

The Teacher Quality Index

**A Protocol for
Teacher Selection**

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Introduction

One of the most critical elements in the success of any school is the quality of teaching that occurs every day in every classroom. If we want students to succeed to their maximum potential, having a quality teacher working with every student is paramount. For this reason, recruiting, selecting, inducting, and sustaining highly effective teachers is one of the greatest challenges facing today's educational leaders.

Research repeatedly has shown that students who are taught by effective teachers achieve more academically than their peers who are taught by less effective teachers (Mendro, Jordon, Gomez, Anderson, & Bembry, 1998; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Stronge & Ward, 2002). In the United States, identifying highly qualified teachers as defined by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is certainly a major step in the direction of better schooling. However, if we want to maximize the impact of the hiring process, we need to actively look for, identify, and hire teacher applicants who exhibit what research indicates to be the qualities of effective teachers.

The purpose of this book is to provide tools for human resource specialists, school administrators, and others involved in teacher selection to use in accomplishing the important task of hiring effective teachers. The key feature that we provide is the Teacher Quality Index (TQI), a two-part, research-based and field-tested interview protocol for teacher selection.

Before turning to tools for use in the teacher selection process (and the TQI in particular), let's begin with a review of two key background issues: *why we need effective teachers* and *why we have a shortage of effective teachers*.

Why We Need Effective Teachers

Policy, practice, and research all suggest that teachers have a significant impact on the education of their students. No Child Left Behind (Public Law 107-110) mandates that all students in every school in the United States be taught by highly qualified teachers by 2005–2006. Highly qualified teachers are defined as professionals who have been licensed to teach in their respective state (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Individual states have interpreted this legislation further. For example, the Virginia Department of Education (2002) has defined highly qualified teachers as those who are both certified and teaching in their area or areas of endorsement.

Being certified to teach, however, does not guarantee that a teacher will be successful with students. Students need effective teachers, but the criteria for teacher effectiveness are not as easily defined—or identified—as those for “highly qualified” teachers. In describing teacher effectiveness, a teacher’s certification is only one of many components. Teacher effectiveness is a multifaceted concept incorporating all aspects of teachers’ backgrounds, skills, and dispositions, ranging from personality to knowledge to technical skills.

The difficulty in identifying effective teachers during the hiring process is compounded by the fact that interviews are seldom conducted in a manner that researchers would deem valid or reliable. The selection process is influenced by the hiring administrators’ personal perceptions of what constitutes a good teacher. For some, a good teacher is one who does not refer students to the office for discipline problems; for others, a good teacher is one whose students achieve a grade level or more in academic growth each year. We would be better served if definitions of and decisions regarding teacher effectiveness were informed and guided by available research.

Research-guided decisions yield many benefits, including higher student achievement results, fewer discipline issues, and better relationships between teachers and students (Ralph, Kesten, Lang, & Smith, 1998). Moreover, researchers have found that the teacher impact on student learning lasts for years after students have left the teacher’s classroom (Sanders & Horn, 1998). Thus, given these short-term and long-term

benefits, school administrators need a well-developed knowledge-base and research-based skills to distinguish effective teacher applicants from others in the candidate pool.

The goal for everyone involved in the hiring process should be placing a highly qualified and highly effective teacher in front of every student in the school. It is true that many teachers grow in their effectiveness over time, but “the best opportunity a principal has to improve teaching and learning in a school is when a new teacher is hired” (Donaldson, 1990, p. 1). This is because a decision can be made about an applicant’s effectiveness without spending a single staff development dollar on the teacher. Thus, school leaders can use the selection process to evaluate applicants in order to determine which ones are likely to make a profoundly positive difference in the lives of students.

Why We Have a Shortage of Effective Teachers

Employees do not magically appear when the need arises; they must be recruited, selected, and retained. The recruitment of individuals into the teaching profession is the first step in securing an effective teacher for every classroom (Dozier & Bertotti, 2000). Selecting the most qualified applicants is the second challenge, followed by retaining effective employees once they are working for the school district. With student enrollments on the rise and state legislatures mandating smaller class sizes, both U.S. public and private schools are facing an increased demand for additional teachers (Gerald & Hussar, 2003). Couple this with the fact that the U.S. teaching force is, on average, five years older than the average worker in America—and five years closer to retirement age—and it is not surprising that approximately 2.5 million educators need to be hired by 2009 (Hussar, 1999).

Legislation can mandate that teacher qualifications meet specific standards, but it cannot compel highly qualified and highly capable individuals to apply for teaching positions. Consequently, this creates a supply-and-demand problem. By 2013, public enrollment in grades preK–12 in the

United States is projected to increase to 49.7 million students—an increase of 1.5 million students from the estimated enrollment in 2004 (Livingston & Wirt, 2004). While enrollment increases, teachers are leaving the profession and retiring faster than certified new hires can be secured (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll also found that teacher turnover rates (13.2 percent) are higher than the overall national average for worker turnover (11 percent). These teachers may be changing positions within the profession or leaving the profession. Moreover, the aging of the teaching force exacerbates the problem.

It is true that teacher preparation programs currently graduate adequate numbers of teachers and that there are sufficient numbers of certified individuals to meet the needs in most areas. However, teachers may not reside or want to work in the localities that need them. Compounding the supply issue is the fact that approximately 42 percent of newly prepared teachers elect not to teach or are unable to secure teaching positions (Darling-Hammond, 2000a; Dozier & Bertotti, 2000; Edwards, 2000). Henke, Chen, and Geis (2000) reported some of the reasons that graduates who earned their teaching certification gave for not entering the teaching workforce. These reasons included prestige of other professions (2 percent), low pay (7 percent), more lucrative offers (10 percent), and loss of interest in teaching (46 percent).

There seems to be clear evidence that teacher supply and demand, particularly in relation to *high-quality* teacher supply, poses a significant challenge for improving U.S. schools. Clearly, the impact teachers have is measurable and pays dividends beyond what is easily seen. Borrowing the format from a familiar credit card commercial, consider this: cost of a new school—\$45 million; cost of a school lunch—\$1.75; cost of an effective teacher—priceless!

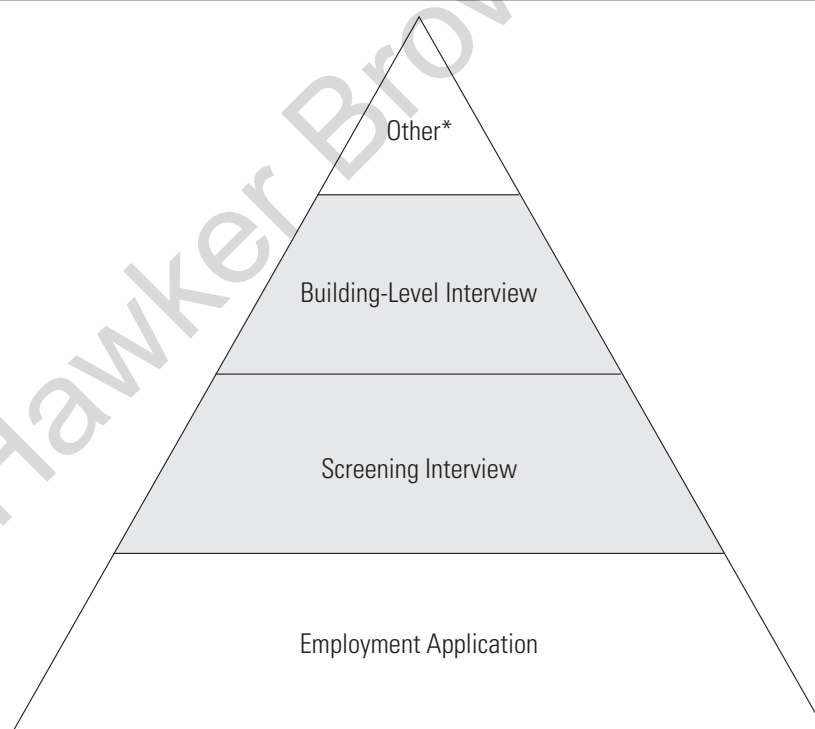
Tools in the Teacher Selection Process

As illustrated in Figure I, teacher selection is a hierarchical process. Our focus is the two middle sections: the interviews that provide an in-depth opportunity to learn more about an applicant. The Teacher Quality Index

is a value-added approach to gathering this information; as such, it does not ask interviewees about information that can be obtained from the employment application (the initial means of evaluation, the focus of which should be to determine if the applicant has the minimum qualifications for the position). Rather, the TQI interview protocol focuses on asking qualified applicants to expand on their abilities, skills, and experiences in an initial screening interview and, later, in a more in-depth building-level interview. The applicant pool is narrowed significantly as successful applicants advance up the pyramid toward the point of final selection.

Within school systems challenged to fill teacher positions, identifying ways to evaluate applicants efficiently and in a value-added manner will enhance the selection process. By developing a systematic way to gather data about candidates for a teaching position, school personnel can work smarter by not duplicating the efforts of others. And in the final analysis,

FIGURE I
The Hierarchical Process of Teacher Selection



*May include a writing sample, a demonstration lesson, additional interviews, and so on.

we hope they can enhance the predictability of their hires in terms of teacher quality.

Overview of the Book

This book provides concise background information on both interviewing and teacher effectiveness. It presents a research-based approach to teacher selection, and provides and discusses the two-part TQI interview protocol, which is provided in five forms on the accompanying CD-ROM.

The TQI protocol integrates research regarding how to conduct a good interview with research on what constitutes an effective teacher. Selection of high-quality teachers is complex: it is influenced by factors identified in applied psychology, such as interview structure and the phrasing of question prompts, and it draws on effective teacher research. The questions within the TQI are job-related and thus within the legal bounds of interviewing guidelines. Additionally, the TQI protocol is designed to offer a systematic application of the qualities of effective teachers to the selection process. In summary, the Teacher Quality Index

- Blends research on effective teaching with research on effective interviewing.
- Encourages the asking of interview questions that are legally permissible and job relevant.
- Draws from interview protocol components found in applied psychology literature.
- Uses research-based and field-tested interview questions aligned with the qualities of effective teaching.
- Provides research-based and field-tested rubrics to evaluate interviewee responses.

In the final analysis, using the research to strengthen the selection process gives educational leaders a valuable tool to assist them in identifying the applicants who are most likely to become the effective teachers our students need.

PART I

FOUNDATIONS
OF THE
TEACHER QUALITY INDEX

Teacher Quality and Teacher Selection

1

Teacher *recruitment* is the process of providing an adequate number of quality applicants. Teacher *selection* is the process of choosing only high-quality employees from among the assembled applicants. Hiring, supporting, and sustaining effective teachers is one of the most important responsibilities of school leaders, perhaps *the* most important responsibility. If we believe that teaching and learning are the core of schooling, then we also understand why good teacher selection is absolutely indispensable to high-achieving schools. And for those of us in the United States, identifying and selecting highly qualified individuals to facilitate learning in a productive and academically enriching classroom environment is integral to satisfying the need for capable teachers and fulfilling the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

An examination of the historical context of teacher effectiveness reveals that concern about capable teachers is not a new development. Studies on the qualities of effective teachers in the 1920s focused on personality traits. Today, such studies focus on teaching methods, behavior toward student learning, mastery of competencies, professional decision making, and interaction of pedagogical and subject area knowledge (Lederman & Niess, 2001). Of the various conceptual lenses that can be used to consider teacher quality, accountability is the most prominent—meaning the focus tends to be teacher competence and the importance of providing evidence

of effectiveness (Yin & Kwok, 1999). And to consider teacher effectiveness, we need to address the following issues:

- The quality indicators of effective teachers
- The connection between teacher quality and teacher selection
- The importance of connecting teacher quality to teacher selection

The Quality Indicators of Effective Teachers

The term “teacher effectiveness”—some definitions of which can be seen in Figure 1.1—is broadly used to identify attributes of what constitutes a good teacher, but it is also dependent upon who is considering the concept. As we use the term throughout this book, *teacher effectiveness* is a set of experiences, traits, behaviors, and dispositions that are typically evident in effective teachers. Words such as *ideal*, *analytical*, *dutiful*, *competent*, *expert*, *reflective*, *satisfying*, *diversity-responsible*, and *respectful* have been used to describe good teachers (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001). As demonstrated by this range of adjectives, “There is surprisingly little consensus on how to define a qualified teacher” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 42).

No Child Left Behind has established a working definition of a qualified teacher as a teacher who is certified in the area in which he or she is

FIGURE 1.1
Definitions of Teacher Effectiveness

teach-er ef-fec-tive-ness \ˈtē-cher i-ˈfek-tiv-nes\ n

1. A loosely defined concept (Stronge, 2002) that is influenced by individuals’ perspectives on what characteristics should be highlighted (Yin & Kwok, 1999).
2. The idea that a teacher cares about students as individuals and communicates that ethic by creating thoughtfully planned, executed, and assessed instructional opportunities in a productive classroom environment in an effort to increase the achievement of each student (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999).
3. A measure of the academic growth demonstrated by students during the year spent in a teacher’s classroom (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Stronge, Tucker, & Ward, 2003).

teaching. Yet there are other measures of quality to consider beyond the federal guidelines, including student achievement, stakeholders' perspectives, and performance ratings. Teacher effectiveness is like beauty; it is often in the eye of the beholder when people recall a special teacher. In doing so, former students often use words like *caring*, *intelligent*, *fair*, *funny*, *competent*, and *understanding*. Combining what we know from experience with research findings helps to identify integral components that are common in most effective teachers. One way to synthesize the extant research on key attributes, behaviors, and dispositions of effective teachers is to consider six domains—or areas—of teacher effectiveness described by Stronge (2002) in the ASCD publication *Qualities of Effective Teachers*:

- Prerequisites of effective teaching
- The teacher as a person (i.e., personal attributes)
- Classroom management and organization
- Planning for instruction
- Implementing instruction (i.e., instructional delivery)
- Monitoring student progress and potential (i.e., student assessment and student expectations)

Let's examine each of the six areas.

Prerequisites of Effective Teaching

Prerequisites are attributes teachers bring with them to the classroom. Included among key prerequisite qualities are verbal ability, content knowledge, education coursework, teacher certification, and teaching experience.

Verbal Ability. Teachers make connections with their students through words and actions. A teacher's verbal ability has a positive effect on student achievement, as the ability to communicate content knowledge and belief in students is vital to teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000b; Haberman, 1995b; Hanushek, 1971).

Content Knowledge. A California study found that mathematics teachers who majored or minored in mathematics had students with higher test