

The Hiring Season is Upon Us - Holcomb, the Hidden Jewel

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In my opinion, there is no other job in the world that I would rather be doing than being a part of the educational system. While our work space might not as be as glamorous as being a jet pilot or as exciting as being a professional athlete, I DO know that our profession has a far more lasting impression on society than most any other profession. Knowing this, it really perplexes me that each year we are experiencing more and more difficulty attracting people to the profession. This holds true not only here in Holcomb but across all of Kansas and even the nation. It is with this knowledge that we are moving into the “hiring season” for next year.

When I began my career in public education here in Kansas thirty-two years ago, if a school district had an opening for the next year, the district would receive many applications. Yes, there have always been challenges in hiring people geographically (believe it or not, people aren’t beating down the doors to get to western Kansas...) and into certain areas of teaching, but there were always enough applicants to be able to compare the relative strengths of the people who had applied. For the past few years, though, it has become very difficult to gather a pool of applicants. This is in NO way saying we don’t have topnotch people. We do. In fact, I would MUCH rather have one EXCELLENT candidate than twenty substandard applicants. I just know we need to keep at our efforts to find the best and the brightest to work with our students.

So, that brings me back to the theme of this letter – the hiring season. Along with doing the “normal” teacher-recruitment activities (going to job fairs and advertising on line), we are continually looking for new and more impactful ways to get people to think about joining the Land of the Longhorns. Toward that end, we have definitely increased our social media presence and have gone out of our way to foster deeper “front of the line” relationships with the institutions that produce teachers. Also, we are concentrating on growing our own professional staff by enticing our para professionals into programs that will allow them to earn a living and at the same time complete teacher preparation programs. And, I am happy to report our efforts have met with success.

One specific endeavor in which I am engaged to help with finding the sorts of teachers we need in the classroom is I am involved on a national level in examining the Transition to Teaching (T2T) pathway to the classroom. This option for becoming a teacher is geared

directly to the people who are in the workforce who would rather be a teacher. In the past, those individuals would have to go back to college to earn the “right” degree to teach. Now, however, through the T2T program, people are able to get teaching positions that are lined up with their original degree. For instance, it would be possible for a journalist to become an English teacher or for an accountant to become a business teacher. Those are just two examples. The work I am doing, though, is digging into the characteristics and essential elements of the T2T programs that exist so that when a person does choose to follow that path, he is set up for success. This is important work.

Any successful leader knows deep down that we are only as good as our people. In fact, we could have all of the “best stuff” in the world and have school buildings that are cutting edge and have every conceivable extra-curricular activity to offer to our students and we could fall far short of meeting the needs of our students. No, the KEY to any organization, but particularly education, is the people in that system. That is why I care so deeply about this entire “Hiring Season” issue and put forth great efforts to attract people to our system and then support and reward them so as to help keep them here. J

As we are ALL Longhorns, I invite you to spread the Gospel about the Holcomb School District to get people to take a look at what it is like to be a part of our greater educational family. Actually, word of mouth recruitment might not cast the widest net out there, but that approach does tend to bring forth the best candidates, so I am not whistling Dixy here. I would love to have homegrown leads for people to come join us in our efforts to provide the best possible educational opportunities to our students. I know anyone who joins us will learn that we truly are one of the most advantaged districts in the state. People outside of our small corner of the world just don’t seem to know it...yet. J