

Best Hiring Practices

Practical strategies to improve the functions of **human capital management**.

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AREAS OF FOCUS:



Selecting

Hire for attitude and fit — not just résumé.



Designing a Good Interview

Structured questions that reveal real behavior.



Onboarding the Employee

Set them up to grow — and to stay.



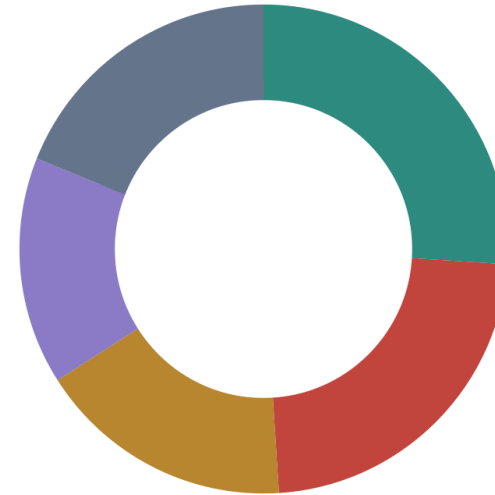
Hire for Attitude

Leadership IQ tracked **20,000 new hires** over a 3-year period.

Within the first 18 months...

46% failed

(fired, received poor evaluations, or written up)



Coachability (26%)

Emotional Intelligence (23%)

Motivation (17%)

Temperament (15%)

Other/Technical (19%)

Emotional Intelligence – Demonstrates self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and the ability to build positive relationships with others.

Temperament – Remains calm, professional, patient, and composed, particularly during stressful or challenging situations.

Coachability – Is receptive to feedback, willing to learn, and able to apply constructive criticism to improve performance.

Motivation – Demonstrates initiative, enthusiasm, persistence, and a genuine desire to achieve goals and contribute to the organization.



89%

Attitude-Related Failures

11%

Technical Competence

Skills matter—but attitude determines fit and longevity.
Of 46% who failed, nearly 9 in 10 failed due to attitude, not skills.



Activity: 3-3-3

Reflect on the people who've shaped your team — for better or for worse.

Your 3 Best

Think of your 3 strongest employees from the past 3 years.

List **3 attitudinal characteristics** that made each of them exceptional.

Your 3 Most Challenging

Think of 3 employees who struggled.

List **3 specific reasons** — especially attitude-related that placed them in this category.

The Goal: Identify your school's must-have attitudes and most common red flags.



It's About Fit

Sometimes great candidates simply don't sync with the group — and that's okay.

Culture Fit

Shares your school's values, norms, and way of working together.

Team Fit

Complements existing strengths and collaborates naturally.

Leadership Fit

Aligns with your expectations, communication style, and decision-making.

Values Fit

Demonstrates a student-first mindset.



The Candidates Interview Experience

You cannot over communicate!

Information Ahead of Time

A few things to review:

Where to park.

Who is in the interview?

How much time should they allot for the interview?

Waiting Experience

Does the office know who they are expecting?

What are they doing while waiting?

What are they hearing and seeing?

Introductions and Name Tags

How do they come into the space?

Do they introduce themselves or who does?

Do you offer water?

Check the temperature with them and adjust if needed.

Needs Ahead of Time

Do you need specialized seating? Do you have plan to adjust seating before they come in the room?

Do you need adaptive equipment or an interpreter?

If serving food are there dietary restrictions?

Who are they interacting with after the interview?

Have you partnered them with a realtor who is an advocate for your district?

Where did you suggest they go to lunch?

Answer the questions they will have.

When can they expect to know if hired?

How will they find out if selected or not selected?

Can they see the building?



Discerning the Best Candidate

Before you interview, define what you **need** for your team and design questions to help you find that person.

Personality Tendencies

Steady and reliable? Innovative risk-taker?
Detail-oriented organizer?

Team Role Needed

Do you need a leader, a supportive follower, or a connector?

Self-Starter vs. Structured

Will they thrive with autonomy or do better with clear direction?

Must-Have Attitudes

Coachability, empathy, resilience, and a growth mindset.

Red Flags to Watch

Blame-shifting, resistance to feedback, or poor self-awareness.



Determine the Interview Format

Make the interview format match the position.

Match the format to the evidence you need about the candidate's skills, communication style, judgment, and fit.

Presentation

Ask candidates to present on relevant topics — especially helpful in roles where they have to present as part of their job.

Video Submission

Request a short recorded introduction or response to a prompt.

Writing Task

Assign a written response, reflection, or planning document. Assesses clarity of thinking, attention to detail, and written communication — critical for many school roles.

Interaction with Students

Observe a candidate teaching a lesson or facilitating a discussion. Nothing reveals classroom presence, student rapport, and instructional judgment faster.

The format should answer the question: What do I need to SEE or HEAR to feel confident about this hire?



Designing the Right Interview

Build an interview that reveals what you actually need to see.

1 Identify 5–7 core competencies and attitudes you're hiring for.

2 Craft behavioral questions and job-relevant tasks that surface those traits.

3 Define what a strong answer looks like and what raises concern.

4 Do you need a panel?
Assign panel roles and standardize follow-up questions.

5 If you have a panel then debrief your panel so everyone knows what to listen for.

6 Process the interview and make personal notes or use a rubric.



Identify What You Are Looking For

Before designing interview questions, identify 5–7 core competencies, attitudes, or traits you need in your program leader — then design questions to match.

Competencies Examples (Band Director Example)

Student Focused / Culture of Program

Grow Program and Participation and Recruitment

Communication / Leadership

Inclusivity and Barriers

Community

Excitement and Commitment to the Position

Once you know what you need, every question has a purpose.



Panel Interviews

Do not assume people know how to interview just because they were interviewed.

Meet with Panel Ahead of the Interview

Review Confidentiality Agreement and Sign
Review Rubric if applicable
Set Norms: Limit conversations between candidates and only discuss candidates at a designated time.

Materials Management

Provide all materials and make sure they know materials will not leave the interview area.

Review Questions off Limits (chit chat):

Religion
Age
Children

Warn about Backdoor Questions

“Have you found childcare.”
“Have you found a church yet.”
“You look familiar. I think I might know your momma.”

A Word of Caution

Might not want to have the panel vote but no announced consensus
Other things are considered:

- Another round of interviews
- Reference checks

Panel Needs Next Steps

Explain that the number 1 might turn the job down
Explain the next steps in hiring and the timeline



Who NOT to Hire

Sometimes one the most important hiring decisions is knowing when to say no.

Problem Attitudes

Candidates who blame others, resist feedback, or display chronic negativity — attitudes that are very hard to change.

Culture Mismatch

Their values and working style clash with your school's norms, no matter how strong their résumé looks.

The Reference Said No

When a reference is lukewarm, vague, or effectively tells you not to hire them — listen carefully.

You Can't Find Peace

If something feels off after thorough due diligence, trust that signal. Protect your team.



What Candidate Should I Hire

If you can't find great attitude and great skills then pick a "Bless Their Heart".

Bless Their Hearts

Great Attitude · Low Skills

These folks show up with enthusiasm, warmth, and a genuine desire to grow. With the right coaching and support, they can flourish. Invest in them — they're worth it.

God Bless Them

Poor Attitude · Weak Skills

No amount of PD or pep talks will move the needle. These hires drain team energy and erode culture. The kindest thing you can do — for them and your school — is not extend the invitation.

You can train skills. You cannot train attitude.



Interview Questions Need a Purpose

If you don't know why you're asking it or what you're listening for then don't ask it.

Require a Goal: Every question should be designed to reveal a specific trait: coachability, initiative, emotional intelligence, or cultural fit.

Know What 'Good' Sounds Like: Before the interview, align your panel on what a strong answer looks like and what raises a red flag.

Connect Questions to Your Needs: Map each question back to the competencies and attitudes you identified as essential for this role.
HAVE A FEW BACK UP QUESTIONS TO GET THE SAME INFORMATION IN CASE THE QUESTION DOESN'T WORK.

Great interview questions don't just fill time.
They give you the evidence you need to make a confident decision.



Bad Questions Miss the Mark

Not all questions are created equal — some tell you almost nothing.

Overly Closed Questions: "Are you a team player?" yields a yes or no — and everyone says yes. Closed questions confirm what candidates want you to believe.

Overly Vague Questions: "Are you good with parents?" invites vague, prepared answers. Without a specific scenario, you can't assess real behavior.

Leading Questions: "You'd agree that data-driven instruction is important, right?"
YOU TOLD them the answer. You learn nothing except that they can agree with you.

Challenge: If your interview questions are not pre-planned, script them.

Replace closed and vague questions with specific, behavior-based prompts that require candidates to draw from real experience.



Icebreakers – Don't Tell You Much

These familiar openers are comfortable — but rarely revealing.

Tell me about yourself.

What are your greatest strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

What it reveals: Very little — candidates have rehearsed this dozens of times.

Insight: Use these sparingly as warm-up questions only.

Limit to 3 minutes — then move to questions that actually differentiate candidates.



Why These Questions Fall Short

Common icebreakers have a place — but they have limits.

Too Vague to Differentiate: Questions like 'Tell me about yourself' invite broad answers that reveal very little about how a candidate actually performs on the job.

Heavily Rehearsed: These questions are so well-known that most candidates have polished, practiced answers ready. You're hearing their performance, not their truth.

Self-Perception of Performance: Candidates describe who they think they are — not necessarily who they are in action. Without a specific scenario, you can't verify the claim.

Tip: Use them as a brief warm-up if you like, but limit to 3 minutes, then pivot to structured questions that require candidates to draw from real experience.



A Slightly Better Approach?

Some questions improve on the basics — but still have limitations.

What would your previous boss say is your greatest strength?

Why It's Better

- Shifts perspective from self-report to how others perceive them
- Encourages candidates to think about observable impact
- Can surface genuine self-awareness

The Catch

- If you're going to contact their references anyway...
- Why rely on a secondhand self-report?
- Verify it directly — ask the reference the same question

Better: Use behavioral questions to get the evidence, then verify it through reference calls.



Make Questions Better

The best interview questions separate high performers from average ones — before you hire.

How would a close friend describe you differently than a coworker would?

Why This Works

Forces candidates to reflect on how they show up in different contexts

Reveals self-awareness and emotional intelligence

Surfaces authenticity — scripted answers don't work as well here

What to Listen For

Specific, concrete differences (not vague generalities)

Genuine self-awareness vs. polished performance

Signs of coachability, humility, and relational intelligence



Behavioral Interviewing

What is a behavioral based question?

A structured interviewing technique that asks candidates to describe specific situations from their past

*Past behavior is one of the strongest predictors of future performance.

Why Behavioral Questions Work

They ask candidates to describe what they actually did in real situations.

They give better evidence of judgment, habits, self-awareness, and problem-solving than hypothetical or rehearsed answers.

Past behavior is the strongest predictor of future performance.

Candidates can't easily rehearse real experiences, making their answers more authentic.

BEHAVIOR-Focused Examples

Classroom: "Tell me about a great lesson you taught recently and what made it great."

Collaboration: "Describe a conflict with a colleague and how you resolved it."

Data Use: "Tell me about a time you make adjustments to instruction based on student data."

Family Communication: "Share a time you de-escalated a difficult parent conversation."

Equity: "Give an example of adapting instruction for diverse learners."

Coachability: "Tell me about tough feedback you received and acted on."



Behavioral Question Example

Use this type of question to assess self-awareness, ownership, and growth mindset.

Tell me about a time you responded to a problem at work in a way you wish you could change now. What would you have done differently?

What options did they consider?

Who did they involve?

What did they learn?

Did they reflect on their approach?

Listen for: Ownership (not blame), honest reflection, a clear growth arc, and a better strategy for the future.



Scenario Questions

Scenario

"During the game a player made mistakes and you substituted another player into the game. The player who was taken out of the game is visibly upset. After the game you are loading the bus and you casually say something to the player about what the team is having for dinner. The student lashes out at you in front of other players by saying, 'I am tired of you playing favorites. You make me sick.' What do you do next?"

Listening For:

- **Staying calm in time of crisis**
- **De-escalation techniques**

Good Practice:

Determine how long they have to answer a scenario question and tell them how long you expect the answer to be.

Scenario questions reveal how candidates perform under pressure and in emotionally charged situations.



Scenario Questions

Present a realistic situation and listen for how the candidate thinks, prioritizes, and acts.

Scenario

"After practice you hear from a player that there was a fight in the locker room between two players and supposedly one of them had a knife. Describe what you would do next. What would be your priorities, including who would be made aware?"

Listening For:

- Urgency
- Judgment
- Who is notified
- Policy
- Knowledge of law

Scenario questions reveal how candidates perform under pressure — before they're in your district.



Avoid Questions That May Not Tell You Much

Some popular questions sound meaningful — but rarely yield useful data.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Why It Falls Short

- Answers are almost always optimistic and generic
- It's a poor predictor of actual job performance
- May unintentionally screen out excellent educators focused on present impact
- Candidates often give the answer they think you want to hear

Try This Instead

"What specific practices are you focused on improving THIS year — and how will you know if you've succeeded?"

Reveals goal-orientation, self-awareness, and a bias toward action over aspiration.

The best candidates are focused on getting better now — not just imagining a future title.



Reference Checks Done Right

Don't settle for vague praise — make references quantify their responses.

Compared to other first-year teachers you've supervised, was this person above or below average?

If you ranked all the staff on your team, would this person be in the top 25% or top 50%? With classroom management? Communication with families? Getting along with coworkers?

Would You Rehire?

"Would you enthusiastically rehire this person? Why or why not?" — Enthusiasm (or hesitation) tells you everything.

Test Coachability

"What kind of coaching or feedback helped them grow most?" — Reveals how they respond to being developed.

In your opinion what is their biggest area of growth? What is a good goal for their PGP next year?

Triangulate

Collect 2–3 references and compare with what you heard in the interview. Patterns reveal the truth.

A good reference check doesn't just confirm — it adds new evidence. Listen for what's NOT said as much as what is.



After the Hire — Now What?

A great hire deserves a great welcome.

Decide who owns what, when — from signed offer through their first day.

Who Makes the Next Contact?

Who takes over after the offer is signed?
Usually the principal or a person designated in the building.

They cover things like: **keys/fobs/access badges · computer & email setup · building hours · parking · dress code · first-day logistics, etc.**

Summer Communication

Don't go silent between June and August

Example: **a short check-in every 2–3 weeks** — a text, a call, a coffee invite, a quick "we're thinking about you."

Introductions

Introduce them before the first bell — not on

Do you have a formal way they are acknowledged as new staff in the building?

Pair them with a buddy teacher · include them in summer PD emails · invite them to informal team gatherings · check on them often ·

Welcome

Decide which welcome comes from where.

District examples: handbook, lanyard, branded polo, welcome letter.

Building: examples: mug, spirit shirt, a note from the team, social media announcement.

Onboarding isn't a form — it's a felt experience. Make a plan!



Thank you for attending!

