

CONSTRUCTING A TEACHER PROFILE

Version 12.1.2023

What is a teacher profile and why is it important?

Various research and experience reinforce the importance of districts developing and using a teacher profile throughout their teacher pipeline to help drive teacher quality and diversity. A teacher profile specifies the kinds of teachers you want in your district across positions, aligned to your district's definition of equitable teaching and learning and informed by performance data, to ensure that each teacher enters your district already on a trajectory toward success.

For example, in [DL2's research](#), districts that used a teacher profile as the basis for recruitment enhanced their efforts to support teacher quality and diversity (Honig & Rainey, 2023). As one HR director explained,

With the teacher profile, we are saying it's not enough for a candidate to be certified.... They need to be ready to perform on Day 1.... New teachers will be in a different place. But when we use the profile, we are saying that even they need to come in ready. Now our recruiters are more strategic about where they look for candidates. And when they go out, they are sending a message of "A [district] teacher is highly valued" which has been important to our culture building. The message is "High fliers, apply here! If you are serious about your growth and serving [historically marginalized students]... we want you!" (p.21)

Such profiles anchored DL2 districts' equity agendas in part by integrating cultural competence into basic hiring criteria for all positions. Over time, profiles also helped build school principals' confidence in the applications they received from HR, since those applications included candidate data related to specific, common criteria and came only from applicants who could already perform at levels predictive of their future success.

How to develop a teacher profile?

There is no one best process for developing a teacher profile, but DL2's research and experience suggest districts would do well to consider the following steps, which we illustrate with examples from Highline Public Schools (WA).

- **Engage stakeholders.**

Developing the right profile takes the expertise of many people and engaging those people early in the process can increase the likelihood they will use the profile to anchor their work. Staff with important expertise and buy-in include: HR recruitment and selection staff; Teaching & Learning leaders especially knowledgeable about the district's definition of high-quality teaching and learning and teacher growth trajectories; Data and Accountability staff who can build data systems to track candidates along the profile; school principals especially engaged in teacher

hiring; and leaders of preservice pathways— particularly those that educate large numbers of candidates of color.

For example, Dr. Steve Grubb, Chief Talent Officer in Highline Public Schools (HPS), assembled a team which he described as “a combination of building-based and central office staff, and Teaching & Learning and HR” including principals, principal supervisors, the Chief Academic Officer, and other central office staff with deep knowledge of the district’s definition of equitable teaching and learning.

- **Start from the district’s definition of equitable teaching and learning.**

DL2’s study districts and other school systems have advanced support for equitable teaching and learning by aligning their various central office processes to a single clear definition of equitable teaching and learning. Many of their HR units worked backward from that definition to create a profile that identified the skills and dispositions a teacher new to the district would demonstrate if they were on a trajectory of success toward that definition.

In HPS, participants in the profile development did just that and also used the district’s strategic plan, which focused on four areas or pillars: Equitable access, results-focused instruction, partnerships, and cultural responsiveness. Per Dr. Grubb, “What we wanted to do was use those resources to identify explicit teaching practices... what teachers would do, and then what teachers believed, and then what they would commit to” with a specific eye to what was reasonable to expect of new teachers entering the district. The focus on commitments led the development team to include specific demonstrated beliefs in their profile, in Dr. Grubb’s words, “around equity,...empathy and listening and growth mindset and rigor. And beliefs around kind of a commitment to this community and this context of Highline.”

- **Consult the research and data.**

In DL2’s districts, leaders engaged with research and researchers to develop their definitions of equitable teaching and learning and aligned profiles. Many noted that some teacher candidates’ practices were predictive of later performance and that they wanted to ensure their profiles reflected that knowledge base. They also consulted their own workforce data. One HR director described developing their profile, in part, by examining cases of successful teachers, saying:

You have to go find out why did that one teacher over there have significantly higher attendance with . . . [African American and Latinx boys] who are absent four times more than their White peers. . . . Where did they do their teacher prep? What kind of mentoring [did they have]? What did their applications look like—or not look like because we didn’t ask the right questions? Then that kind of information becomes standard” (Honig & Rainey, 2023, p.80).

Dr. Grubb and his team in HPS drew on research about instructional practice, specifically in literacy and mathematics instruction and culturally responsive teaching. Much of this research was already reflected in the instructional framework used by Teaching & Learning which showed what novice levels of those key practices typically look like.

- **Evolve the profile over time.**

HR leaders in DL2's districts viewed their initial teacher profiles as hypotheses or informed guesses about the kinds of teachers who would be successful in their schools. They planned to evolve their profile over time as they generated data about new teachers' actual performance. As one said, "... when our data system has matured... we ought to know over the next three years how do these teachers perform? Did our predictions hold up?" (Honig & Rainey, 2023, p.80).

Dr. Grubb recalled the importance of viewing the profile as a resource that would necessarily be informed by experience and district values. In his words,

We had a mantra back then [when we were first developing the profile]: Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Better to take a crack at it. Get something out there that's better than what was before, and then improve on that. And as the strategic plan has evolved, we look at the profile.... Not [with an eye to] throwing everything out... but to relook at our profile, look at what we're valuing, and making sure everything aligns.