On Teacher Quality in Independent Schools

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Executive Summary

The importance of education is undeniable, as is the impact of great teachers on student learning. Independent schools pride themselves on providing a unique educational experience for students, one that is robust and mission driven; tailored to low student to teacher ratios and more personalized learning with high quality teachers. While there are numerous studies measuring teacher effectiveness in public schools, there is little research on teacher quality among independent schools. We have partnered with the National Association of Independent Schools to create a mixed method study on teacher quality in independent schools.

In this report we present a clearly articulated concept of high quality teachers in independent schools as defined by various stakeholders. Applying the description of high quality teachers to issues of recruitment and selection, and retention and recognition has far reaching potential for increasing quality teachers, student learning, and the financial sustainability of independent schools. We draw conclusions related to teacher quality as well as practices of hiring and retention of high quality teachers. Finally, we make recommendations for independent school leaders, and suggest areas for further study.

This study finds that independent schools use four key characteristics to describe high quality teachers. Independent schools value teachers who develop *strong relationships with students*, demonstrate *strong pedagogical knowledge and content expertise*, possess a *growth mindset* about their own capacity, and *fit* well within the school's culture. This study examines school practices and finds some commonly used activities for recruitment and selection are intended to identify the key characteristics of high quality teachers. Administrators use *demonstration lessons* and *interviews* purposefully in order to assess candidates' abilities to develop *strong relationships with students* and their *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise*. While independent school administrators use some methods of retention and recognition of high quality teachers that directly reflect the valued characteristics of high quality teachers, we find that practices around teacher evaluation are inconsistent.

Extant research conducted in the Catholic school setting offers foundational understanding to interpret the results of our study, especially regarding relationships and culture. Human resource theories around hiring and recognition provide conceptualization of our findings around recruitment and selection. Issues around teacher evaluation are framed in the context of the recent findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching study.

This study culminates with recommendations to the National Association of Independent Schools suggesting they analyze extant research to determine the potential implications for their context. Independent schools will benefit from grounding their practice in research, aligning practice to the key attributes of high quality teachers, and assessing their use of metrics.

Definition of Issue - Project Questions

Introduction

Public discourse around educational issues in the United States focuses largely on the need for improvement in public schools. Popular media, university and foundational research, state and federal agencies, as well as many others, are attempting to discern what is at the heart of school failure and how to improve schools. As public schools, including charter schools, continue to educate the largest portion of our nation's children, a common issue that emerges repeatedly from this national discourse is the quality of the nation's teachers. Recent articles in the *New York Times* and other media sources entice readers with titles such as, "How to Ensure and Improve Teacher Quality", "Real Respect is the Path to Great Teaching", "Treat Teacher Education Like a Medical Residency".

The country's attention has turned to issues around how to find and keep great teachers.

Concurrent to the conversation around teacher quality, the country has witnessed a change in the way schooling happens. Traditional public schools are dealing with increased school choice, privatization, and market influences. Many believe that by increasing school choice, schools will be motivated to improve their practice in order to retain their student body. While others are concerned that increasing school choice creates greater competition for scarce resources (money, teachers, curriculum, etc.) without necessarily improving practice and/or learning. With or without increased school choice, school leaders must continue to closely select, monitor and use all of their resources. Schools that receive state and federal funds are bound by state and federal regulations in every way. While teacher quality is a key issue in the national discourse around school improvement, local schools and districts have limited autonomy in decision-making and practices that contribute to hiring, retaining, and rewarding high quality teachers.

While all sectors of schooling have a vested interest in improving teacher quality, the private school sector has a greater degree of autonomy in decision making in all areas, including teacher

quality. Since the 1970's a relatively stable percentage of students, around 10% to 12%, have been enrolled in private school options (Murphy, 1999).

Private and Independent schools are identified by their relative autonomy in funding, program, mission, and hiring requirements.

Given the autonomy of independent schools especially in the area of teacher selection, compensation, and evaluation, this study focuses on how independent schools define teacher quality and, recruit and retain teachers.

Purpose of this Study

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) recognizes that increased schooling options combined with a struggling economy, create greater competition and comparison among schools (Torres, 2014). Hence, the necessity for a clear articulation of the factors that differentiate independent schools from other kinds of schools has never been greater. Traditionally, NAIS asserts that one of the key characteristics of independent schools is the high quality of their teachers. In previous research, the organization identified that high teacher satisfaction, expertise in their subject matter, and autonomy to make curricular decisions in their classrooms are all factors that contribute to teacher effectiveness (Torres, 2014).

NAIS research indicates that teachers often choose to work in independent schools because of smaller class sizes, teacher autonomy, and highly engaged students. Independent schools assert that high teacher quality and low class sizes are the top reasons parents choose to send their children to independent schools. Since a high quality faculty is potentially one of the most important factors for the success of an independent school, and the market for high quality teachers is more competitive than ever, independent schools need to develop strategic plans that clearly articulate the recruitment, retention, and recognition of high quality teachers (personal communication, A. Torres, May 30, 2014).

Commonly an implicit program theory guides independent school practices with regard to teacher quality and the impact of high quality teachers. For instance, underlying assumptions, rather than clear descriptions, often guide selection and retention of teachers in independent schools. These assumptions are then casually correlated with teacher, parent, and student satisfaction to evaluate the quality of teachers. Often a teacher's reputation, rather than valid evaluative measurement and feedback, or the combination of reputation and other evaluative measures, inform employment, recognition, and promotion decisions.

Indeed, it is not overstated to claim that independent schools' reputations are anchored to the ability to continue to increase the number of high quality teachers, and therefore, the ability to enhance the growth of learning within their schools.

Thus, this project aims to articulate and describe quality teachers at independent schools and make recommendations that inform recruitment and selection, retention and recognition of high quality teachers.

Ultimately, the results of the study can help guide independent schools toward attracting and hiring, developing and retaining, high quality teachers. The logic model (Figure 1) below describes the purpose of the project and the theory of action that guides this study.

Project Questions

Research has repeatedly demonstrated positive effects of high quality teachers on multiple populations of students and their learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Hanushek, Rivkin, Rothstein, & Podgursky, 2004; Heyneman & Loxley, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Rothstein, 2004). While the conclusions drawn by the research are widely accepted, it must be noted that most research has been conducted in public schools. Therefore, this study posits questions around the characteristics of high quality teachers.

The foundational question of this study is simply, how do independent school practitioners describe high quality teachers?

Specifically, what do administrators value most as they describe the best

teachers in their schools? How do high quality teachers in independent schools describe the attributes that most significantly contribute to their success? As non-traditional public schools such as charter schools, voucher programs, home schooling, and independent school student populations continue to grow and change, the answers to these questions have increased potential to impact practices in this growing sector of schooling. This study aims to uncover the extent to which independent schools' practices are aligned with practitioners' descriptions of high quality characteristics.

Do independent schools' practices of recruitment and selection, retention and recognition of high quality teachers reflect what they value in high quality teachers?

More specifically, we know that hiring is among the most important tasks administrators have in schools (Lee, 2005; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Mueller & Baum, 2011). Do independent school practitioners' seek characteristics in candidates that match the characteristics of high quality teachers? Do hiring practices give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate high quality characteristics?

Independent schools have the unique ability to determine their own criteria for high quality teachers and establish their own guidelines for practices. While independent schools are not accountable to state or federal regulations, they must answer to accrediting bodies, governing boards, and, importantly, they are ultimately accountable to parents who pay tuition. NAIS identifies two main

Figure 1: Logic Model

Articulate and Describe High Quality Teachers

Recruitment and selection of high quality teachers
- Candidates' characteristics
- Hiring processes
- Induction practices

Retention and recognition of high quality teachers
- Professional growth opportunities
- Evaluation methods
- Compensation
- Leadership opportunities
- Teaching conditions

Consistent understanding and improved practice of high quality teachers across independent schools

reasons parents select independent schools for their children: smaller class sizes and high quality teachers. The findings in this capstone provide independent schools with a clear articulation of how high quality teachers are described in these schools. Furthermore, this project provides practitioners with practical recommendations.

NAIS, in seeking further research in these areas has partnered with Peabody College at Vanderbilt University to examine the concept and implications of teacher quality among its member schools.

Logic Model

This project has significant importance for independent schools. We present a clearly articulated concept of high quality teachers in independent schools as defined by various stakeholders. This conceptualization of high quality teachers is discussed in the context of the existing research. Thus providing differentiation in the concept and operationalized description of quality teachers in independent schools to the research on "effective teaching" in public schools. Because our research is unique to independent schools, so are our results.

Ultimately, we hope practitioners in independent schools find the results of this study to be directly applicable to their schools' practices. Applying the description of high quality teachers to issues of recruitment and selection, and retention and recognition has far reaching potential for the future of increasing quality teachers, student learning, and the financial sustainability of independent schools. With increased schooling options for families and a struggling economy, independent schools have added imperatives to maintain tuition at affordable rates while continuing to distinguish and differentiate their product from other schools. An explicitly articulated definition of teacher quality that is implemented across the span of teachers' careers in independent schools will serve to ensure a consistent level of high quality teachers.

What are independent schools?

The terms private school and independent school are often used interchangeably and clarity between the two is a critical component to this study. The term private school refers to a diverse group of schools that are essentially non-public. This group can include parochial, for profit, trade, and a variety of other kinds of schools. Private schools can be subject to outside governing bodies and external requirements for financial or programmatic decisions. In short, all independent schools could be referred to as private schools, but not all private schools could accurately be referred to as independent schools.

Independent schools can be categorized as a subset of private schools. While independent schools can also be categorized as non-public, or private, independent schools, are a unique subset of private schools in that they are non-profit, self determining in mission and program, and self sustaining. Independent schools are self-governing by independent boards and funded primarily through tuition, charitable donations, and endowment income.

All independent schools differ from public, charter, and for-profit schools in that they are not bound by state, federal, or other guidelines in any way.

For example, independent schools are not bound to require that teachers or administrators be "certified". Another manner through which they maintain their independence is by way of their financial resources and structures - independent schools are funded solely by tuition, charitable donations, and endowment income. They typically do not receive funds or grants from government sources. Independent schools' ability to determine educational programing and self-governance means that each independent school is responsible for establishing their own criteria for all programmatic decisions (NAIS, 2012). Further, they are not directly beholden to governmental academic or curricula accountability measures. Specifically related to this study, it is important to underscore that independent schools dictate all aspects of their faculty relations such as hiring criteria, evaluations, compensation, professional development, and termination.

Independent schools are characterized as mission-driven schools that are

typically governed by a board of directors or a board of governors that has clearly articulated responsibilities bound to the school's mission. Specifically, independent school boards typically hire, evaluate, and determine compensation for the Head of School.

Within independent schools, variety is vast. There are organizational paradigms that include co-educational, single gender, boarding, day schools, religiously affiliated, and many more differences between schools. While there is great variety between independent schools, some common characteristics prevail as well; they are private, nonprofit organizations that are self-governed with self-determined missions, curricula, and programs (NAIS, 2012).

Contextual Analysis - NAIS

NAIS - Organizational purpose and demographics

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) is a member organization comprised of 1,700 independent schools 1,400 of which are located in the United States. NAIS schools represent all regions of the country and a wide variety of types of schools. The organization counts among its member schools some that are religiously affiliated, secular, single gender, co-educational, boarding, and day schools. Schools in NAIS can also serve any range of grade levels such as Pre-Kindergarten through 12th, 8th through 12th, or PK - 5th. NAIS's vision is to serve "a vibrant community of independent schools for a changing nation and demanding world" and its mission is to "empower independent schools and the students they serve" (NAIS, 2012). NAIS identifies four core values that guide the organization, excellence, equity, efficiency, and emotion. On its website NAIS describes its first core value by stating that excellence, "is at the heart of the independent school experience: providing students an excellent educational and life experience. At NAIS, we strive to highlight this excellence to the wider world, and to make our programming, tools, and resources excellent so they can better help you".

What is NAIS?

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) is a membership organization for private independent schools in the United States and abroad. Currently, there are more than 1,700 member schools and school organizations that comprise NAIS. The purpose of NAIS is to serve all member schools with guidance on practice, professional development, publications, and other services.

On the organization's website, NAIS states that it serves its member schools, "as the national voice of independent education, advocating on behalf of its members. The association offers research and trend analysis, leadership and governance guidance, and professional development opportunities for school and board leaders" (NAIS, 2012).

NAIS provides member schools with a variety of services intended to support the unique needs of independent schools. The organization provides opportunities for professional development, data sharing and analysis, research, and guidelines for best practice.

Table 1- NAIS Demographics

Type of School	Number of Schools	Percent of total
Boarding	10	1%
Boarding-Day	99	9%
Day	958	84%
Day-Boarding	75	7%
Total	1,142	100%

Religious Affiliation	Number of Schools	Percent of total
Non-Affiliated	832	71.2%
Not Reported	28	2.4%
Affiliated	308	26.4%
Total	1,168	100%

Student Gender	Number of Schools	Percent of total
Coed	1,004	88%
Girls	82	7%
Boys	56	5%
Total	1,142	100%

Table 1 (Continued)

Region	Number of Schools	Percent of total
East	162	14%
Middle Atlantic	188	16%
Midwest	122	11%
New England	166	15%
Southeast	168	15%
Southwest	106	9%
West	230	20%
Total	1,142	100%

NAIS's Principles of Good Practice

Among the resources on its website, NAIS offers access to data sharing, idea sharing, professional development, and guiding principles. The guiding principles are articulated in documents titled the "Principles of Good Practice" (PGP's). They are written with the intent to provide member schools with the ethical grounding on which to make decisions. NAIS states, "*The NAIS Principles of Good Practice* for member independent schools define high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of independent school operations. They are designed to help guide independent schools to become the best education communities they can be" (NAIS, Various).

The documents are not meant to be followed as policy, nor are they meant to create uniformity within NAIS. However, the documents state that membership in the organization "is contingent upon agreement to abide by the spirit of the PGP's" (NAIS, Various). There are twenty discrete documents describing various roles and responsibilities in schools that range from the "Head of School" to "financial aid" to "teaching and learning in the digital age". They were drafted by committees of independent school educators and submitted to the board of NAIS for review and publication. We anticipate that the results of our capstone will influence the PGP's upon future revisions.

The PGP for the hiring process offers general guidelines to both schools and candidates. For schools, the PGP provides broad recommendations ranging from following laws governing hiring practices to developing a stated policy and procedure around hiring. More specifically, the PGP addresses creating specific job descriptions, inviting candidates to campus, providing information to candidates about job duties, and contacting previous employers.

The PGP titled *Teachers and Supervisors of Teachers* is the lengthiest of the PGP documents. The overview of this document underscores the context of each independent school and a strong focus on teacher growth. It states,

"Entrusted with the education of children, the independent school teacher promotes the best interests of the child within the context of the school's philosophy. Those who supervise teachers are responsible for the quality of teaching and for promoting growth in those who teach" (NAIS, Various).

The guidelines listed in the PGP for teachers includes the recommendation that teachers stay current with recent developments in their field and that they vary their teaching techniques according to the needs of their students and their pedagogy. Strong relationships are a key feature of the PGP's as the document articulates the need for teachers to foster positive relationships with students and colleagues. The PGP also underscores teachers' need to be self-reflective and focus on continuous growth and development.

Supervisors of teachers are similarly advised to stay abreast of current developments in their area of supervisory capacity. The PGP for supervisors also recommends high levels of self-assessment, openness to feedback, and continuous growth. Hiring highly qualified teachers who are a "well informed match between the teacher and the school" is listed as well.

Methods and Sample

Methods

We employed a mixed methods approach in this project to acquire a balance of data that informed the findings, discussion and recommendations. Quantitative survey data provided broad representation to a narrow set of questions allowing us to make statistical comparisons to arrive at findings. Qualitative interview data provided detailed and nuanced information about a specific set of schools that increased our depth of understanding although limiting the scope of data (Patton, 2001, p. 14).

We use findings from both survey results and interviews to articulate a description of high teacher quality as described by independent school practitioners. These findings also inform specific recommendations regarding recruitment and selection, retention and recognition of high quality teachers. We recognize that specific qualitative data we gathered may not be generalizable across all independent schools. However, interviews provided valuable insight into the nuances of culture that influence philosophies and practices that identify high quality teachers, hire the best teachers, and recognize the work of the best performers. As Patton (2001) describes in *Qualitative Research and Methods Analysis*, "the analyst works back and forth between the data or story (the evidence)" to reveal meaning.

The recommendations we make in this study are intended to move independent school practitioners from an implicit theory of action to one that is explicitly stated based on feedback from our research.

Survey sample

The team developed a survey (Appendix) based on a variety of sources that elicited information for each component of the logic model. We used questions from all of the sources listed here to elicit information for our main area of research that is what independent schools value when defining high quality teachers. Questions regarding recruitment and hiring were based on a survey developed by a consortium between Vanderbilt University and Northwest Evaluation Association, *Survey of What Makes Schools Work* (Northwest Evaluation Association & Vanderbilt University, 2008). The *Teaching and Learning International*

Survey (TALIS) created by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provided a foundation for questions specifically related to retention and recognition of high quality teachers such as professional development and teacher evaluation and feedback (OECD, 2013). We also used surveys such as *The Survey of Elementary Teachers' Beliefs*, and the *MET study*. The survey was administered online to heads of school and hiring administrators in all member schools. There were limitations to our survey responses, as are noted below. All responses were anonymous. Of the 779 surveys respondents started, 744, or 96%, completed the survey. Of those respondents, 57% identified as Head of School while 47% identified as 'other hiring administrator' such as division head, assistant head of school or department chair.

Respondents to our survey are highly representative of the member schools in NAIS (Table 2). NAIS defines day schools as schools where at least 95% of the students are day students only. Eighty four percent of the respondents to the survey represented day schools; 88% were coeducational; 8% were all female, 4% were all male. 78% of respondents reported their schools as "non-sectarian" and 22% reported their schools as religious schools. Respondents are representative of the geographical regions represented by NAIS.

We conducted statistical analyses of the data including comparisons of means and T-tests for differences in means (Appendices). Results of these statistical tests were reported only when they were found to be statistically significant resulting in a Pearson's Correlation coefficient of $p < 0.05$. Most frequently, means for each response allowed us to determine the aspects of teacher quality most valued by respondents. The analysis of means provided the data to describe high quality teachers in independent schools. Importantly, those means were compared with means of responses having to do with practice. This analysis provided insight into whether or not independent schools' practices are aligned with their stated values. Some statistical analyses were run to identify potential problems with the survey responses. For example, we conducted a statistical analysis of the comparison of means between responses of heads of school and other hiring administrators to reveal differences by position.

Interviews: sample and selection

We visited six schools in the mid-west and southwest regions of the United States where we conducted interviews with faculty and administrators. The schools were selected based on location, school type, grade levels and various groups of students served. At each school, the team interviewed the Head of School or Assistant Head of School, Division Heads, and a small group of teachers. Previous to our arrival at the school, Heads were asked to use their own criteria to select three to six high quality teachers for interviews. The findings of these interviews are combined with the survey findings to inform the independent school description of high quality teachers. While each school has a unique mission and philosophy we note that groups of stakeholders differ in their perspective especially in questions of practice. The similarities and differences among the

groups are noted in the discussion section of this study.

Table 2 - Survey Demographics

Demographic	NAIS	Survey Respondents
Total #	1,400	n=779
Day School Only	84%	84%
Boarding only	1%	3%
Day and Boarding	16%	13%
Coeducational	88%	88%
Girls only	7%	8%
Boys only	5%	4%
Non-sectarian	71%	78%
Religious	26%	22%
East	14%	10%
Middle Atlantic	16%	14%
Midwest	11%	10%
New England	15%	12%
Southwest	9%	11%
West	20%	17%

In addition to site visits that included one-on-one interviews and focus groups, we collected focus group data from a select group of NAIS teachers. Based on its core value of excellence, NAIS provides member schools with various activities, publications, and professional development opportunities. In 2007 NAIS began an initiative called *Schools of the Future* to meet the demands and provide leadership in the ever-changing world of schools. This initiative included a program meant to distinguish outstanding teachers and provide them with opportunities to lead outside of their school campuses. This program is called *Teachers of the Future* (*ToF*). NAIS describes this program as follows,

> *This program provides selected teachers a way to distinguish themselves as leaders. They can advance independent school education by spurring discussion and idea-sharing about innovation in teaching and learning. Each selected teacher: leads an NAIS online educational discussion forum throughout the school year and creates a demonstration teaching unit video (three to 10 minutes in length) to be posted on NAIS's online independent school community and/or TeacherTube. The Teachers of the Future 2014-15 will work together — guided by NAIS as well as mentors from the field — to frame each theme's central challenge(s), develop essential questions, outline a path of exploration and learning, and identify what outcome(s) will be shared with the education community at the culmination of each theme project (NAIS, 2014)*

Teachers from member schools across all of NAIS apply to the program and are selected by an NAIS committee based on internal criteria. We chose to capitalize on this group of pre-selected teachers for several reasons. NAIS selected this group of teachers based on a measure of excellence that made them stand out

among other applicants. During the group's annual conference, we invited ToF teachers to participate in small group online focus group interviews as a part of this project. In all, six interviews were conducted with groups ranging in size from two to five, for a total of nine ToF teachers.

6 Schools
5 Heads of School,
1 Assistant Head of School
~18 Division Heads
~36 Teachers on site
~15 Teacher of the Future

Responses to ToF interviews were combined with the responses of the teacher interviews conducted on site and were included in the qualitative analysis. We note ToF findings separately, however, from the one-on-one and focus group interviews conducted during our site visits to case study schools.

Case study schools*

Southwest Schools: Milborn DaySchool, Parker, Mountain Valley School
Midwest Schools: William Butler, Burrows, Bear Lake Academy

Milborn Day School

Milborn Day School is a coeducational day school that is accredited by the Independent School Association of the Southwest. Serving more than 1,200 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade, the school is divided into four discrete divisions. The Primary School serves PK and K, the Lower School serves 1st through 4th grades, the Middle School serves 5th through 8th, and the Upper School serves 9th - 12th. The Upper School is the largest division and serves over 470 students. It is set on 75 acres of land just outside a city center in the southwest region of the country and has enough land to expand its already abundant facilities. In fact, they are in the process of building a state-of-the-art performing arts center that will showcase student work and performances.

The school describes itself as non-sectarian and committed to honoring the variety of spiritual beliefs held by the diverse student population. In addition to a floor-to-ceiling fireplace that roars in the winter, the school's iconic library houses several quiet meeting spaces and a meditation room. Students were observed ambling throughout the grounds and making use of every space. We saw small groups of students studying and socializing at picnic tables, in common workspaces, and under trees. Often, teachers are part of these groups or working one-on-one with students in study carrels. There is a palpable sense of high academic expectation tempered by students playing Frisbee on "the quad".

Milborn Day anchors its program, mission, and vision to three pillars: athletics, arts, and academics. The ample size of the grounds supports a wide variety of athletic programs and activities, including football, baseball, softball, soccer, and tennis facilities, along with several practice fields. Two gymnasiums, a fitness center, and a swimming pool comprise the athletic and physical education program available to students. The arts department is the creative hub for all students of the campus.

* Pseudonyms used for privacy

Table 3 - Case Study School Demographics

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Milborn Day School	Co-ed, non-sectarian, day school	PK-12	1,200+
Parker	Girls', non-sectarian, day and boarding	Day PK-12, Boarding 8-12	1,000+
Mountain Valley	Co-ed, Episcopal, day school	PK-12	1,100
William Butler	Co-ed, non-sectarian, day school	Early Childhood (3 years) - 6th grade	388
Riverside Preparatory	Co-ed, non-sectarian, day school	7-12	600
Bear Lake Academy	Co-ed, non-sectarian (middle school offering some single gender options), day	JK-12	1,245

Academically, the school boasts a strong commitment to rigorous standards and expectations. Numerous Advanced Placement courses are offered as well as several capstone programs. Milborn Day employs roughly 170 faculty members, 60% of whom have earned advanced degrees. Faculty members are recruited nationally for all teaching positions. The school's administration reports that it has recently transitioned its faculty evaluation program from one that provides formal, summative feedback every three years ,to one whereby teachers set yearly goals and receive feedback from department chairs and division heads annually. Like most independent schools, Milborn Day prides itself on the quality of its faculty.

Parker School for Girls

The Parker School for Girls is a day and boarding school located in an historic neighborhood in the southwest region of the country. A sprawling tree-lined campus of 88 acres, the campus offers a rigorous academic program to more than 1,000 girls in PK - 12th grades. Additionally, the campus welcomes boarding students in grades 8th - 12th from the United States and 9 other countries. The school recently celebrated its 100th year and is accredited by the Independent School Association of the Southwest.

Parker is highly regarded across the region for its strong academic program. It is self-described as a school for girls of strong academic potential. The website states, "It is the purpose of The Parker School for Girls to foster a community of concern and friendship and to instill in every girl a love of learning, an understanding of herself and the ethical principles which guide her life, an appreciation of excellence in all its forms, and a commitment to what is right and good". The school has had at its foundation the same four cornerstones since 1914; character, courtesy, scholarship, and athletics. Regarding scholarship, the schools says, "Scholarship is the search for knowledge that brings a wise understanding of a complex world; it fosters in us a creative, discerning, and resourceful mind." Selection for admission is based on previous academic performance and entrance exams (Parker School for Girls profile, 2014-2015). The school offers numerous Advanced Placement courses and counts more than 21 National Merit Finalists in its class of 2013. In fact, roughly 70% of the class of 2014 received some National Merit recognition.

The faculty at Parker consists of 119 full time teachers and 10 part time teachers. Sixty-six hold Master's level degrees and 11 hold Doctoral degrees. The average years of teaching experience at the school is 12 years.

In 2008, the faculty worked collaboratively to develop the, "Tenets of Faculty Excellence". Administrators and faculty alike referred to the document in conversation and point to it as guiding their work. Among other things, the Tenets address strong relationships, caring learning environment, subject matter knowledge, continuous improvement, and professional responsibilities. On the website, the Tenets are described as follows, "We recognize that mastery of all Tenets is a career-long process, one that Parker generously supports through a mentoring program for new faculty, professional development opportunities, tuition assistance and study grants, and other programs that support transformative learning on the part of teachers and, thus, our students".

Mountain Valley

Mountain Valley School is a religiously affiliated co-educational day school just north of downtown in a large southwestern city. The school serves over 1,100 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12 and is accredited the Independent School Association of the Southwest, and is affiliated with the National Association of Episcopal Schools. The school's mission is to provide a challenging academic experience in a Christian environment, although the school

welcomes students of all faiths and only 20% of the student body identifies as Episcopalian. Mountain Valley prides itself on building strong relationships and meeting the needs of a variety of learners. The values statement at Mountain Valley underscores nurturing leaders, critical thinkers, and measuring students by what they can do and not solely their achievement.

Mountain Valley's facilities are divided into two campuses; Pre-K through 2nd grade and 3rd through 12th. Mountain Valley is recognized in the region as an independent school that is available to students of varying academic abilities and valuing students' varied talents. Academically, the school distinguishes itself from other area independent schools by focusing on the process of educating its students rather than relying on outcomes such as the number of National Merit Scholars or end of course assessments. The website states that rather than focusing on grade point average or standardized test scores, the school focuses on "instructional practices and assessments that ask students to demonstrate enduring skills which, once mastered, will have them prepared not only for college but also to succeed in the rapidly changing world they will lead".

We observed students at Mountain Valley enjoying their environment and taking ownership in their work. They had casual and comfortable conversations with the Head of School often making jokes and laughing about a particular dress up day and how they had been creative in their interpretations. The 'Design Den' is a large warehouse type room filled with design tables, materials, tools, and ongoing projects. An offshoot of the Den

is a welding room where we spoke with a pony-tailed girl who removed her protective gear to tell us about the art project she was welding with the help of her teacher who kept his head cover on, waiting for her to finish the small talk and continue the exercise of creating art.

Mountain Valley identifies four tenets that serve as the schools framework; reflection, passion, relationships, and fortitude and presents the framework through the three lenses of its core values; wisdom, honor, and service. For teachers, the school has developed, "Characteristics of Effective Teaching". This document begins,

> *Teachers at Mountain Valley School make a positive impact on the lives of the students they teach. In recognition of the central role the teacher plays in the Mountain Valley experience, we have identified a set of characteristics which we believe broadly define effective and impactful teaching at Mountain Valley.*

The document identifies four guiding principles; integrity, leadership, innovation, and preparation. Furthermore, the document provides a list of attributes that indicate commitment to the guiding principles. A system of teacher evaluation is tied to the attributes intended to ensure that teachers receive feedback from their supervisors based on the attributes.

Riverside Preparatory School

Riverside Preparatory School (RP) is a nonsectarian, coeducational college preparatory school for grades 7-12. RP is formally accredited through the Independent School Association of the

Central States (ISACS). Total enrollment of RP is 600 students. There are approximately 90 full time faculty and 30 part time faculty, and they average 20 years of teaching experience. Over 85% of RP's teachers hold advanced degrees.

The RP campus is approximately 50 acres and sits just outside a major mid-western city nestled in an affluent residential area. RP has recently made major upgrades to its athletic facilities, while maintaining a traditional feel for the academic buildings. As we walked the halls we noticed friendly conversations among students and faculty in relatively narrow hallways and stairwells, terrazzo floors and dark wood paneling foster an academic feel to the hallways. In the age of white marker boards and SMART boards, we noticed several classrooms maintaining actual chalkboards!

RP takes immense pride in its students' academic achievement and fervor. Locally, it is considered the most academically stout school in this metropolitan area. Rigor is expected, honored, and celebrated at RP. RP is proud of its alumni who have been Presidential Scholars, as well as their high rate of National Merit recognition (over 35% of senior class receiving some form or National Merit acknowledgement).

William Butler

William Butler School is an independent coeducation, nonsectarian day school in perhaps the most unique setting of all the schools we visited. William Butler sits on the border of a major metropolitan mid-western city, an affluent inner ring suburb, a major

international research University, and one of the largest urban parks in the United States. While the campus has a unique location its acreage and land-related facilities are extremely limited compared to peer institutions. William Butler School serves just under 400 students from age 3 through 6th grade on approximately 4 acres of land.

William Butler School is accredited by the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS). William Butler School students regularly go on to attend many of the most selective secondary schools in the area.

Academically, William Butler School focuses its attention to a co-teaching model, with two full time teachers in each classroom, as well as developing students athletically and through a "challenge" curriculum that includes elements of experiential and outdoor education practices.

The campus includes a series of four enormous homes that have been converted to school-like buildings. Large back yards have been combined to yield playgrounds and play spaces. And despite typical mid-western swings in weather, students and teachers spend a good portion of each day walking outside from building to building. As we visited on a particularly blustery day it was common to see students and adults happily bundled up throughout the buildings and walk-ways. William Butler School is able to take advantage of their unique setting and building structures as the classrooms and facilities, including the dining area (nestled in the basement of one of the homes), felt very warm and homey.

Bear Lake Academy

BLA is a nonsectarian, coeducational day school that is accredited by the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS). Serving more than 1,200 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade, the school is divided into three discrete divisions. The Lower School serves JK through 4th grades, the Middle School serves 5th through 8th, and the Upper School serves 9th - 12th. The Upper School, the largest division, serves over 600 students. Class sizes at BLA range from 12-18 students, with a consistent student to teacher ratio of 8 to 1. The faculty profile includes an average number of years teaching at 18, and 71% of the faculty possessing an advanced degree.

BLA has a beautiful and sprawling 100+ acre campus. The numerous red brick buildings maintain an aura of historical academia and homeliness from the outside, while possessing state of the art facilities within. In particular, the school has impeccable indoor and outdoor athletic facilities as well as a state of art STEM building.

BLA is considered one of the preeminent independent schools in the country and prides itself on preparing students for the future and being forward thinking as part of its design. At BLA, there is a focus on parental involvement, arts, and athletics. However, academics is clearly the focus. At the Upper School level "BLA is an active participant in the Advanced Placement program in the Midwest Region of The College Board. Each year approximately 250 students in grades 10 -12 take more than 500 AP examinations in up to 23 separate subjects. In the past three years, 85% received qualifying grades."

Limitations

Reliability of Survey

Inevitably, limitations exist that can impact the findings of any study. Both the surveys and the interviews are subject to potential threats. One limitation of our quantitative data that potentially threatens the internal validity of our findings is the fact that the survey was only administered to Heads and hiring administrators and was not administered to teachers. Many of the questions we ask in the survey are focused on descriptions and practices that are typically part of the administrative function of schools. Teachers' potential lack of experience and responsibility for the themes in the survey could yield inaccurate responses. Therefore, the teacher perspective is only represented in our qualitative data.

Additionally, survey questions were developed based on a variety of existing surveys used primarily in public schools. The lack of extant research in independent schools impedes the possibility of using a survey that has been deemed valid and reliable in independent schools. Differences in nomenclature between independent schools and public schools require that we modify the language in the questions from existing surveys in order to make the survey comprehensible to independent school administrators. Finally, 3,000 emails with the survey link were sent to hiring administrators in NAIS schools; however our email data base had not been recently updated. As a result, hundreds of emails were returned, additionally we had several respondents notify us they were retired, or no longer in the position they previously held. Further, there is the

possibility that survey emails may have ended up in email spam folders, never to have been recognized by the intended recipient. Thus it is difficult to accurately calculate survey completion of total recipients, we are only able to accurately calculate completion rate from surveys started to completed.

Validity of Qualitative Study

Our qualitative findings are also subject to a number of limitations. Limited resources of time, funding, and researchers, creates the issue of a small geographical sample size for our qualitative data. While our quantitative data is representative of all NAIS schools, the qualitative data we gathered was based only in two cities, one in the Southwest and one in the Midwest. In order to minimize the threat to the generalizability of our findings based on a small location sample size, we visited a variety of kinds of independent schools including coeducational, single gender, religiously affiliated and non-sectarian.

Other limitations include issues around the sample group of teachers and administrators we interviewed. The fact that supervisors preselected the teachers we interviewed as high quality teachers may have influenced teachers' responses to positively reflect school practices. Additionally, some administrators we interviewed had only been at their school for a short time limiting their capacity to answer questions. Those who had been at their schools for many years and were responsible for the school's practices are potentially influenced to answer questions around practice positively. Inevitably, we encountered issues of reliability regarding interviewees' recall of practices, especially around feedback and evaluation.

Key Findings

High Quality Teachers in Independent Schools: Described & Defined

Findings Question # 1: *Independent school practitioners value four main characteristics when describing high quality teachers.*

Trends in the data we collected across all types of independent schools suggest that there are four key attributes of high quality teachers in independent schools. Strong consistency is noted among each group, Heads of School, division heads, and teachers. High quality teachers in independent schools:

- **Establish strong relationships with students**

- **Demonstrate strong pedagogical knowledge and a depth of content expertise**

- **Possess a growth mindset about their own capacity**

- **Fit well within the school's existing culture.**

Relationships with Students

The survey and interview data we collected suggest that regardless of the type of school, Heads of School and hiring administrators agree on the attributes that describe high quality teachers in their schools. Interestingly, the interview data we collected reveal that across all types of schools there are in some instances differences between administrators' and teachers' perspectives. Administrators across schools agreed on the attributes of high quality teachers. Teachers across schools also agreed on the attributes of high quality teachers. However, administrators and teachers sometimes have differing perspectives. In future sections of this study, we present the differences that are even more significant regarding questions of schools' practices.

Heads of School, hiring administrators, and teachers consistently identify teachers' ability to develop strong relationships with students as an important attribute of high quality teachers. Survey responses indicate that administrators identify *strong relationships with students* as the most important attribute when describing their highest quality teachers. When

Figure 2

When describing the highest quality teachers at your school, rate the following:

Characteristic	Extremely Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Not at all Important
Ability to develop strong relationships with students	82%	18%			
Strong pedagogical skills	65%	33%			
Agreement with the school mission/vision/religious affiliation	63%	33%	1%		
Enthusiasm	62%	37%			
How well they fit within the school's culture	55%	41%	3%		
Team player	53%	44%	3%		
Strong communication skills with parents	42%	53%	5%		
Ability to work with struggling students	38%	57%	4%		
High intellectual ability	26%	64%	9%		
Ability to produce significant gains in students outcomes	23%	56%	17%	3%	
A major or minor in the subject they will teach	20%	53%	23%	4%	
Willingness to take on extra duties outside of typical teaching	9%	63%	23%	3%	
Commitment to stay at the school	5%	50%	37%	7%	
Certification	4%	20%	32%	23%	21%
Years of teaching experience	2%	37%	49%	10%	
Graduate of prestigious university	1%	20%	51%	20%	8%

asked to rate the characteristics of high quality teachers, a remarkable 100% of respondents describe the "Ability to develop strong relationships with students" as Important or Extremely Important (see figure 2). When asked to *rank* the characteristics of high quality teachers 61% of

respondents ranked "ability to develop strong relationships with students" as first or second (see appendix G). These findings are found consistently throughout our interviews, as well. Notably, every group we interviewed described *strong relationships with students* as a key characteristic of high quality teachers.

Heads of School and hiring administrators identify this attribute as not just important, but also as a key factor in a teacher's employment status with the school. One division head stated that this attribute "can ultimately make or break a teacher's career" (R. Division Heads, 2014). In fact, administrators commonly made connections between teachers' ability to develop strong relationships with students and their longevity at the school. Division heads describe students and parents as unforgiving of teachers who are perceived as unable to develop relationships with students. Moreover, students and parents are perceived as more tolerant toward teachers who are less effective pedagogically, yet able to establish strong relationships.

"Hands down the most important thing is a passion for kids and building strong relationships with them" (M. Head of School, 2014)

Teacher responses similarly identified this characteristic as a key descriptor of high quality teachers. Yet, teacher responses differed from administrator responses in that they did not articulate a link between the ability to establish strong relationships with students and job security. Interestingly, teachers consistently provided specific descriptions of how they define *strong relationships with students*. Teachers commonly provided specific descriptions of strong relationships with notions that include "building trust," "letting students know you care," "connecting with students outside of the classroom content," and "reaching the out of the box student".

Another common theme among teachers regarding relationships is that high quality teachers see building relationships as mutually beneficial to the teacher and the student. High quality teachers authentically enjoy positive relationships with students. Teachers' rewarded by their positive relationships with students. As one teacher observed: "Our greatest teachers are inspired by great relationships with these girls. We really are their other family" (P. Teachers, 2014).

Pedagogical knowledge and content expertise

High quality instruction requires specific knowledge and understanding of how to teach. Pedagogical knowledge refers to the sophisticated skills required to teach students effectively. Content expertise describes the knowledge necessary in a content area to construct and deconstruct students' understanding of the subject matter (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008). For the purpose of this study, we briefly define *pedagogical knowledge* as a teacher's understanding of how to teach and *content expertise* as a teacher's depth of knowledge in their subject area.

Survey questions asked respondents to rate and rank the importance of *strong pedagogical knowledge* as well as *expertise in content knowledge.* Additionally, related questions asked respondents to rank the importance of teachers' *high intellectual ability* and *a major or minor in the subject they teach*. In response to these questions, 99% of respondents identified *strong pedagogical skills* as Important or Extremely Important, with 65% of respondents rating it as Extremely Important (see figure 2). When asked to

rank the qualities of high quality teachers 62% ranked *strong pedagogical knowledge* as first or second (see appendix G). Ninety percent of respondents rated *high intellectual ability* as either Important or Extremely Important (see figure 2).

We also probed survey respondents regarding their beliefs around the importance of identifying this attribute in teaching candidates. The reframing of the question around hiring versus current teachers yielded similarly consistent responses. Respondents ranked *strong pedagogical skills* as the second most important attribute when hiring teachers. One administrator said, "Knowledge in the subject matter is key. They (high quality teachers) must know their subject really well and love it. We hire for it. Knowledge is foundational to our school" (B. Head of School, 2014).

Responses to interview questions underscore the importance of *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise*. When asked to describe high quality teachers, teacher groups consistently described the importance of *pedagogical skill and content knowledge*. Teachers repeatedly used terms such as passion, interest, and commitment when discussing content area expertise. A William Butler teacher said the following, "You have to have a commitment to your content area - whatever you are teaching - and a burning desire to communicate it, combined with a passion to excite students about your content area" (W. Teachers, 2014).

Growth Mindset

Survey results and interview responses indicate that teachers' interest in continuous growth and learning is commonly identified as a key attribute of high quality teachers. Carol Dweck's work defines *growth mindset* as the belief that intellectual ability is not fixed; rather, it is related to effort and can be developed (Dweck, 2007). For the purpose of this study, we use Dweck's definition of *growth mindset* as she applies it to adult's intellectual ability. We define *growth mindset* as teachers' belief that they can improve their pedagogical knowledge and content expertise through continuous learning, effort, and use of feedback.

When asked to rate the importance of eight different teacher attributes, 99% of respondents rated *growth mindset* as Important or Extremely Important (Figure 3).

In fact, Administrators selected growth mindset as the most important attribute from the possible choices. Further, 97% of respondents denoted "Evidence of continuous professional development" as Important to Extremely Important, with 64% rating it as Extremely Important.

When asked to rate nine different component of teacher candidates 89% of respondents rated "Evidence of ongoing professional development" as Important or Extremely Important, with 29% rating it as Extremely Important (see appendix H). We found this resoundingly similar to the interest expressed earlier in "Growth Mindset" and "Evidence of ongoing professional

Figure 3

When you think about teacher quality, how important are the following:

■ Not at all Important ■ Unimportant ■ Neither important nor unimportant ■ Important ■ Extremely Important

Category	Not at all Important	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
Perceived prestige of undergraduate institution	5%	17%	40%	37%	2%
Previous non-teaching experience		8%	41%	45%	3%
Certification	16%	25%	27%	24%	7%
Highest level of degree attained		21%	66%		9%
Previous teaching experience		7%	62%		29%
Perception of previous employer		10%	50%		38%
Evidence of continuous professional development		2%	33%		64%
Growth mindset	1%	20%	79%		

development" in the description of high quality teachers. Indeed, as we ran a test of two separate T-tests we see that the variables "Evidence of ongoing professional development" and "Growth Mindset" as consistent characteristics of a high quality teacher we see that they have a statistically significant and substantial correlation with the importance awarded on the characteristic "Evidence of ongoing professional development" in the teacher selection process (*p-value = 0.00)*. In other words, hiring administrators consistently rate that "evidence of ongoing professional development" and a "growth mindset" are common attributes of high quality teachers. Further, in the recruitment and selection process of teachers, hiring administrators consistently align their

selection of teacher candidates who are able to demonstrate "evidence of ongoing professional development".

Interview responses support our quantitative findings. Heads of School and Division Heads we interviewed all referred to great teachers as having the interest, ability, or motivation to learn and improve. They described teachers who sought out professional development opportunities so that they could improve their practice. They described high quality teachers as those who actively sought out and applied feedback from colleagues and supervisors for improvement.

The Mountain Valley Head of School summed up his description by saying, "The greatest teachers have an inspired attitude toward improvement and

optimal performance" (MV. Head of School, 2014). Another administrator at Mountain Valley stated, "(High quality teachers) are open to feedback because they have a growth mindset. They are committed to their own continuous improvement and learning" (M. Division Heads, 2014). High quality teachers we interviewed often referred to internal motivation toward excellence and improvement.

Milborn Day's teacher leader stated eloquently, "The greatest teachers have a restless spirit toward continuous growth. This is both a blessing and a curse. You strive to take your teaching to a new level every year but you never seem to get there". A division head at BLA stated, "Great teachers want to be great all the time. They don't want to be left behind".

Administrators often underscored the importance of teachers' continuous learning and improvement by describing a sense of responsibility for creating a culture of *growth mindset* in their schools. "We have to insist upon norming and language around teacher growth. Creating conversations around improving practices of pedagogy is a way to improve the culture of growth. If it feels important, people will do it"(B. Head of School, 2014).

ToF and high quality teachers we interviewed at school sites all indicated that the opportunity to improve their practice and deepen their content knowledge was an important reason for remaining at their current schools. When asked, "Based on the fact that you have been identified as a high quality teacher and could be hired at another

school, why then, do you continue to work in your current school?" teachers pointed to many things such as autonomy and in some cases tuition remission for their own children. Most commonly, though, teachers expressed appreciation for the resources necessary to continue learning. "BLA is as interested in your growth as students' growth and they are willing to give you the time and money to do it. I've never been denied a request for professional development." (B. Teachers, 2014).

Findings reported from both the survey and interviews thus far identify the attributes most frequently selected by respondents as important attributes of high quality teachers. Importantly, there is also consistency in responses regarding the attributes respondents do not consider as attributes of high quality teachers. Figure 3 also shows data around the three attributes that garnered the least amount of importance were "certification", "previous non-teaching experience", and lastly, "perceived prestige of undergraduate institution". The variable "Certification" received the highest percentage of ratings in the "Not at all Important" and "Unimportant" categories, and the most equal distribution of ratings overall. Only 7% categorized "certification" as extremely important, and only 24% of respondents rated "Certification" as Important. When asked to select the two most important attributes when hiring high quality teachers, only 1% of respondents selected certification. During an interview with a ToF, one teacher specifically referenced choosing not to teach in public schools because they lacked certification and felt that the steps to attain certification were "prohibitive". When asked why he

continues to teach at his current school he stated,

> **"I find 'licensing' to be prohibitive. I like the curricular freedom I have in an independent school. They (public schools) need to re-think the requirements to become a teacher. Really smart people avoid going into teaching because they don't want to go through all the hoops of certification" (T. Teachers, 10/14) .**

In our interviews we asked heads of school and division heads, "When you hire new teachers, what characteristics are most influential?" The issue of certification was completely absent from all responses. Not one administrator identified certification as something they look for when hiring faculty or even a requirement for being interviewed for a position. Only when teachers identified themselves as having worked in public school did the issue of certification arise. When asked why they chose to remain at their current school considering the fact that they were identified as high quality teachers and could potentially go to any school, a teacher at William Butler stated, "I know I might earn a higher salary and have a better retirement plan if I worked at a public school, but aside from loving my school, I am not a certified teacher. It would take too much time and money for me to go through that process and I'm just not willing to do that".

Fit with school culture

Independent schools ideally base all decision making on their respective missions, core values, and visions. Therefore, the Heads of School and

those employed at the school must ultimately enact the mission of the school in the day-to-day practices. We refer to this as *fit with school culture*. Extant research conducted in Catholic schools describes the importance of selecting teachers who match the mission of those schools such as modeling the faith throughout the school day, participating in the lives of students in extra curricular activities, belief in a strong academic core, and a commitment to the formation of students' personal character (Bryk, 1993). We note here that

> ***"fit"* is a common term in independent schools used to refer to teachers' philosophical alignment with the school's mission, vision, religious affiliation, or other cultural foundations.**

As seen in Figure 1 we asked respondents to rate the importance of attributes. The variables "Agreement with the school mission/vision/religious affiliation" and "How well they fit within the school's culture" are, respectively, rated at 99% and 96% Important or Extremely Important. These categories in our survey are related to the concept of "fit", which is one that emerged throughout interviews with administrators and teachers.

During our observations and interviews, administrators and teachers consistently made reference to how well high quality teachers *fit* in the school's culture. At Parker, administrators and teachers underscored their commitment to girls' education throughout the interviews. Those involved in the boarding aspect of the school shared

their enjoyment in the experience of making school a home for their girls. In fact, evidence of this key finding was embedded within many responses to the varied questions in all interviews. When asked why they stay at their current school, teachers at Milborn Day mentioned the school's commitment to diversity and service. Teachers at Mountain Valley explained that they shared the school's commitment to individual learners' needs. At William Butler, teachers underscored their shared commitment to the school's mission of strong academic endeavors and autonomy of learning. The Assistant Head of School at Butler proudly described the school as a place for "nerdy academic" students to find their role models.

Recruitment and Selection of High Quality Teachers

We asked, "Do hiring administrators assess and select new teachers based on the characteristics of high quality teachers as identified in our earlier section"? In this capstone we refer to hiring administrators as any administrators who have the responsibility of recruitment and selection at their schools such as heads of school, assistant heads of school, division heads, or department chairs. We define recruitment and selection as all processes administrators use to vet candidates for teacher positions. Survey data reveal the aspects of *recruitment and selection* most valued by hiring administrators while interview and focus group data provide specific attributes administrators seek through various processes.

Key Finding – *Independent school administrators commonly use candidates' demonstration lessons to determine if they possess the attributes of high quality teachers.*

Human Resource Management literature suggests that candidates for a job opening should be asked to complete a pre-employment performance test that will allow them to demonstrate their ability to perform the tasks of the job for which they are applying (Mueller & Baum, 2011). In schools, the opportunity to observe a candidate's performance as part of the interview process occurs through a *demonstration lesson.*

Our data suggests that the *demonstration lesson* is commonly used in independent schools and is valued as a method to determine if candidates possess *strong pedagogical knowledge and content expertise* as well as the ability to develop *strong relationships with students.*

Our survey results indicate that 45% of respondents require their candidates to present a *demonstration lesson* in order to be considered for hire. Another 40% of respondents consider important for hiring and
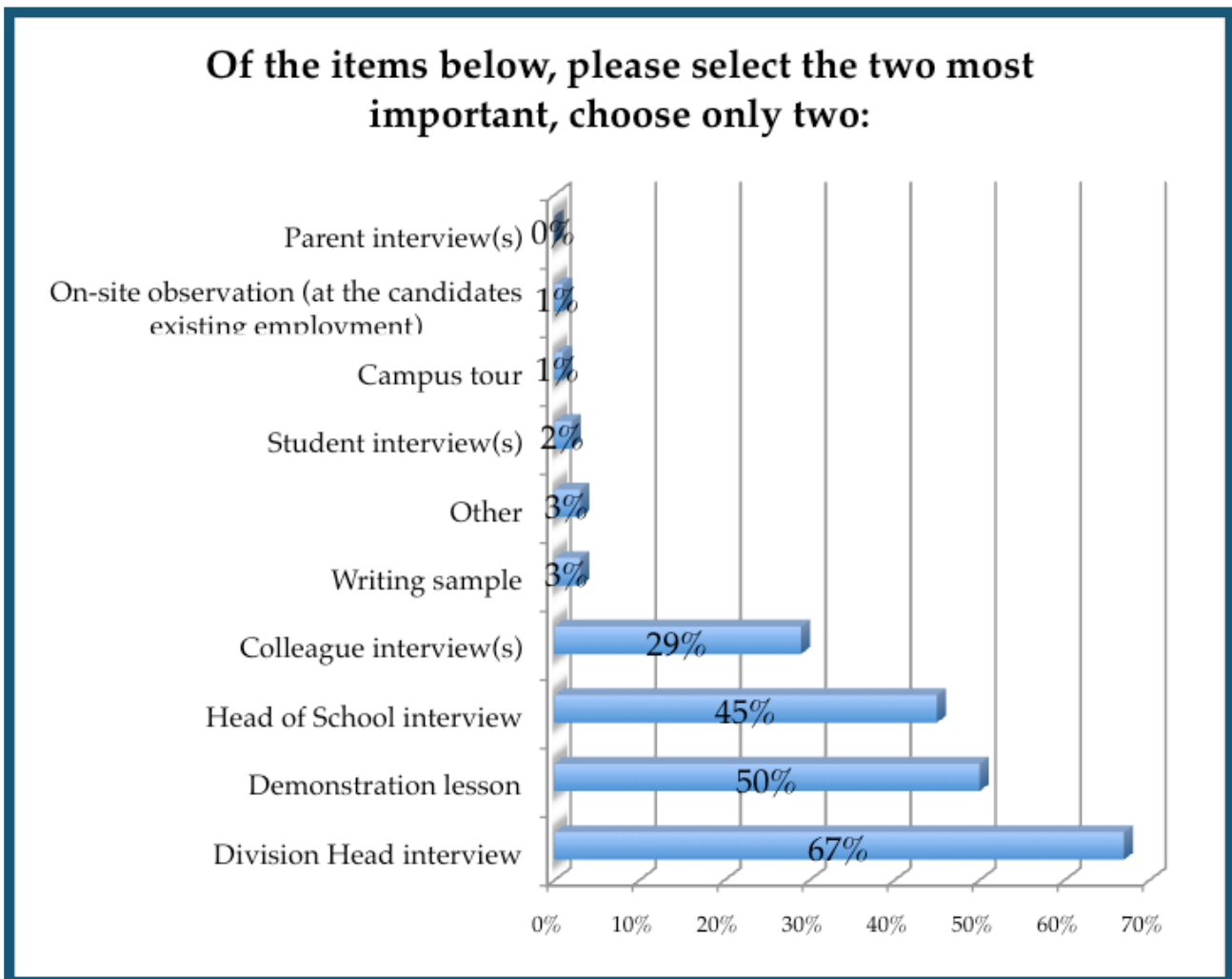
only 6% of respondents noted that they do not use the *demonstration lesson* at all.

When asked to select the two most important variables in a candidate's hiring process, 50% of all respondents selected the *demonstration lesson* (see figure 4). In fact, the *demonstration*

Figure 4

Of the items below, please select the two most important, choose only two:

- Parent interview(s) — 0%
- On-site observation (at the candidates existing employment) — 1%
- Campus tour — 1%
- Student interview(s) — 2%
- Other — 3%
- Writing sample — 3%
- Colleague interview(s) — 29%
- Head of School interview — 45%
- Demonstration lesson — 50%
- Division Head interview — 67%

lesson outranks the *Head of School interview* by 5% (see figure 4).

This data is supported by our qualitative findings. Consistently, hiring administrators identified the *demonstration lesson* as a necessary tool to identify a candidate's *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise* as well as a candidate's *ability to develop relationships with students*. As the Head of School of Mountain Valley said, "If they can't nail the demonstration lesson, a single lesson with obvious importance, than it is extremely unlikely that they will be able to regularly perform at a high level." Further, another hiring administrator commented, "I am really watching for

how the teachers relate to the students in those lessons, rather than what kind of bells and whistles or pedagogical wizardry they can pull out of their hat" (M. Division Heads, 2014). A division head at Milborn Day School referred to the demonstration as a "first date". The candidate puts their best foot forward and tries to make a good impression. If the first date doesn't work out, the chances of a successful relationship are not good. An interesting finding revealed only through interviews suggests that independent school administrators use hiring as a method to improve teacher quality in their schools. When asked, "What is the best way to increase teacher

Figure 5

Please rate the importance of each component of your hiring practice:

Legend: ■ Required to hire ■ Important ■ Not used

Component	Required to hire	Important	Not used
Division Head interview	73%	19%	8%
Head of School interview	71%	22%	3%
Demonstration lesson	45%	40%	6%
Colleague interview(s)	39%	50%	5%
Campus tour	23%	36%	5%
Writing sample	17%	49%	20%
Student interview(s)	7%	29%	39%
On-site observation (at existing employment)	3%	9%	65%
Parent interview(s)	1%	5%	66%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

quality in your school?" The Head of School at Parker responded bluntly, "Can I say *hiring*"? The inflection in her tone indicated a bit of frustration and a slight roll of her eyes alluded to the fact that removing ineffective teachers and hiring high quality teachers is a more effective way to improve the quality of teaching in a school than improving the quality of the existing faculty. Many administrators identified hiring when asked about improving teacher quality in their schools as opposed to identifying practices intended to improve teacher performance such as offering professional development opportunities or providing feedback through teacher evaluations. This trend in administrators' responses is exemplified by another division head

who stated, "The strong lever in improving teachers here really is hiring. I hate to say it this way, but getting rid of the teachers who aren't on the bus, the ones who aren't mission aligned is one way (to improve teacher quality)."

Key Finding: *Administrators value interviews by various stakeholders and use them to determine a candidate's "fit in the school's culture".*

Bryk & Lee (1993) discuss the impact Catholic schools' relative autonomy has on the recruitment and hiring of their teachers. They contend that Catholic schools are able to select teachers who enjoyed working with students inside and outside of the classroom, who had a

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commitment to strong academics, and whose vision matched the schools' missions. They describe the autonomy to hire teachers who match the school's philosophy as a way to shape the culture of the school.

Our findings indicate that independent school administrators, who have a high level of autonomy, also use hiring practices to ensure they hire for *fit within the school's culture.*

We find that administrators use information they gather from interviews and campus tours as a way to verify a teacher's *fit* with the school's mission. Survey responses overwhelmingly demonstrate that interviews are a key part of the selection and hiring process. Ninety-three percent of respondents rated the *interview with the Head of School* as either important or required for hire. Almost identically, 92% rated the *interview with division head* the same, and 89% rated the *interview with colleagues* with the same descriptors (see figure 5). These quantitative results prompted us to probe administrators about the purpose of interviews and the information they hoped to garner.

During our interviews, hiring administrators pointed to the colleague interview section of their hiring process as a way to determine "fit" in the school culture. At Riverside, the Assistant Head of School talked at length about this part of the hiring process. She articulately described the colleague interview process as follows:

The word on the street in this city is that our faculty is slightly off-beat. We are known as the nerdy, brainy school. We like our quirkiness and we like that students who are like that fit here. Our hiring process overall is not very formalized, but one important piece is getting the input of the faculty members on the team. We know that they will make sure that the warmth, niceness, and willingness to help kids is present in the candidate we choose (R. Head of School, 2014).

Heads of School described their interviews with candidates as an opportunity to determine if a candidate's teaching philosophy matched the mission of the school. Interestingly, some Heads of School admitted skepticism regarding the interview. They shared instances where candidates had interviewed exceedingly well, but had not resulted in a "cultural fit" at the school. However, even under these circumstances, Heads of School continued to describe their interview as a requirement for the selection and hiring process.

Retention and recognition of High Quality Teachers

In an attempt to better understand independent schools' systems of retention and recognition of high quality teachers, we focused our analysis on ways in which school leaders retain and reward their best teachers. In survey questions and interviews we probed in two distinct areas: teacher evaluation

and merit based rewards for high quality teachers in independent schools.

Key Finding – *Independent schools evaluate teachers formally, but administrators and teachers differ on perspectives of formal evaluation processes.*

The Gates Foundation recently reported its findings in the pivotal Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study. Importantly, study authors contend that in order to develop, reward, and retain great teachers, schools must be able to identify them (Kane, McCaffrey, Miller, & Staiger, 2013). To that end, the MET study uncovers effective evaluation practices. Similarly, our study seeks to understand how independent schools identify high quality teachers through formal evaluation and if teachers are evaluated on the attributes of high quality teachers. In our analysis of teacher evaluation practices we asked hiring administrators to respond to several questions related to evaluation practices and procedures. We asked hiring administrators, "Do you evaluate faculty with a formal process?". An overwhelming percentage of schools

 (93%) "Evaluate faculty with a formal process". A subsequent question inquired if schools provide faculty "with the criteria upon which their performance is evaluated?". Results demonstrate that 92% of respondents provide performance evaluation criteria.

Several survey questions asked respondents to identify what teacher qualities are formally evaluated. Figure 6 displays the responses and shows that most schools formally evaluate some attributes of high quality teachers. Ninety-seven percent of respondents

Figure 6
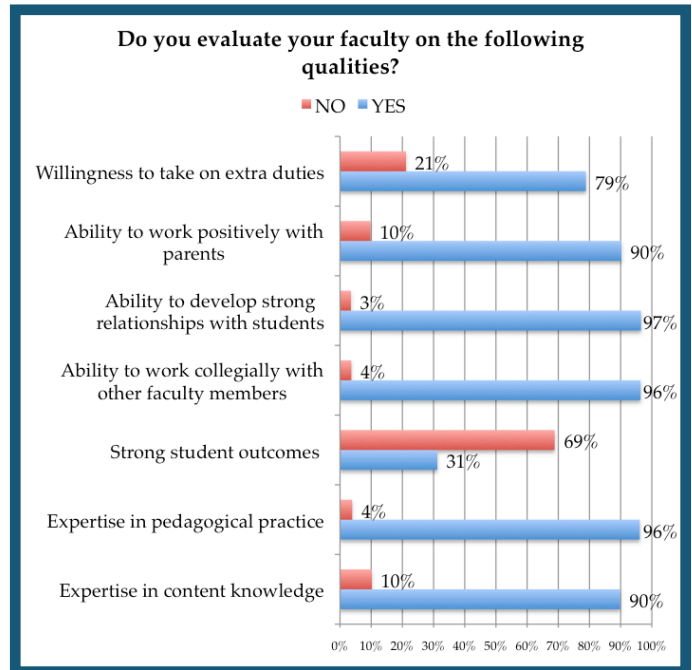
evaluate their faculty members' ability to develop strong relationships with students. Pedagogical knowledge and content expertise are evaluated by 96% and 90% of respondents respectively. Interestingly, 69% of respondents replied that they do not evaluate their faculty based on "Strong Student outcomes".

Interview responses to questions of formal evaluation processes and effectiveness indicate that there are discrepancies between administrators' and teachers' perspectives. We asked administrators and teachers, "To what extent does your school's evaluation process influence teacher quality?" Administrators offered a range of positive responses. Some answered that formal evaluations have a moderate effect on teacher quality and that teachers' attitudes about feedback often dictate the extent to which the process influences their teaching. Others described formal processes that were clearly outlined, strictly followed, and effectively tied to teachers'

Figure 7

Does your school use any of the following strategies to recognize or retain your best teachers?

■ YES ■ NO

Strategy	YES	NO
We financially support professional development opportunities	99%	1%
We offer leadership opportunities	94%	6%
Our teachers visit other schools for observations	80%	20%
We financially support continuing education opportunities	80%	20%
We offer salary increase or stipend	74%	26%
We provide formal praise	71%	29%
We allow unpaid leaves of absence	61%	39%
We provide awards and/or Public recognition	59%	41%
We offer reduced course loads and/or teaching responsibilities	43%	57%
We offer paid sabbaticals	14%	86%
We offer our teachers tenure	4%	96%
We pay teachers specifically for improved student outcomes	2%	98%
We pay teachers specifically for high student outcomes	2%	98%

compensation. Even when administrators admitted that they did not adhere strictly to the set process, most shared that the formal evaluation provided some positive benefits such as a common language of expectations, recommendations for improvement, or opportunities for reflection.

Consistently, teachers responded to the same question with a range of negative responses. Some teachers reported that they could not recall ever being evaluated despite the fact that the administrator at the same school provided an elaborate description of the process. Most interview responses indicated that the process was something teachers knew they had to do but felt it had little to no positive effect on teacher quality. One school's responses exemplify the disparity between administrators' and teachers'

responses. A division head at this school described the formal evaluation process as "having a profound impact on teacher quality that scaffolds over time" while the teachers at the school stated, "for high quality teachers it has absolutely no impact at all. Perhaps it gives administrators the ability to move out poor teachers".

Retention and Recognition

Key Finding – *Independent school practitioners view opportunities to learn and lead as ways to retain and recognize high quality teachers.*

As is seen in Figure 7, schools consistently use a variety of methods to retain and/or recognize their best teachers beyond the scope of a formal evaluation or salary increase. For instance, 99% of schools "financially

support professional development opportunities". This descriptive average strongly correlates to the finding in our qualitative research. Interviews with high quality teachers revealed that they felt great support for furthering professional development from their schools. Many indicated that professional development opportunities and continuing educational opportunities were reasons they chose to stay at their respective schools. Additionally, the school leaders we interviewed also spoke with great pride about the financial support they dedicate to professional development. "When you're hired here, all of a sudden you realize you're in the major leagues. The sky is the limit on professional development funds and the expectation is that you'll take advantage"(P. Teachers, 2014).

Survey responses indicate that 94% of schools recognize and retain their best teachers by providing them "leadership opportunities". During interviews teachers and administrators identified opportunities to provide leadership on school-wide committees, additional titles, and more public responsibilities as ways to recognize high quality teachers. It is interesting to contrast this data with responses to our interview question "What are the obstacles you face in your work?". Perhaps not surprisingly, almost every single group we interviewed answered with one word: time. In fact, the responses that indicate time as a barrier are far too numerous to list.

Data garnered from interviews revealed an important element that is unique to independent schools. We asked, "How does your school administration support high quality teachers?" and, "Why do you continue to work at your current school?". These probes revealed that high quality teachers who have their own children enrolled in the schools in which they teach, perceive tuition remission as a reward for their work and an important tool for retention. "To get great teachers to stay, salaries must be competitive outside of the field of education to be able to recruit the best and brightest - not just what makes you competitive within the field of education. And tuition remission really is a draw to high quality faculty!" (R. Teachers, 2014).

These results suggest that schools use a myriad of measures to base rewards for high quality teachers (see Appendix I). Of note is the propensity to include 'informal' feedback from multiple constituents:

- **57% of respondents reward high quality teachers based on "Informal parent feedback"**

- **60% of respondents reward based on "Informal student feedback"**

- **65% of respondents reward high quality teachers based on "Informal collegial feedback"**

- **84% of respondents reward high quality teachers based on "Informal supervisor feedback"**

Discussion

Definition of High Quality Teachers

Our analysis of the key findings described above identifies a set of characteristics commonly found among high quality teachers in independent schools. High quality teachers enjoy the ability to

- **Establish strong relationships with students**

- **Demonstrate strong pedagogical knowledge and a depth of content expertise**

- **Possess a growth mindset about their own capacity**

- **Fit well within the school's existing culture.**

These attributes primarily and consistently summarize the characteristics of a high quality independent school teacher. As school leaders described their best teachers they inextricably linked the ability to build meaningful relationships with students and an ability to teach effectively. seem inextricably linked Despite the lack of research specific to independent schools, extant research in the public school sector describes the impact of teachers' positive relationships with students on a school's culture, teachers expectations, and ultimately, on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, & McGaughy, 2001; Smrekar, Guthrie, Owens, & Sims, 2001).

This study's findings indicate that independent schools aim to employ high quality teachers who are able to established and maintain rigorous learning experiences due to their content knowledge and pedagogical expertise, and because they have the ability to develop meaningful relationships with their students. Joseph Murphy (in press) contends that there are two necessary pillars for school success, personalization and academic press, which align with the findings in this study. Murphy states, "schools that serve children and young people well are defined by two anchoring pillars, strong academic press and supportive culture" (Murphy, In press). Our findings indicate that independent schools highly value these two pillars with strong responses on both interviews and surveys that value relationships with students and as well

as pedagogical practice and content expertise.

Additionally, we find that

high quality teachers commonly point to the internal rewards they garner from building strong relationships with students, watching students learn and grow, learning themselves, and participating in the life of a school as reasons they choose to work in this sector of schooling.

Research has long supported the importance of these factors as foundational to successful schools. In *Catholic Schools and the Common Good,* Bryk & Lee (1993) describe various Catholic schools' cultures as places where students are greeted daily with warmth and authentic affection. Teachers in the schools they studied were said to have an "intrusive interest in students' personal lives beyond the classroom" (Bryk, 1993, p. 141), which demonstrates a keen interest in students' lives and strong commitment to participate in extra curricular activities. Our findings similarly identify a link between connecting with students outside the classroom and building the strong relationships that high quality teachers possess.

Growth Mindset and Pedagogical Content Knowledge – Values and Practices

Growth mindset and pedagogical knowledge and content expertise emerged as two important dimensions of high quality teachers in independent schools. Data we collected indicates that a teacher's commitment to continued

growth is highly valued in independent schools. Carol Dweck's work on *mindset* posits that a *growth mindset* focuses on the ability to improve ability through effort whereas a fixed mindset perceives ability as predetermined and immovable (Dweck, 2007). Dweck extrapolates her findings to analyze the mindset of leaders, organizations, teams, parents, and coaches. Likewise, we use Dweck's definition of *growth mindset* and extend the definition to teachers. Our findings suggest that administrators and teachers value teachers' growth oriented mindset as a key attribute of high quality teachers.

We find that hiring administrators focus on *growth mindset* and *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise* when recruiting and hiring new teachers for their schools. Our data indicate hiring administrators use a myriad of selection activities to evaluate teacher candidates. Research clearly articulates that hiring the highest quality teachers is an imperative, not a choice, and that educational leaders who are skilled resource managers understand that hiring well is among the most cost effective strategic moves they can make (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Lee, 2005; Staiger & Rockoff, 2010). The significance hiring administrators place on the *demonstration lesson* portion of the interview process is supported by extant research as well as by our study. Dennis M. Lee (2005) poses the question about hiring the best teachers in a competitive market, "How can a district consistently hire the best teacher candidates - those who are an excellent match with the district's mission, values and vision, as well as those with the requisite teacher skills and knowledge?" (p. 265). In analyzing the data around hiring, we notice a

particular trend toward valuing the demonstration lesson. The demonstration lesson is described as a tool that gives hiring administrators evidence of candidates' ability to interact positively with students. Notably, acquiring evidence of effective practice in the pre-employment process is an important step toward ensuring a potential teacher's *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise* (Mueller & Baum, 2011). "Pre-employment performance tests have a high degree of validity in predicting performance" (Mueller & Baum, 2011, p. 144).

The expectation at independent schools during demonstration lessons is that school leaders must be able to witness a teacher's ability to relate almost immediately with students, even in a contrived and pressure packed scenario. Additionally, hiring administrators expect to see teachers' pedagogical ability and depth of content knowledge.

This finding is supported by the research conducted by Ball et. al., in his study around pedagogy and content knowledge in mathematics (2008).

We note that independent school administrators value *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise,* but they do not perceive *certification* as evidence of this attribute. Administrators consistently rated *certification* as the least important attribute in our survey. However, researchers in the public school sector contend that raising certification standards is one way to increase the potential for hiring highly qualified

teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 1999). Furthermore, a candidate's transcripts were also only rated important characteristics by 4% of respondents (see Appendix H). As we have mentioned before, we are curious by the observation that *content knowledge* is a consistent descriptive attribute of high quality teachers, yet a candidate's transcripts (seen by many as a reliable measure of academic achievement - thus attained content knowledge?) are rated so low. While *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise* is highly valued, hiring administrators do not value measurable evidence of it.

Teacher evaluation practices

Our study probes schools' practices around teacher evaluation as a component of feedback and recognition of high quality teachers. Our findings suggest that administrators evaluate teachers, yet there are inconsistencies in the perception of the impact of the evaluations. We note two findings in this discussion. First, teachers do not perceive a positive impact of teacher evaluations, and second, independent schools do not evaluate teachers for student outcomes. Numerous researchers focus on teacher quality issues and study topics such as certification, pre-service preparation, teacher evaluation, pay for performance, accountability, and many other teacher related reform issues. In 2013, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded the Measures for Effective Teaching (MET) study, which was an investigative partnership of educational researchers, teachers, and education organizations committed to analyzing better ways to identify and develop effective teaching. The MET study finds that effective

measures of teachers -- student outcomes on standardized tests, consistent observations, and student surveys -- provide teachers with more accurate feedback. The MET study finds that these measures are positively correlated with improved student outcomes (Kane et al., 2013; Kane & Staiger, 2012).

Beyond the scope of independent schools, we are amidst a controversial trend in public schools to incorporate value-added measures (VAM) to teacher evaluation. Almost every State and District calculate, use, and merit VAM differently, with various levels of success and controversy. Teacher evaluations and ways to measure effective teaching are a critical topic in the media and in research in public education. In 2012, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project. Importantly, this widely cited project identified five key findings (Kane & Staiger, 2012, p. 5):

1. Observations are positively associated with student achievement gains.
2. Reliably characterizing a teacher's practice requires averaging scores over multiple observations.
3. Combining observation scores with evidence of student achievement gains and student feedback improved predictive power and reliability.
4. In contrast to teaching experience and advanced degrees, the combined measure identifies teachers with larger gains on the state tests.
5. Teachers with strong performance on the combined measure also performed well on other student outcomes.

We articulate these findings specifically and in detail in order to reveal the

difference in the context of public schooling and independent schooling. However, the differences in context do not preclude independent school practitioners from benefitting from the parts of the research that are pertinent among their sector. For example, from the key findings in the MET study, we identify differences in measures of student outcomes. Independent schools do not administer state tests therefore using student outcomes based on standardized state test scores is not contextually relevant to independent schools. On the other hand, our survey reveals that 93% of respondents value a formal evaluation process yet an astounding 45% of schools observe teachers less than yearly. 55% of teachers are reportedly evaluated yearly, but only 10% are evaluated more than yearly (see Appendix J).

The MET findings reveal that observations of teachers are most valid and effective when conducted multiple times. Additionally, in the previous section of this report, we identified growth mindset as an important attribute of high quality teachers in independent schools.

Coupling our findings with the MET findings gives practitioners both research based and culturally relevant support to change formal evaluation practices to include multiple observations of teachers yearly.

Anecdotally, we note that it is common for independent school teachers to survey students about their courses in much the same way colleges and universities do. Again, combining research and contextually relevant

practices, independent schools could make the decision to regularly conduct student surveys for feedback to teachers.

Interestingly, administrators report increasing teachers' pay based on performance. However, figure 8 describes the "loosely-coupled" pay structures among independent schools (Weick, 1976). Figure 9 shows us that 36% of respondents "revise teacher salaries based on teacher evaluation methods". While they may not use 'value-added measures' exactly, over a third of respondents do influence teacher pay based on teacher performance. In our on-site interviews we discussed this practice with school leaders in more detail. We learned that schools that do use this strategy typically have very limited ability to actually influence the rates of teacher pay. In many cases the rates of pay based on performance amounted to less than 1% of a teacher's average salary. Thus, in speaking to teachers about this practice, they saw it as a nominal amount. Nonetheless, the actual recognition and what the money represented ("As a pat on the back, or job well done") gave them great satisfaction. School leaders expressed interest in trying to grow the amounts they were able to award teachers for high performance. However, what teachers seemed more interested in receiving was some gift of "time".

Administrators commonly use added responsibilities to recognize high quality teachers.

We asked every teacher with whom we spoke, "What obstacles do you face in your job?" and almost every one of them replied with "Time."
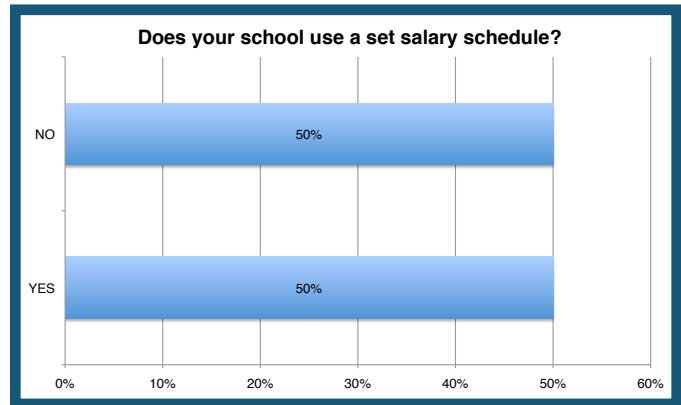
Figure 8

Does your school use a set salary schedule?

NO — 50%
YES — 50%

Figure 9

Do you revise teacher salaries based on teacher evaluation measures?

NO — 64%
YES — 36%
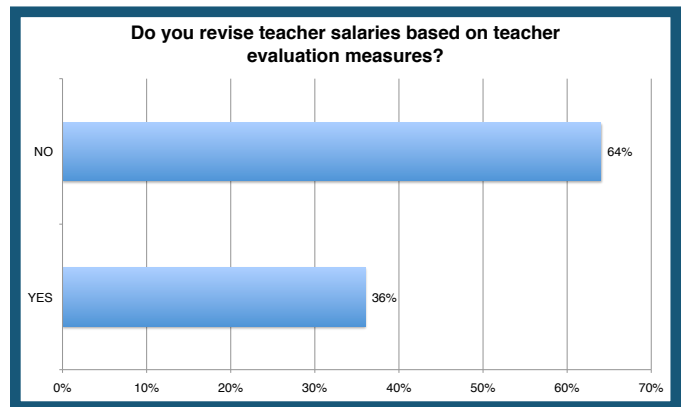
We see this as a real obstacle to overcome for school leaders. It seems that our best teachers are consistently asked to do more and more, while little is taken off their plates of responsibility.

For instance, 94% of school leaders stated that they "offer leadership opportunities" for high quality teachers (see Figure 7). In our research interviews this was often found to be considered as a 'reward' and a form of 'recognition', but also as a burden as the leadership opportunities were additional work. Quite simply, when teachers do a great job, leaders consistently increase teachers' responsibilities as a way to recognize them. The irony is that the more work one is responsible for the higher esteem they are held upon. The National Center for Time and Teaching released findings of a study titled, "Time

for Teachers: leveraging expanded time to strengthen instruction and empower teachers". This report indicates that in most schools teachers spend more than 80% of their time on instruction, leaving less than 20% for other responsibilities and professional growth. The study offers suggestions for expanding the school day and year to leverage time in a way that benefits teachers and students. Some schools studied provide more than 40% of non-instructional time to teacher for professional growth and learning through collaboration, coaching, peer observations, and other growth activities (Kaplan, Chan, Farbman, & Novoryta, n.d.).

Fit – Values and Practices

Fit is a common term in independent schools that indicates alignment and commitment to a school's mission, vision, religious beliefs, and other strong cultural underpinnings. Administrators and teachers in our NAIS study commonly identify the importance of *fitting into a school's culture.* Bryk and Lee describe teachers who commonly and consistently talk with students and model the values of Catholic school education (1993). Not surprisingly, an important part of their research points to the ability of Catholic school teachers to authentically enrich the religious lives of their students. Similarly, we consistently found hiring administrators and teachers seek candidates and recognize teachers for their ability to *fit* in the mission and vision of the school. For example, the 'campus tour' is rated of high importance because candidates are analyzed for *fit* during this portion of the interview process. Administrators are seeking to understand, how do the candidates respond to the environment they are experiencing? Are they interacting with students? What kinds of informal questions are they asking? How do they interact with the professional staff, the facilities staff? Bryk & Lee (1993) underscore the importance of Catholic school administrators' autonomy in hiring. Similarly, independent school administrators value the autonomy of mission and practice that they have. Therefore, both sectors of schools are able to apply their mission within the context of their practices. It is notable, therefore, that independent schools are able to shape their practices based on the mission and vision of their school.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Descriptive Characteristics of High Quality Teachers

Our primary goal in this study was to look for and develop consistent and meaningful characteristics of high quality teachers in independent schools.

In sum, high quality independent school teachers develop trusting and meaningful relationships with students, possess an ability to continually grow and learn as professional teachers as well as model learners, and they are authentically committed to and ingrained in the school culture and mission. We recommend that schools examine the characteristics of high quality teachers and apply them to their context through teacher evaluation practices, hiring and selection methods, as well as using these characteristics to determine the merit for recognizing and rewarding high quality teachers. Further, schools should

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align teacher evaluation processes, professional development, and recognition strategies to the characteristics of high quality teachers that are valued in Independent Schools.

A specific goal of this study was to make the implicit theory of action in independent schools around recruiting and selection, retention and recognition more explicit. We hoped to uncover both theory and practice as we searched for consistent attributes of high quality teachers in independent schools. Additionally, knowing the undeniable impact of hiring well and the exponential harm in hiring poorly, we wanted to have a better understanding of hiring practices among independent schools.

Independent school leaders perceive the *demonstration lesson* and *interviews* as hiring practices that are essential facets of the selection process.

Independent schools not only value a teacher's ability to develop meaningful relationships with students and possess strong pedagogical and content knowledge, but they also value his or her *application* of those core competencies of teaching and learning.

Independent school leaders want to witness applicants' ability to interact with the community on a campus tour,

they want to observe candidates interacting with students in their authentic learning environment. School leaders believe that it is important to not only observe them interact with potential colleagues, but to gain collegial feedback on the candidates.

We conclude that *pedagogical knowledge and content expertise* are vitally important to independent school leaders, to the extent that they are not willing to entrust metaphorical markers to signify that a candidate possesses these attributes.

Instead, independent school leaders want to witness teacher candidates' ability to apply his or her pedagogical knowledge contextually. Thus, independent school leaders employ resource heavy procedures during the selection process to ensure that they are measuring potential candidates' previously acquired pedagogical and content area skill and knowledge within the context and culture of their school.

Independent schools deeply value autonomy from external sources such as state, federal, religious, or other entities. They are committed to decision-making practices that are based solidly on the mission, vision, and culture of their schools. It is congruous that independent schools would perceive *fit* with the school culture as an important part of the hiring process. Explicitly stating in policy and practice indicators of *fit* throughout the various processes for recruitment and hiring will yield candidates, and ultimately hires, that *fit* in each community.

Further, explicitly looking for specific characteristics during different parts of the hiring process will help delineate a candidate's strengths and weaknesses and in the event of multiple highly qualified candidates. This will help school leaders focus on areas of strength in comparison, as well as the leader's perception of the organizational need for each particular position.

The areas of concluding emphasis regarding retaining and rewarding high quality teachers begin and end with what we learned about teacher evaluation practices. We began our understanding of retention and recognition by inquiring about evaluation based on the premise that teachers must be evaluated in some way in order to determine who, when and/or to what degree a teacher is retained and/or rewarded. However,

The results of our investigation show that there is much confusion about the practice of teacher evaluation.

For instance, while a larger percentage of schools use a formal evaluation system, many teachers are not regularly evaluated. Additionally, Many teachers are unclear of the 'formal' processes by which they are evaluated and a majority of administrators responded that several areas of informal feedback have significant influence on teacher evaluation.

Schools will benefit from strategically developing and implementing novel and traditional structures to reward their best teachers with recognition, money, and time. Our best teachers can impact not only their own classrooms, but also

help increase the number of great teachers in classrooms across schools. For instance,

Schools could do a better job of developing their own teachers through formal training and internship programs that connect aspiring teachers with established high quality teachers.

In turn, a high quality teacher may teach classes with more students, but with the support of internship teachers. In this way a student to teacher ratio could stay low, interns could develop and learn from observing and working directly with a master teacher, a master teacher could develop not only his or her students, but teachers for the future, and school leaders could inculcate a new crop of young teachers while being able to offer significant financial rewards to high quality teachers.

School leaders need to operationalize the concepts of *growth mindset*, *fit*, and *the ability to build relationships with students.*

In other words, Heads of School and other school leaders should be asking themselves:
- What aspects of our hiring process currently measure these characteristics?
- What aspects of our current teacher evaluation model measure these characteristics?
- To what extent do we recognize or reward teachers based on these characteristics?

Schools should adhere to consistent implementation of their policies and practices around teacher evaluation. The data suggests an important disconnect between administrators' and teachers' perception of the implementation and effectiveness of formal evaluations. We conclude that this disconnect is in part due to inconsistent implementation.

We encourage school leaders to demonstrate their value of growth mindset in the practice of providing consistent and formative feedback to teachers.

NAIS should reevaluate the Principles of Good Practice with research on teacher quality. We highly recommend that the organization take advantage of the opportunity to provide guiding principles that are research based.

Further, NAIS should consider commission empirical research in independent schools.

As a small subset of schooling in the United States, independent schools must take advantage of the resources spent on research to leverage the information that is applicable to the independent school context. Furthermore, increasingly universities are developing programs for independent school practitioners. We urge NAIS to build partnerships with these university programs and take advantage of research currently being conducted in those institutions.

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Appendix A - Interview for Hiring Administrators

<u>Questions directed toward School Leaders (Division Heads, Heads of School, Assistant Heads of School):</u>
What are the characteristics of a high quality teacher?

What percentage of your current teaching staff do you consider to be 'High Quality'?
(potential follow up) What percentage of your High Quality teachers were once first year teachers in your school?

Do you have a new teacher induction/teacher mentor program at your school?

When you hire new teachers, what characteristics are most influential?

What is the best way to increase teacher quality in your school?

What measures do you take to retain/motivate your best teachers?

What obstacles do teachers face in their work?

As an administration, what do you do to recognize your high quality teachers?

To what extent does your school's evaluation process influence teacher quality?

What can school leaders do to turn the 'average' teacher into a high quality teacher?

In your opinion, what should school leaders do to increase the number of quality teachers in classrooms?

Appendix B – High Quality Teacher Interview Questions

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

<u>For Teacher for the Future</u>:

1.   What are the characteristics of a high quality teacher?

2.   How do you know that students are learning in your class?

3.   What motivates you to be a better teacher?

4.   What obstacles do you face in your work?

5.   How does your school administration support high quality teachers?

6.   To what extent does your school's evaluation process influence teacher quality?

7.   Based on the fact that you have been selected as a TOF fellow, it is likely to assume that you could probably get hired to work in most schools. Why, then, do you continue to work at your current school?

a.   Does your school reward HQ teachers to stay?

8.   In your opinion, what should school leaders do to increase the number of quality teachers in classrooms?

Appendix C – Survey for Hiring Administrators

Survey for Hiring Administrators

<u>Definition of High Quality Teacher in your School</u>– when answering the questions in this section, please consider the highest quality teachers currently employed at your school.

1.   How influential are the following characteristics to teacher quality?

Not at all important, Somewhat important, Moderately important, Very important

    a. Previous teaching experience

    b. Previous non-teaching experience

    c. Certification

    d. Highest level of degree attained

    e. Prestige of undergraduate institution

    f. Perception of previous employer

    g. Growth Mindset

    h. Continuous Professional Development

2. Rank, in order of importance, the following qualities in your teachers.

    i. Expertise in content knowledge

    j. Expertise in pedagogical practice

    k. Strong student outcomes (as measured by grades or standardized assessments such as reading assessments, ERB's, AP's, SAT's, ACT's)

    l. Ability to work collegially with other faculty members

    m. Ability to develop strong relationships with students

    n. Ability to work positively with parents

    o. Willingness to take on extra duties

3.   Rate the influence of the following characteristics when describing the highest quality teachers at your school.

Not at all important, Somewhat important, Moderately important, Very important

a.   A major or minor in the subject they will teach

b.   Enthusiasm

c.   Ability to develop strong relationships with students

d.   Strong pedagogical skills

e.   Strong communication skills with parents

f.   Team player

g.   Years of teaching experience

h.   High intellectual ability

i.   Commitment to stay at the school

j.   Agreement with the school mission/vision/religious affiliation

k.   How well they fit within the school's culture

l.   Certification

m.   Willingness to take on extra duties outside of typical teaching responsibilities

n.   Graduate of prestigious university

o.   Ability to produce significant gains in students outcomes

p.   Ability to work with struggling students

q.   Other (Please specify: _____)

<u>Recruitment and Hiring – when answering the following questions please consider your current hiring practices.</u>

4.   Of the list in question 3, what are the two most important characteristics in hiring the highest quality teachers? (Write in the letter corresponding to the characteristic for each row.)

Most important _____
Second most important _____

5.   Please rate the importance of each component of your hiring practice (please mark 'not used' if you do not use the component):

Not Used, Somewhat important, Very important, Required to Hire

    a. Division Head interview
    b. Head of School interview
    c. Colleague interview(s)
    d. Student interview(s)
    e. Parent interview(s)
    f. Demonstration lesson
    g. Campus tour
    h. On-site observation (at the candidates existing employment)
    i. Writing sample
    j. Other _____

6.   Of the items below, please select the two most important:
Most important _____
Second most important _____
    a. Division Head interview
    b. Head of School interview
    c. Colleague interview(s)
    d. Student interview(s)
    e. Parent interview(s)
    f. Demonstration lesson
    g. Campus tour
    h. On-site observation (at the candidates existing employment)
    i. Writing sample
    j. Other _____

7.   Please rate the importance of each component of a candidate's profile (please mark 'not applicable' if you do not use the component):

Not important, Somewhat important, Moderately important, Very important

    a. Cover letter
    b. Resume
    c. Application
    d. Written statement of philosophy
    e. Transcripts
    f. Evidence of on-going professional development
    g. Certification(s)
    h. Sample lesson plan
    i. Letter(s) of recommendation by previous supervisor
    j. Other informal recommendations
    k. Other _____

8.   Of the items in question 5, please select the two most important:
Most important _____

Second most important _____

Retention and recognition of high quality teachers - when answering the questions in this section, please consider the highest quality teachers currently employed at your school.

9.   How many days are teachers required to spend in professional development yearly (including the previous summer)?

   a. No requirement for professional development

   b. Less than 1 day

   c. 1 – 3

   d. 4 – 6

   e. 7 – 10

   f. More than 10

   g. Requirement varies based on years of experience

10.   Does your school use any of the following strategies to recognize or retain your best teachers? Yes or No

   a. Our teachers visit other schools for observations.

   b. We pay teachers specifically for high or improved student outcomes.

   c. We offer our teachers tenure.

   d. We offer paid sabbaticals.

   e. We allow unpaid leaves of absence.

   f. We offer reduced course loads and/or reduced teaching responsibilities
   g. Formal praise (e.g., letters in personnel file)
   h. Salary increase or stipend

   i. Leadership opportunities (i.e. committee chairs, department chair, mentoring, team leaders, dean positions, etc.)

   j. Awards and/or Public recognition

   k. Professional development opportunities (i.e., workshops, conferences, etc.)

   l. Continuing education opportunities (degreed programs)

m. Other _____

11.   On what indicators do you base rewards for high quality teachers? (Yes or No)

   a. We do not formally reward high quality teachers

   b. Formal supervisor evaluation

   c. Formal collegial evaluation

   d. Student feedback on teacher performance

   e. Faculty self evaluation

   f. Parent feedback on teacher performance

   g. Student-based outcomes (test scores, grades, AP outcomes, etc.)

   h. Informal supervisor feedback

   i. Informal collegial feedback

   j. Informal student feedback

   k. Informal parent feedback

   l. Years of service to the school

   m. Other indicators (please indicate) _____

12.   Does your school use a set salary schedule? (yes or no)

   a. If so, are teachers included in the process of setting or reevaluating the salary schedule? (yes or no)

   b. If not, are teachers able to negotiate their salaries upon contract renewal? (yes or no)

13.   Do you revise teacher salaries based on teacher evaluation measures?

   (Yes or No)

14.   Do you evaluate faculty with a formal process? Yes or No

15.   Do you evaluate your faculty on the following qualities?

   a. Expertise in content knowledge

b. Expertise in pedagogical practice

c. Strong student outcomes (as measured by grades or standardized assessments such as reading assessments, ERB's, AP's, SAT's, ACT's)

d. Ability to work collegially with other faculty members

e. Ability to develop strong relationships with students

f. Ability to work positively with parents

g. Willingness to take on extra duties

16. How often are faculty members formally evaluated?

a. More than yearly

b. Yearly

c. Every other year

d. Every three years

e. Less than every three years

17. Is the faculty provided with the criteria upon which their performance is evaluated? Yes or N

Demographic information:
18. Please indicate the title that best describes your position at the school

a. Head of School

b. Assistant Head of School

c. Division Head

d. Department Chair

e. Other hiring administrator

19. Which description best fits your school setting (choose all that apply):

a. Boarding School

b. Day School

c. Coeducational

d. Single Gender

e. Religious

f. Non-sectarian

20. Which grades does your school serve?

a. Pre/K-5

b. Pre/K-8

c. Pre/K-12

d. 6-12

e. 9-12

f. Other_____

21. Select the size of you school's student population.

a. 0-500

b. 501-1,000

c. 1,001-1,500

d. Over 1,500

Appendix D – NAIS Principles of Good Practice

Individual PGPs are linked from the list below, or you may download a PDF file containing all the PGPs.

The NAIS Principles of Good Practice for member schools define high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of independent school operations. The PGPs reflect the overall dedication to quality education that has always characterized independent schools. As members, all NAIS schools work to uphold the spirit of the PGPs. NAIS endorses in principle and follows in practice the Code of Ethics recommended by Independent Sector. Also see the NAIS Guidelines of Professional Practice, which are focused on defining specific standards of professional conduct for various roles or positions within independent schools.

General Considerations Regarding NAIS PGPs

Definitions: Principles are precepts grounded in an ethic and ethos of "doing the right thing"; practices are common activities.

Implementation: NAIS recommends that on the agenda of individual schools and that of groups of schools at the local, state, and/or regional levels, leaders initiate programming that educates school professionals and volunteers to the PGPs so that individuals use them to guide decision-making, especially in arenas that are fraught with potential challenges. Recommended implementation strategies include:

- Heads of schools distributing to staff and board members select PGPs, inviting community members to review them for applicability and compliance in their school and to tease out common themes across the set of PGPs (such as ethics, transparency, standards of excellence, and inclusivity).

- School leaders using NAIS Case Studies (available on ths website) and applying the relevant PGPs to role-playing how one's school or board would trouble-shoot the situation, including identifying the locus of responsibility for ensuring the spirit of the PGPs is being adhered to, as appropriate to a school's mission.

- Faculty and staff attending sessions at NAIS conferences and workshops and those of other independent school organizations devoted to the actualization of the PGPs in school operations and validation of them via the accreditation and strategic planning processes.

Modifications: If an NAIS member school or group of NAIS member schools wishes to use a modified version of an NAIS Principle of Good Practice that is more detailed for its specific use, we ask that the school or group include on the resulting document the following statement: "This document is based on the NAIS Principles of Good Practice created by the National Association of Independent Schools."

Concerns about Possible Violations of NAIS PGPs: NAIS recognizes there may be various interpretations of how the PGPs apply to each school and that, in some cases, one principle may conflict with another. Schools may air their concerns by contacting membership@nais.org. In the case of inquiries to NAIS about possible violations that have legal or accreditation implications, NAIS refers inquirers first back to the school authorities, and if that doesn't

resolve the question, to the school's accrediting body or to legal counsel, as the case may dictate.

How Are the PGPs Created?

These PGPs have been and continue to be developed by the industry for the industry, with much care and thought from NAIS school practitioners. NAIS's Principles of Good Practice are only as strong as the educational community that created them. Each set of principles is drafted by an NAIS committee of practitioners in that professional area, submitted to the NAIS board of directors for approval, then distributed to every member school. Read about the process NAIS uses to vet and create the PGPs.

Appendix E – Principles of Good Practice – Teachers and Supervisors of Teachers

Teacher

1. The teacher has a thorough knowledge appropriate for his or her teaching assignment and stays abreast of recent developments in the field.

2. The teacher uses a variety of teaching techniques suitable to the age and needs of the students and subject matter being taught.

3. The teacher establishes positive relationships with students, which, while recognizing the differing roles of adult and child, are characterized by mutual respect and good will.

4. The teacher collaborates with colleagues and the school's leadership in the design and implementation of curriculum within the context of the school's overall program and mission.

5. The teacher initiates growth and change in his or her own intellectual and professional development, seeking out conferences, courses, and other opportunities to learn.

6. The teacher is self-aware and self-monitoring in identifying and solving student, curricular, and school problems. At the same time, the teacher knows the mission and policies of the school and, when questions or concerns arise, raises them with appropriate colleagues and supervisors.

7. The teacher serves his or her school outside the classroom in a manner established by the individual school and consistent with the responsibilities of a professional educator. For example, teachers often serve as advisers, coaches, or activity sponsors.

8. The teacher participates in the establishment and maintenance of an atmosphere of collegial support and adherence to professional standards.

9. The teacher welcomes supervision in the context of clearly defined and well communicated criteria of evaluation.

10. The teacher models integrity, curiosity, responsibility, creativity, and respect for all persons as well as an appreciation for racial, cultural, and gender diversity.

Supervisor of Teachers

1. The supervisor has thorough knowledge appropriate to his or her supervisory assignment and stays abreast of recent developments in the field. The supervisor also exemplifies in his or her own work with faculty members the qualities that he or she hopes to develop in the faculty.

2. The supervisor develops and administers a comprehensive system of hiring, consistent with the policies of the school, which results in the appointment of the best-qualified candidate and a well informed match between school and teacher. Throughout the hiring and supervisory processes, the supervisor values racial, cultural, and gender diversity.

3. The supervisor ensures that faculty members new to the school receive orientation and support sufficient for them to work effectively and with confidence that they are carrying out the educational mission, policies, and procedures of the school.

4. The supervisor ensures that teachers are informed of both praise and criticism of their work and that useful support and assistance are available to each teacher to improve the quality of teaching.

5. The supervisor makes available to all faculty members on an equitable basis whatever resources the school can provide for professional growth and development, both inside and outside the school.

6. The supervisor encourages and challenges teachers to initiate curricular improvement by providing the necessary time and resources and by creating structures to foster faculty collaboration on curriculum development.

7. The supervisor leads faculty members in upholding high standards of professional behavior and responds immediately when behavior occurs that is harmful to children or harmful to the school community.

8. The supervisor evaluates and works to improve teaching through classroom visits, discussions with teachers, and other methods that are fair and consistent with the practices of the individual school. Evaluation is based on clearly articulated criteria that teachers have helped define and occurs in a context of respect for the teacher's professional knowledge and decision-making capability. The supervisor also monitors his or her own work by inviting suggestions and critiques from teachers.

9. When a faculty member's future in the school is in question, the supervisor devotes sufficient attention and resources to ensure that the situation is resolved or that the faculty member's departure from the school is handled with attention to due process and the dignity of the individual.

10. The supervisor ensures that all personnel policies are clearly articulated to faculty members and makes every effort to promote the establishment of salaries and benefits commensurate with the professional responsibilities of teaching.

Endnotes:
1. See General Considerations Regarding NAIS PGPs.

Article Date: 9/19/2014

Revised and approved by the NAIS board in 2006

Preamble: The following principles provide common ground for interaction between independent school professionals and their many constituents (parents, students, colleagues at other schools, and the public). The NAIS Principles of Good Practice for member schools define high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of school operations to guide schools in becoming the best education communities they can be, to embed the expectation of professionalism, and to further our sector's core values of transparency, excellence, and inclusivity. Accordingly, membership in NAIS is contingent upon agreement to abide by "the spirit" of the PGPs.(1)

Overview: The quality of the hiring process sets the tone for a mutually satisfying relationship between the school and the candidate and communicates to the candidate the spirit and values of the institution. The values that infuse these guidelines can be applied to any hiring process, whether that process involves the use of placement agencies or is fully managed by the school. NAIS encourages schools to adopt these principles and to share them with candidates as appropriate.

Principles of Good Practice:

The School's Obligations

1. The school has a stated procedure governing its hiring process and a strategic recruiting plan that includes strategies for seeking candidates who will add to the racial, cultural, and gender diversity of the institution.

2. The school identifies means by which to advertise the position to various pools of potential candidates, including those not currently employed by independent schools, and makes current staff aware of openings as they become public and available.

3. The school creates a complete job description for each available position. This description outlines the main responsibilities and expectations of the position, as well as any significant other activities that may be asked of the candidate.

4. The hiring and interview process includes the people who will be directly involved with the candidate in his or her new position.

5. The school and its representatives follow the laws that govern hiring practices and focus fairly and consistently with every applicant on the talent, skills, and abilities needed for the job, disclosing all information that is necessary for the candidate to make a well-informed decision.

6. When inviting a candidate to the school, the school explains who is to be responsible for expenses and what the visit will entail.

7. The school keeps all candidates informed about the hiring schedule and decision timeline.

8. In performing its due diligence, the school performs appropriate background and reference checks to validate a candidate's education and employment history, focusing on the ability of the individual to fulfill the professional duties of the position and to confirm the individual's suitability to work with children. The school does not finalize the hiring of a new employee

without completing a reference call with the individual's most recent employer, after securing permission to contact that employer from the candidate.

9. The school ensures that it is aware of any employment-related, binding contractual obligations of the candidate; and the school carefully avoids inducing or assisting in a breach of those contractual obligations.

10. When making an offer to a candidate, the school provides all relevant information, including compensation, job expectations, and working conditions.

11. The school affords candidates a reasonable period of time to consider an offer.

12. When the selected candidate accepts the job, the school contacts the other candidates to notify them that the position has been filled.

The Candidate's Obligations

1. The candidate discloses all information that is necessary for the school to make a well-informed decision.

2. The candidate accepts an invitation to visit at the school's expense only if he or she is seriously interested in a position.

3. The candidate responds to an offer within a reasonable period of time.

4. The candidate notifies the current employer as soon as reasonably possible of any plans to work for another employer.

5. The candidate does not accept more than one job at any time and seeks a release from any obligation with a current employer before signing a contract with a new employer.

Endnotes:
1. See General Considerations Regarding NAIS PGPs.

Article Date: 2/4/2005

Additional Tables of Survey Results

Rank, in order of importance, the following qualities in your teachers. (1 is highest ranking; 7 is lowest ranking)

■1 ■2 ■6 ■7

Quality			
Willingness to take on extra duties		34%	51%
Strong student outcomes		26%	41%
Ability to work positively with parents	4%	28%	5%
Ability to work collegially with other faculty members	2%	12%	6%	1%
Expertise in content knowledge	28%	26%	3%
Expertise in pedagogical practice	30%	32%	3%
Ability to develop strong relationships with students	37%	24%	1%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Additional Tables of Survey Results

Please rate the importance of each component of a candidate's profile:

- Not applicable
- Unimportant
- Neither Important nor Unimportant
- Important
- Extremely important

Component	Not applicable	Unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Important	Extremely important
Certification(s)	12%	24%	34%	23%	7%
Transcripts	8%	6%	26%	51%	9%
Sample lesson plan	15%	11%	30%	33%	10%
Application	20%	6%	22%	37%	14%
Written statement of philosophy	8%	3%	17%	50%	22%
Cover letter	2%		12%	60%	25%
Letter(s) of recommendation by previous supervisor	1%		9%	53%	37%
Evidence of on-going professional development	1%		10%	60%	29%
Resume	1%			43%	56%

Of the items below, please select the two most important, choose only two:

Item	Percent
Parent interview(s)	0%
On-site observation (at the candidates existing employment)	1%
Campus tour	1%
Student interview(s)	2%
Other	3%
Writing sample	3%
Colleague interview(s)	29%
Head of School interview	45%
Demonstration lesson	50%
Division Head interview	67%

Additional Tables of Survey Results

On what indicators do you base rewards for high quality teachers?

YES NO

Indicator	YES	NO
Student-based outcomes	25%	75%
Parent feedback on teacher performance	29%	71%
Formal collegial evaluation	30%	70%
Student feedback on teacher performance	42%	58%
Years of service to the school	55%	45%
Informal parent feedback	57%	43%
Informal student feedback	60%	40%
Faculty self evaluation	61%	39%
Informal collegial feedback	65%	35%
Informal supervisor feedback	84%	16%
Formal supervisor evaluation	86%	14%

Additional Tables of Survey Results

How often are faculty members formally evaluated?

Response	Percentage
Yearly	55%
Every three years	21%
More than yearly	10%
Every other year	7%
Less than every three years	6%