



Center for
Educator Compensation
Reform

Strengthening the Educator Workforce Through Human Resource Alignment

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Introduction and Background

For the third round of Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants, the Department of Education encouraged grantees to make their performance-based educator compensation system part of a coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce. A key aspect of such an approach is the alignment of human resource management (HRM) practices for educators at the district and school levels. In this brief, we describe two types of HRM practice alignment: alignment of HRM practices to important educator performance competencies and alignment of the practices to each other. Districts or local education agencies (LEAs) can assess both aspects of alignment and use the results to generate ideas for improving current HRM practices and developing new ones. The ideas become the foundation for a coherent and integrated HRM strategy. To help the district or LEA get started on the path toward human resource alignment (HRA), we also provide two exercises that they can use to guide an HRA assessment. The assessment yields alignment ratings for a wide range of human resource practices, as well as ideas for how to improve alignment for those practices.

HR Strategy and Educator Quality

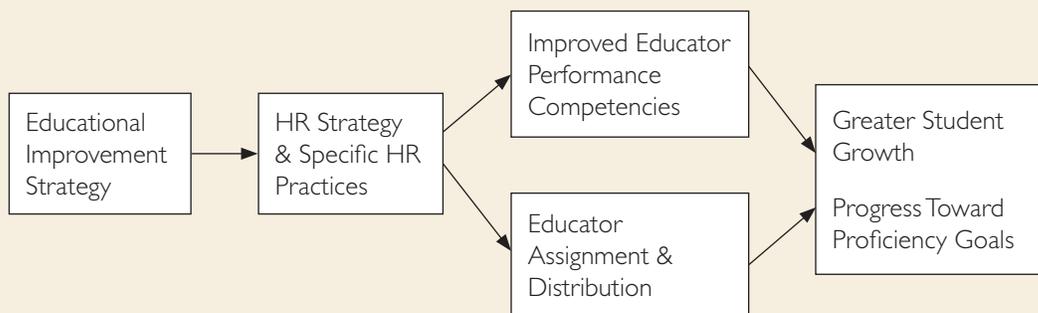
What does it mean to strengthen the educator workforce? In our view, it means districts must acquire, develop, and motivate educators with the performance competencies needed to improve educator practice and increase student achievement. It also means deploying the right number of high-quality teachers in schools and teaching assignments. Accomplishing all of this requires an aligned HRM strategy at the district level that focuses HRM practices on the desired performance competencies and that fits the practices together to support one another. Exhibit 1 shows the theory of action for this strategic approach.

Based on its overall educational improvement strategy, a district or LEA should develop an HRM strategy and the HRM practices based on identifying what educators need to know and need be able to do to implement the strategy. We call these educator performance competencies. They provide the specific definition of educator quality for the district or other LEA. These HRM practices in turn improve these educator performance competencies and deploy

educators to assignments where they can fully use their competencies. Districts will realize student growth and progress toward proficiency targets through this competency-enhancing process.

Strengthening the educator workforce thus requires a combination of acquiring and building (through learning and motivation) educator competencies. Districts can accomplish this through development and implementation of a competency-focused HRM strategy to guide specific HRM practices. The strategy must incorporate all HR practices, rather than allowing programs such as a performance-based compensation system (PBCS) to stand alone. The reason for this is that different HR practices have differing competency-enhancing purposes and impacts. Recruitment and selection, for example, are intended to bring educators with the competencies into the district. Alternatively, mentoring and professional development are aimed at building the competencies of existing staff. Performance management practices center on evaluating performance and planning for district-wide improvement, while PBCS seek to motivate the acquisition of competencies needed to perform at higher levels and their application in practice

Exhibit 1. HR system links between improvement strategies and improved student achievement



(Heneman, Milanowski, and Kimball 2007; Kelley, Odden, Milanowski, and Heneman 2000). Thus, the maximum possible impact on strengthening the educator workforce will come from a thoughtful design and delivery of all HRM practices. This strategic emphasis is necessary to develop coherence and integration.

Human Resource Alignment: Focus and Fit Are the Keys

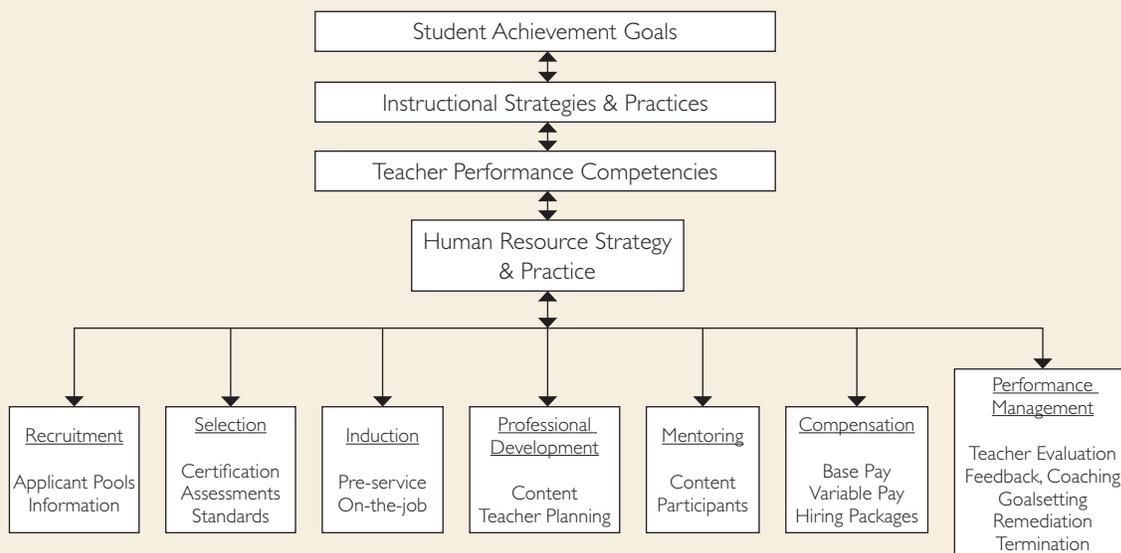
HRM alignment ensures that each HRM practice promotes acquiring, developing, and motivating educators with the desired competencies and that the practices work together in a coherent way (Heneman and Milanowski 2004, 2011). There are two forms of alignment:

- **Vertical alignment**, where all HRM practices focus on desired educator performance competencies. In vertical alignment, the performance competencies are embedded in the HRM practices, such as interview questions that focus on desired performance competencies during the selection process or competency-focused learning activities in professional development.

- **Horizontal alignment**, where HRM practices fit with each other in supportive ways, rather than staying confined within central office silos. An example of supportive fit is when the results of competency-focused teacher evaluation during the performance management process are used to identify competency-focused professional development activities for teachers.

Exhibit 2 illustrates strategic focus and fit (vertical and horizontal alignment, respectively) for the total HRM system for teachers. (A similar alignment concept also applies to school administrators.) There are eight major HRM practice areas for teachers (Heneman and Milanowski 2004), shown at the bottom of the exhibit. Within each HR practice area are two to four more specific HR practice components. Each HR practice area and components should have a focus on teacher performance competencies. The upward arrows from the HR practices to teacher performance competencies represent the specific focus. The performance competencies are necessary to drive student achievement; this is depicted by the upward competency-student achievement arrows. When choosing competencies, district planners should be guided by expert judgment and

Exhibit 2. Model of human resources alignment



emerging evidence showing empirical links between evaluations of teachers' competencies and student achievement (Heneman, Milanowski, Kimball, and Odden 2006; Kane, Taylor, Tyler, and Wooten 2010). Finally, the horizontal arrows between the HR practices signify supportive fit, meaning that the practices align horizontally through interface and support of each other.

Moving Toward HR Alignment

Getting started on the path toward an aligned HR system requires districts to make a number of inter-related decisions.

1. *For which educators is alignment is most critical?* For TIF grantees, teachers and principals are the logical choices. Since these two groups have different performance competency requirements, they require a separate aligned HR system for each group.
2. *At what level should alignment occur?* One could consider alignment at the state, district/LEA, or individual school level. Since most HR practices are developed and administered at the district/LEA level, we recommend starting there. However, if your PBCS is statewide or just applies to one school, those levels would be more appropriate.
3. *Who conducts the alignment assessment?* Moving toward HRM alignment requires decisionmakers who are committed to improvement, have instructional and HRM practice expertise, have control over resources, and are respected leaders. The decision to pursue HRA should have the support of district or LEA leadership. We recommend that a working group that includes key instructional and HRM staff (e.g., the HR director, the professional development director, the curriculum director, a principal or supervisor of principals, and if appropriate, a representative of the teacher or principal association) carry out the assessment.
4. *What are the performance competencies?* This is a key issue, since the competencies represent the actual skills and behaviors teachers or principals must have and use to carry out district strategies for improving student achievement. While districts need to choose specific competencies to meet their own needs, starting with an existing performance competency model speeds the process. A typical teacher performance competency model contains key performance domains (e.g., instructional planning, classroom management, instruction, and professionalism) and within each domain specific behaviors (e.g., uses student performance data in developing instructional units) and standards of performance for each behavior. Many available performance competency models are available for teachers, which should greatly reduce the burden of having to develop a model from scratch (Milanowski, Heneman, and Kimball 2009). Examples of these models include the Framework for Teaching, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the teacher evaluation component of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). Examples of performance competency models for principals include the ISLLC standards from the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), the model developed by Douglas Reeves (Reeves 2004), and the one underlying the VAL-ED principal assessment tool (Elliott, Murphy, Goldring, and Porter 2009). Exhibit 3 provides examples of teacher competencies.

Exhibit 3: Example Teacher Competencies

General Instructional Competencies	District-Specific Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze state content standards• Align curriculum to state standards• Analyze student assessment data• Manage classroom procedures• Manage student behavior• Engage students in lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan instruction and develop model lessons with grade-level or subject team• Implement district literacy framework• Work with grade level or subject team to develop grading standards that align with state proficiency levels• Implement district student behavior management procedures in response to student misbehavior

Conducting the Human Resource Alignment Assessment

Once program designers have made the decision above, the study group should first focus on vertical alignment by examining the degree to which each individual HR practice area supports the competencies. After designers review all the practice areas and ensure vertical alignment, the group should move on to consider horizontal alignment. The exercise that follows provides an abbreviated example of an alignment assessment. A full alignment assessment might take the study group six to eight meetings, working through two to three HR practice areas during each meeting. At the end of the process, we recommend the group review ideas generated for improving alignment and prioritize them based on cost, expected impact, and the time needed to implement them.

Human Resource Alignment Assessment Exercise

To help districts gain a sense of HRA assessment, we have developed a shortened version of the process that we used in the large district with which we worked (Heneman and Milanowski 2004; 2011) and also drawing on work by others (Jerald 2009; Wright 2008). The exercise focuses on district-level teacher HR practices. The exercise can be done individually or by a small group of district staff who are knowledgeable about desired educator performance competencies and current HRM practices. The exercise assumes districts currently have a PBCS or are in the process of developing one. The exercise will thus help districts gauge how close they are to having a well-aligned HRM system, one that represents a coherent and integrated strategy for strengthening the teacher workforce. The exercise is given at the end of this brief.

Vertical Alignment—Focus

Districts should proceed with the vertical alignment assessment in four steps: (1) identify teacher performance competencies, (2) rate the degree of alignment of each of the 21 HR practice components shown in the attached exercise, (3) add the ratings by area and overall, and (4) review the ratings and develop ideas for HR practice adoption and improvement. This exercise can begin the process of formulating specific HR strategies for a coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the teacher workforce.

Horizontal Alignment—Fit

The second exercise will help the district determine how well other HR practices support and are supported by its PBCS, so that they fit together into a coherent approach. It consists of a set of questions that ask the district to rate how well specific HR practices work with the PBCS. For each set of practices, the district should: (1) rate alignment, (2) add the ratings by area and overall, and (3) develop and record suggestions for how to improve horizontal alignment. Once the district has reviewed the information in the above table, it can formulate specific strategies for coherence and integration.

The district can assess horizontal alignment for any component of the HRM system. For example, the district could modify this exercise to assess horizontal alignment between professional development and other HRM practices.

Other Factors to Consider

Assessing HRM focus and fit and developing HRM practice improvements will take districts into other aspects of HRM, such as communication, data systems, and HR staff competencies. Districts may want to communicate more about their PBCS and the performance competencies they support to potential teacher or administrator recruits. Districts may need to streamline their hiring processes using information technology so that the district quickly interviews and offers jobs to applicants with the needed competencies. Districts' HR department staff may need upgrading to ensure they both understand current HR technology and have a good understanding of the district's strategies to improve student achievement. These additional considerations should be part of the plan to implement alignment improvements.

Several recent reports and studies shed light on transforming HRM systems (Bridgespan Group 2010; Campbell and DeArmond 2010; Campbell, DeArmond, and Schumwinger 2004; Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, and Newton 2010; Kimball 2011; Odden 2011). These suggest that the following factors are likely to help implement aligned HRM alignment systems for educators:

- Commitment and support from top management for aligning HR practices;
- Cross-functional teams, including HR, Instruction, and Information Technology staff to work on HR practice development, execution, and evaluation;
- An information technology system for storing and communicating teacher competency information; and
- Training of the principals who carry out HRM functions at the school level in new practices.

Human Resource Alignment Assessment Exercise

Part I: Vertical Alignment

A. Teacher Performance Competencies in Your District

Before conducting an HRA assessment, districts must identify the teacher performance competencies needed to implement their strategies for improving student achievement. These competencies will serve as the measure for how aligned a district's HR system is. Having these competencies in mind will help you make your alignment assessments in the exercise.

Briefly describe below four to six major teacher performance competencies that teachers in your district need to have to carry out the district's strategy for improving student achievement or realizing its vision of good instruction. If your district has not formally identified such competencies, outline four to six competencies you think the district should use.

Competency 1:

Competency 2:

Competency 3:

Competency 4:

Competency 5:

Competency 6:

B. Vertical Alignment Rating

In this part of the exercise you will make HRA assessment ratings of various HR practices in your district. In each question, the term “competencies” refers to the competencies you identified on the previous page. The questions cover the eight HR practice areas, and for each area, there are three questions about alignment. After answering the questions about each HR area, add the ratings made for each question to get an area alignment score. After making the last set of ratings, add the area scores to get a total score representing overall HR alignment.

Recruitment	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
R1: Are potential applicants informed about the competencies they are expected to have (such as in recruitment advertising or information on the district's website)?	2	1	0	0
R2: Does the district target recruitment to sources where potential candidates with the competencies are most likely found?	2	1	0	0
R3: Do you communicate the competencies you expect of new teachers to the major teacher training programs in your area?	2	1	0	0
Recruitment Total:				

Selection	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
S1: Are those who do the interviewing and hiring trained on the district's desired competencies?	2	1	0	0
S2: Are candidates assessed on the competencies desired (such as in initial screening, central office or school interviews, reference checks, portfolio reviews)?	2	1	0	0
S3: Do you try to select those candidates with the highest level of the competencies or the highest potential to develop them?	2	1	0	0
Selection Total:				

Induction/Mentoring	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
I1: Do you inform new hires early after hiring about the competencies the district expects them to have or develop?	2	1	0	0
I2: Do induction activities focus on developing the competencies?	2	1	0	0
M1: Does the district select mentors based on how well they have mastered the competencies?	2	1	0	0
M2: Do mentors assess teaching practice using a tool based on the competencies?	2	1	0	0
Induction/Mentoring Total:				

Professional Development	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
PD1: Are professional development opportunities available to help teachers develop all the competencies?	2	1	0	0
PD2: Does professional development planning explicitly include an assessment of the competencies? Do the findings from this evaluation result in directing efforts toward improving weak competencies?	2	1	0	0
PD3: Does the district conduct program evaluation of its professional development to gauge its relevance to the competencies before the district approves the competencies for funding or implementation?	2	1	0	0
Professional Development Total:				

Compensation	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
C1: Is the level of pay and benefits the district offers high enough to attract teacher job candidates with the desired competencies?	2	1	0	0
C2: Does the compensation system reward teachers for developing the competencies with pay raises, bonuses, or other financial incentives?	2	1	0	0
C3: Is there the flexibility to provide higher starting pay for teacher candidates that have especially high levels of the competencies?	2	1	0	0
Compensation Total:				

Performance Management	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
PM1: Does the teacher evaluation system assess the competencies?	2	1	0	0
PM2: Do school leaders set goals for teachers in terms of developing and demonstrating the competencies?	2	1	0	0
PM3: Do evaluators provide feedback and coaching related to the competencies?	2	1	0	0
PM4: Do remediation programs for struggling teachers focus on helping them develop and demonstrate the competencies?	2	1	0	0
Performance Management Total:				

(Please add the scores for each of the HR areas above to get your overall alignment score)

OVERALL ALIGNMENT SCORE: _____

After completing the ratings, record any ideas to improve vertical alignment in the table below.

Vertical HR Alignment Summary

HR Practice	Ideas for HR Practice Improvement
Recruitment	
Selection	

HR Practice	Ideas for HR Practice Improvement
Induction	
Mentoring	
Professional Development	
Performance Management	
Compensation	

Part II: Horizontal Alignment

The purpose of this part of the exercise is to help identify the degree of horizontal alignment (fit) between your PBCS and other key HR practices. The questions cover how well six HR practice areas support and are supported by a PBCS. For each area, there are two questions about alignment. After answering the questions about each HR area, add the ratings made for each question to get an area alignment score. After making the last set of ratings, add the area scores to get a total score representing overall horizontal alignment.

Recruitment	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
R1: Does the district provide information about the performance required to earn incentives in the PBCS in enough detail to allow applicants who believe they will not be able to perform at that level to self-select out of the hiring process?	2	1	0	0
R2: Does the district provide applicants with information on the additional money they can earn by meeting the performance goals in the PBCS?	2	1	0	0
Recruitment Total:				

Selection/Hiring	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
S1: Does the selection process used to screen or interview teachers focus on the competencies needed to meet the performance goals of the PBCS?	2	1	0	0
S2: Is the PBCS attractive to the kinds of teachers who have the competencies to help meet student achievement goals?	2	1	0	0
Selection Total:				

Induction	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
I1: Do induction programs orient new teachers to the PBCS and its performance requirements and help teachers learn how to meet them?	2	1	0	0
I2: Does the PBCS provide a pay increase or other rewards for teachers to engage in induction activities or show improved performance during the induction period?	2	1	0	0
Induction Total:				

Mentoring	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
M1: Do mentors help teachers understand the PBCS and help them develop the skills to succeed in earning the incentive?	2	1	0	0
M2: Does the PBCS offer sufficient incentives to encourage those with the ability to help teachers develop effective practice to accept and stay in mentoring positions?	2	1	0	0
Mentoring Total:				

Professional Development	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
PD1: Are there PD opportunities specifically targeted to help teachers improve performance in the areas rewarded by the PBCS?	2	1	0	0
PD2: Does the PBCS reward development of the competencies needed to improve student achievement? (Or does the PBCS reward development of the key competencies PD programs focus on?)	2	1	0	0
Professional Development Total:				

Performance Management	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Unknown
PM1: Do school leaders set goals for teachers that are compatible with the performance standards or targets in the PBCS?	2	1	0	0
PM2: Are the competencies the district evaluates in the performance evaluation process the same ones that will help teachers meet the goals needed to receive the incentive?	2	1	0	0
Performance Management Total:				

Total alignment score (sum area totals):	
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Horizontal Alignment Summary

After completing the ratings, summarize them and record any ideas to improve the alignment of other HR practices to your PBCS in the table on the next page.

HR Practice	Alignment Rating	Ideas for HR Practice Improvement
Recruitment		
Selection		
Induction		

HR Practice	Alignment Rating	Ideas for HR Practice Improvement
Mentoring		
Professional Development		
Performance Management		

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