

PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS

Best Practices and Indicators

Human Resource Management

1. The district efficiently and effectively recruits and hires qualified instructional and non-instructional personnel.

- a. The district
 - can demonstrate that it verifies the qualifications of all of its instructional employees, and that all instructional employees are qualified for the positions that they hold;
 - by policy conducts its employment procedures in a manner that assures equal opportunity regardless of age, race, color, religion, sex, and national origin; and
 - completes at least preliminary background checks of all new employees prior to placing the employee in a position that involves contact with students. *(Basic Indicator)*
- b. The district maintains up-to-date, clear, concise, and readily accessible position descriptions that accurately identify the duties of each position and the education, experience, knowledge, skills, and competency levels required for each class of positions, and for each district-level administrative position.
- c. The district's recruiting practices generate a sufficient number of qualified applicants to fill vacant positions in a timely manner. Factors that should be considered in reviewing the district's recruiting practices include those below:
 - Are job vacancy announcements clear and readily accessible to potential employees?
 - Do out-of-state recruiting trips achieve measurable results over time that justify the costs of those trips?
 - Has the district developed/used other recruiting practices, such as job fairs, college partnerships, or local training programs?
- d. The district uses a variety of methods, including the Internet, to increase the accessibility of information on job vacancies, the ease with which potential applicants can submit applications, and the efficiency with which applications can be processed and shared within the district.
- e. In those areas in which the district experiences a shortage of qualified applicants, the district has developed and implemented short- and/or long-term strategies to remedy the situation. ¹
- f. If the district is not generating enough qualified recruits to fill its vacancies, then the district has compared its entry-level salaries and other recruitment factors with neighboring or competing districts to determine what steps are necessary to better compete for qualified applicants. Those steps have been identified, reported to the board, and addressed by the board to the extent feasible.
- g. The district can demonstrate that district employees generally reflect the population of the district, OR, if certain minorities are underrepresented, the district has implemented a long-term plan to remedy that situation.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹ One strategy for meeting shortages in instructional areas is the use of out-of-field teachers. The district should be taking steps as required by law to minimize the use of out-of-field teachers, such as providing training to help those teachers become in-field.

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- 2. To the extent possible given factors outside the district's control, the district works to maintain a reasonably stable work force and a satisfying work environment by addressing factors that contribute to increased turnover or low employee morale.²**
- a. The district can demonstrate through climate surveys, exit interview results, collective bargaining negotiations and/or other appropriate methods, that it has created a working environment for its employees that enhances worker satisfaction, and minimizes employee turnover. At a minimum
- unless the results of surveys conducted by the employee unions are available to the district, the district should conduct climate surveys that measure employee satisfaction on such factors as work environment, quality of supervision, safety, district-wide support, and opportunities for professional development; and
 - the district should conduct exit interviews with employees who terminate employment, and compile the results of these interviews.
- b. The district maintains historical data on turnover rates for major classes of employees and monitors this data to identify unusual variations in the turnover rate. In lieu of historical data from the district, current turnover data from peer districts can be used.
- c. Districts monitor data related to portions of the workforce approaching retirement, with attempts to forecast any large numbers of retirements that are likely to create a need for an abnormally high number of qualified applicants in any given year.
- d. The administration and board have been informed of the results of efforts to evaluate the working environment of the district. Based upon analyses of the working environment, the district has taken steps to identify and remedy factors that adversely affect this working environment. These steps may include
- comparison of salary and benefit packages with peer districts and with other public and private employers in the area;
 - internal equity studies (comparisons of pay grades and responsibilities for major classes of positions within the district);
 - linking pay increases to performance, including student achievement;
 - incentive pay policies to encourage and reward effective teachers, critical shortage teachers, and teachers in hard to place schools; or
 - basing the selection of personnel for positions that receive supplemental pay on performance criteria.
- e. The district maintains clear and effective channels of communication with its employees, including
- providing readily accessible copies of a useful employee handbook, the collective bargaining agreement, and information on district personnel policies and benefit packages;
 - communicating district news and changes in policy to all employees; and
 - opportunities for employee feedback on district policies and practices that affect their areas of work or expertise, including employee membership on policy committees, and/or the solicitation of employee input on district policies and programs.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

² A reasonably stable work force is characterized by a turnover rate that is low enough so that vacancies can be filled in a timely manner without requiring extraordinary recruitment efforts. This includes both a focus on the district as a whole as well as individual schools and departments. Evidence of an unstable work force could include situations in which school sites or a support departments have been beset by an extremely high turnover rate so that programs and activities have been disrupted, discontinued or have decreased value.

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3. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program to improve student achievement and to achieve and maintain high levels of productivity and employee performance among non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees.³

- a. The district
 - conducts orientation programs for all new employees, and includes information on district procedures, performance expectations and evaluations, training and career opportunities, and personnel policies regarding such issues as absences, leave approval and tardiness;
 - has a professional development system that meets the requirements of Florida law, including approval by the state Department of Education; and⁴
 - has a district-wide training program and maintains training records on each staff member. (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. In the process of providing professional development for all employees, the district conducts needs assessments that include input from employees and their supervisors at least every other year. Included within these assessments is input related to the new employee orientation programs.⁵ Professional development for instructional personnel should be planned and implemented based on an analysis of student needs.
- c. The district establishes and maintains formal staff development plans to ensure that all employees receive needed training.⁶ Individual professional development plans that meet the requirements of Florida law are maintained for instructional personnel.⁷
- d. As required by law, the inservice activities for instructional personnel primarily focus on
 - subject content,
 - teaching methods,
 - technology,
 - assessment and data analysis,
 - classroom management, and
 - school safety.⁸
- e. The district solicits employee feedback on in-service training activities, especially high-cost or recurring training efforts. This feedback is used to evaluate the quality of the training; the performance of the trainers; the extent to which training efforts have met identified long-term training objectives; and the relative benefits produced by the training in view of the costs of the training.⁹

³ In some districts, the staff development programs and issues related to non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees may vary widely. In such cases, it is acceptable to separate this best practice into two or three separate best practices, and to deal with these employee groups separately.

⁴ See s. 231.600(4), *F.S.* If a district has a DOE-approved professional development system, then the focus of this best practice review will be upon verifying that the district has implemented and continues to implement the system as approved.

⁵ Other tools that can be used for planning include an analysis of the aggregated results of employee evaluations, and, for instructional training, an analysis of disaggregated student data pertaining to goals for student learning and development.

⁶ The responsibility for the delivery and coordination of training for classes of employees may be delegated to other units within the district (i.e., transportation employees may be trained by the district's transportation unit).

⁷ See s. 231.600(5), *F.S.*

⁸ See s. 231.600(4), *F.S.*

⁹ This best practice does **not** suggest that employee feedback has to be collected on **every** individual training event, as that has the prospect of producing lots of paper that never gets used or reviewed. However, the district should use a strategy for collecting and analyzing employee feedback data, and using that data to improve the training program.

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- f. Individual departments are aware of their training responsibilities and have access to budgeted funds in order to meet those responsibilities.¹⁰ The district has policies and/or procedures to guide the use of district funds for high cost training activities such as conference attendance, consultant trainers, or the purchase of video training or other training packages.
- g. The district has mentoring programs for new non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees. Mentors receive training at least bi-annually. Mentoring programs should be relationship-based with minimal paperwork requirements. For new teachers, the district has a comprehensive induction program that provides
 - opportunities to learn the additional skills necessary to be successful in specific school environments; and
 - a mentoring component for new teachers.
- h. The district provides information and administrative support to encourage instructional personnel to pursue certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, in accordance with the provisions of Florida law.¹¹
- i. All principals, assistant principals, and school site administrators have completed (or anticipate completing within the current school year) the district leadership training program for administrators and school-based managers.
- j. Considering the size of the district and the projected need for new school administrators over the next three to five years, the district has developed a pool of potential administrators who are receiving training prior to their selection to become administrators.
- k. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The district's system for formally evaluating employees improves and rewards excellent performance and productivity, and identifies and addresses performance that does not meet the district's expectations for the employee.

- a. The district
 - has established and implemented procedures for assessing the performance of all instructional personnel as required by Florida law, and these procedures have been approved by the Department of Education;¹²
 - provides written information regarding the performance assessment process to all personnel at the beginning of a rating period, including performance criteria that will be used in the assessment and the process that will be used to make the assessment;
 - has performance criteria including measures and standards related to student outcomes for instructional personnel, as required by Florida law; and¹³
 - provides employees with a written employee disciplinary procedure that includes provisions of due process. (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. The evaluation of instructional employees includes an appraisal of the employee's content knowledge in the area of instruction. The evaluation of performance may include input from peers and subordinates, from parents and from other classes of employee. Master teachers who have received training for this purpose may be used to assist in the evaluations of new teachers.

¹⁰ The policies and procedures do not have to be identical for all departments. Approval for training costs can be assigned to department or school site administrators so long as the district has policies that set parameters for those approvals.

¹¹ See s. 236.08106, *F.S.*

¹² See s. 231.29, *F.S.*

¹³ See s. 231.29, *F.S.*

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- c. The district verifies that all instructional employees receive performance evaluations at least once a year as required by law, and all non-instructional employees receive performance evaluations as required by district policy.
- d. The evaluation process is structured in such a way that employees are clearly informed when their performance does not meet the district's expectations. When an employee's performance does not meet expectations, the supervisor provides the employee with written notice as to when performance will be reevaluated, and a copy of this notice is provided to the district.
- e. The evaluation of school administrators is made after considering feedback solicited and received from non-administrative personnel and from parents.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The district ensures that employees who repeatedly fail to meet the district's performance expectations, or whose behavior or job performance is potentially harmful to students, are promptly removed from contact with students, and that the appropriate steps are taken to terminate the person's employment.¹⁴

- a. The district regularly provides training, guidance, and coaching to managers on the procedures and issues associated with working with poorly performing employees.
- b. The district has established procedures and criteria to identify the employee behaviors and performance problems that are potentially harmful to students.

¹⁴Evidence of a problem in this best practice area could include one or more of the following examples

- the forced reinstatements of employees who had been dismissed;
- large monetary settlements to employees who had been dismissed;
- public forum, survey or focus group results that suggest that poor performing employees are transferred from site to site rather than being dismissed; or
- incidents occur that are adverse to students involving employees who had previously been identified by the district as poor-performers or as potentially harmful to students.

Evidence that a district is performing this best practice should include

- general consensus from the public forum, survey, and/or focus groups that behavior and performance problems are dealt with effectively by the district;
- if there are cases or incidents as those described above, the district should be able to explain how such cases or incidents were exceptional and should not repeatedly occur within the district; and
- on the indicators listed under this best practice, it is more important that the district provide examples of the application of these procedures than that it provide evidence that a particular procedure is written down some place.

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- c. The district has established and implemented policies regarding the drug testing of employees and who are impaired by alcohol or drug abuse, in accordance with Florida and federal law.¹⁵ The established policy includes the confidential random testing of new employees and of employees after specified accidents or incidents. The policy provides for termination of persons who test positive for drug or alcohol use under the provisions of federal law.
- d. The district conducts an employee assistance program for staff to receive assistance with any admitted substance abuse issues or any impairment resulting from alcohol or drug abuse, as required by Florida law. While staff receive counseling or other treatment, the district ensures they are suspended from bus driving or other safety-sensitive functions.
- e. District managers¹⁶
 - follow district procedures and state requirements for working with employees with unsatisfactory performance in such a way that performance is improved or employment is terminated; and
 - monitor the progress and performance of students who are under the instruction of a teacher who has been evaluated as performing unsatisfactorily.
- f. At least one official at the district level is charged with the responsibility of working with principals and other administrators to appropriately document poor performance and to provide administrative and legal consultation to the principals and other administrators in making and implementing decisions to terminate employees.
- g. The district provides for
 - the prompt investigation and resolution of allegations of behavior by district employees that is potentially harmful to students and
 - the expeditious removal from contact with students those employees whose behavior, attitude, or performance may be harmful to students.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The district has efficient and cost-effective system for managing absenteeism and the use of substitute teachers and other substitute personnel.

- a. The district monitors rates of absenteeism and the use of substitutes among teachers and other essential employees. The district has defined the rate of absenteeism that requires district review, and has developed policies/practices to deal effectively with the problems created by excessive absenteeism.
- b. The district recruits and maintains a sufficient number of substitute teachers to cover most absenteeism peaks. The district has clearly defined procedures for teachers and essential non-instructional personnel to notify the appropriate school or district officials of an anticipated absence and for substitutes to be contacted.
- c. The district provides ongoing training and orientation for substitute teachers.
- d. The district routinely provides special assistance (training and oversight) to those who must substitute for extended teacher absences.

¹⁵ See ss. 112.0455 and 231.263, *F.S.* While the policy should be enforced for all employees, the analyst should pay special attention to the enforcement of the policy with regard to full and part time bus drivers.

¹⁶ The team is looking for evidence that these types of activities are occurring when the described situations occur. The existence of a written procedure is not sufficient evidence by itself. The attendance of managers at training courses on how to deal with poorly performing employees is a positive indicator, with some qualitative support from focus groups, surveys, and forums that affirms that these practices are routinely followed within the district.

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- e. The district has implemented ways to decrease absenteeism, which may include an incentive program to reward good attendance.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. The district maintains personnel records in an efficient and readily accessible manner.

- a. The district maintains personnel records, including confidential records, in accordance with the *Florida Statutes* and regulations.¹⁷
(Basic Indicator)
- b. The district uses automated record-keeping systems and minimizes the use of antiquated or time-consuming hardcopy record systems. The district has an efficient and effective record keeping system for both automated and hardcopy personnel records, including a system for the identifying and archiving of old records.
- c. The district has established procedures to allow officials at school sites to access automated personnel records. School administrators can amend personnel records without compromising the security of those records, thus diminishing the need for the transfer of paper from the school to the district office.
- d. The district can demonstrate that it updates personnel records in a timely manner, and, when dealing with a filing backlog, files hardcopy records in a prioritized fashion so that needed records can be found in the file.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district uses cost-containment practices for its Workers' Compensation Program.

- a. The district reviews its Workers' Compensation Program to evaluate workers' compensation claims and expenses. Included in this evaluation, at a minimum, are an examination of claims trends and a comparison with state and national statistics, peer and area school districts, and as appropriate for some positions, other government agencies and private industry.¹⁸
- b. The district uses the results of these evaluations to be proactive in attempts to cost effectively reduce frequency and cost of Workers' Compensation claims.¹⁹
- c. The district has procedures that are distributed to all employees concerning prompt reporting of all on-the-job injuries.
- d. The district has a safety inspection program that determines the corrective actions necessary based upon past workers' compensation claim experience and proactive inspection of known and probable high-risk areas and professions.

¹⁷ See s.231.291, *F.S.*

¹⁸ The frequency of this review of claims and expenses will vary based upon the size of the district and the value of the review findings.

¹⁹ For example, the district may have implemented changes within the district to reduce the potential for similar accidents or it may have identified trends in the claims that can be addressed through training or changes in the employment criteria.

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- e. The district practices strong cost-containment measures to limit the amount needed to be placed annually into the workers compensation reserve fund. These cost containment measures include
- a light duty program to get injured employees back to work as soon as possible;
 - routine, cost-efficient monitoring and follow-up of claims (usually by a third party administrator) to ensure that workers are returned to work as soon as possible;²⁰
 - a training and safety program to reduce the likelihood of on-the-job accidents; and
 - a claims review function to identify and address situations, unsafe conditions, or training deficiencies that may have contributed to worker injuries or accidents.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

9. The district uses cost-containment practices for its employee benefits programs, including health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement.

- a. The district reviews its employee benefits prior to each new contract with employee unions to ensure that the district is attaining appropriate value for its benefit costs.
- b. The district works cooperatively with employee unions to evaluate alternative delivery options for its employee benefits in order to contain costs, such as
- self-insurance;
 - alternative approaches to benefit programs, such as cafeteria plans;
 - variable family benefit choices;
 - HMO and preferred provider plans;
 - variations in the levels of deductibles and co-payments;
 - the relative level of benefits provided to part time and full-time employees.
- c. The district calculates the anticipated short term and long term fiscal impact of changes to its benefit packages prior to agreeing to those changes in negotiations with the employee unions.
- d. The school board is informed as to the short term and long term fiscal impact of changes to its benefit packages prior to approval of employee contracts.
- e. When considering early retirement offerings, the district calculates both the short term and long term fiscal impact of such proposals, including the effect on employee benefits and the effect on employee recruitment, before offering the options.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The district's human resource program is managed effectively and efficiently.

- a. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for the human resource program that reflect the intent (purpose) and expected outcomes of the program and address the major aspects of the program's expenditures.
- b. The district conducts formal and/or informal reviews of the human resource program's organizational structure and staffing levels to minimize administrative layers and processes. The results of formal reviews are provided in writing to the school board.²¹

²⁰ A monitoring program should produce results that justify its costs either in terms of deterrent effect or in actual cost recovery.

²¹ The frequency and formality of these reviews will vary depending upon the size of the district.

Best Financial Management Practices With Their Associated Indicators
Best Practices (1, 2, 3 . . .) and Indicators (a, b, c . . .)
Adopted June 2002

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- c. The district's human resource program staffing levels are reasonable, based on applicable comparisons and/or benchmarks, and that each position performs work that adds value to the district. Furthermore, the district can demonstrate that each administrative position has supervisory or management responsibilities that justify classification as an administrative position.
- d. The district has considered the advantages, disadvantages, potential costs and potential cost savings of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering human resource services and benefits through increased use of automation and technology and the use of outsourcing.²²
- e. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve personnel management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. For classes of employees that are unionized, the district maintains an effective collective bargaining process.

- a. The district clearly designates which staff member(s) is (are) responsible for labor relations and contract negotiations, and these staff members receive annual training to enhance knowledge of the negotiations process, issues, and legislative mandates.
- b. The district has clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the negotiator, the superintendent and school board members during the negotiation process. The process includes steps to establish district priorities for the negotiation process while maintaining confidentiality.
- c. School and unit administrators are asked to identify potential issues of concern that could be raised in the collective bargaining process. District negotiators determine the costs or potential cost savings associated with these issues, and then meet with district level administrators to determine the feasibility of addressing the concerns raised and whether the district wishes to include these issues in the district's proposal(s) to the union(s).
- d. Upon receipt of union proposals other than salary, district officials determine the estimated costs, and the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal.
- e. The administrative negotiating team(s) has access to an attorney trained in collective bargaining law and procedure.
- f. Records of negotiations are updated and maintained for at least five years or some other time prescribed by the district.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

²² For example, in order to handle requests for personnel assistance from administrators and employees more efficiently at the district level, the district has evaluated and implemented, when warranted, the use of automated systems as a means of more efficiently receiving and/or answering these requests and other inquiries.
Making wholesale changes without determining the advantages, disadvantages, and costs is not a good practice.