screening criteria, and timelines. Regularly monitor progress toward achieving goals and establish clear staff accountability for specific parts of the hiring process.
- Develop an outreach/marketing campaign or take other steps to increase the number of applicants for teaching positions.
- Accelerate the hiring process. Get prospective applicants into schools for interviews as early as January. Hire top applicants right away using an “open offer” of a guaranteed position, without a specific school placement.
- Create incentives for teachers to provide early notice of resignations and/or retirements.
- Review current policy, which allows teachers to apply for one-year leave of absence for child rearing after only one year of service, and consider changing to reduce need for hiring long-term substitute teachers.
- Work with the teachers’ union to establish earlier deadlines for internal voluntary transfers.
- Work closely with teachers’ union to improve teacher recruitment and retention practices. The union and district should work together to discuss how recruitment could be improved, analyze why teachers leave Bridgeport, and propose recommendations.
- Improve the frequency of updates to the teacher vacancy report on the district’s website to at least monthly throughout the school year and weekly from May through September.
- Improve human resource systems and tracking processes. Purchase or develop a web-based teacher application system and automated applicant tracking software.
- Make the hiring process transparent with clearly defined deadlines that are communicated in advance to applicants. Provide rapid turn-around and regular communication to applicants in areas that have been prioritized for hiring. Make sure internal communications between human resources and school principals are timely and efficient.
- Improve data collection and reporting. Find out why teachers leave and why applicants do not accept positions with the district. Track and analyze responses and use this information to improve retention and recruitment efforts. Track and evaluate which recruitment strategies are most effective and modify recruitment plans accordingly.
- Provide leadership opportunities for teachers and explore incentives for mentoring that do not require additional resources.



Teacher recruitment is an opportunity to be seized

A consequence of the recent economic recession is that many school districts have begun to receive large numbers of applications from prospective teachers. As a result, the quality of applicants for open positions has improved. Bridgeport should take advantage of this opportunity and strive to do all it can to recruit, and then retain, the best and most effective teachers.

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