

**Review of Human Resources Processes
Milford School District
Fall, 2018**

Overview of Milford School District Human Resources Landscape

The Milford School District (MSD) is a high functioning school district located in southeast New Hampshire. The official student count as of October 1, 2018 is 2,312. The total number of MSD staff is 425 which includes 352 full-time and 73 part-time employees.

The breakdown of district staff is as follows:

Central Office Administration	3
Administration (includes school-based and central office administrators)	15
Teachers, BCBA and Specialists	210
Secretarial and Central Office Support	31
Building and Grounds Staff	24
Special Education Associates	83
Other Support Staff	43

Additionally, there are approximately 100 active substitutes in the MSD database. Instructional staff provides personalized instruction to all students in pre-K to grade 12 students in four schools (2 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high school). There is a 93% graduation rate and 75% of students go on to enroll in post-secondary education institutions. More than 35 students matriculate to Milford High School from other districts to take part in the Applied Technology Center.

Dr. Jessica Huizenga was appointed as superintendent in 2018 to lead the school district and build upon past successes – specifically charged with taking the district from good to great. A key element of Dr. Huizenga’s entry plan is to review and understand key central office functions. The importance of focusing on improving the way Milford School District attracts, hires, supports, evaluates and retains its staff is a critical lever in the educational and strategic plan for the district. We know that the most significant factors in student achievement is the quality of instruction and the school leadership that create the conditions for high-quality teaching. Additionally, the central office role in MSD is to support schools to ensure that all students reach their highest potential.

Dr. Huizenga requested a review of Human Resources systems and processes as well as recommendations around gap areas. Dr. Huizenga understands and recognizes the importance of all aspects of human capital work and is eager to implement best practices that will result in a continuous improvement in workforce quality.

According to the Milford website, the Human Resources Department assists current and prospective employees with all employment questions related to recruitment, hiring, benefits, the

New Hampshire Retirement System, compensation, leaves of absence, job descriptions, state and federal laws and compliance, employee safety and worker's compensation, contracts, employee personnel situations, and other employment-related matters. The HR Department consists of one HR Generalist who oversees these many functions. She has been in the position since September 2017. The HR Generalist has experience in teaching and also worked for a private company in Human Resources. Other HR functions are shared among staff in the business office, the superintendent's office and the SAU receptionist.

Approach to Information and Data Gathering

Beginning in August 2018, Susan Marks, Tekia Stokes and Laura Sebert met remotely for six weekly 2-hour conference calls to learn about Milford School District with an emphasis on human capital function areas. Our conference call agendas focused on problem solving employee issues, what practices are working, and the challenges of the district to implement a strategic approach to supporting the workforce in Milford. During these conference calls, we shared HR best practices, resources and tools with the HR Generalist.

On September 18 and 19, 2018, Susan Marks and Tekia Stokes were on site to engage with staff and stakeholders to obtain a fuller picture for how HR functions in Milford.

During the visit, we conducted fact finding and analysis of the following topics:

- Recruitment and hiring process for all staff
- Onboarding and processing of all staff
- Payroll/Benefits
- Induction for new staff
- Performance management and professional development
- HR Data metrics
- Organization and service delivery model
- Job description development and classification
- Substitute hiring
- Leave processes
- Investigatory processes

Our methods for collecting data included:

- Interviews and discussions with employees who perform HR functions
- Interviews with union representatives' teachers, custodians, technology and paraeducators
- Interviews with principals and other central office leadership
- Review of various HR documents and forms
- Review of the various HR processes to understand how candidates apply, get hired and are onboarded to the district
- Review of various job descriptions

Summary of Interviews *(Please note that this section reflects what the interviewees stated in response to questions that are aligned to the work of the HR Department)*

Feedback from the interviews was positive. The interviewees reported that the Milford School District is a “great place to work.” Employees are retained above the national average. Some staff said that due to the size of the district, there is definitely a feeling of “family”.

The HR Generalist is committed to improving service to schools and offices. She has attempted to improve various processes by reviewing and creating standardized forms. She is working collaboratively with the Business Administrator, principals and union leadership to understand the human capital needs of the district and how it impacts MSD’s mission. In fact, everyone that was interviewed from the central office sees their role as supporting schools and all MSD employees.

For the 2018-19 school year, all instructional positions were filled prior to the first day of school. There were only a total six classified part-time vacancies in food services, custodial services and special education paraeducators. Beginning school fully staffed should be the goal of every school district.

MSD HR Infrastructure and Roles

Currently, there is one HR Generalist who manages most of the HR components in MSD. She ensures that positions are posted and works with principals and hiring managers to make job offers and then processes the onboarding of new employees. Additionally, the HR Generalist handles investigations, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and other leave matters and maintains data entry of employees into *Infinite Visions* by Tyler ERP Solutions. Data related to employee absenteeism is collected from the *Absence Management* system (ASOP by Frontline Education). Staff from the superintendent’s office and the business office also perform several HR function responsibilities.

The SAU receptionist also performs a number of HR functions in addition to her central office responsibilities.

The administrative responsibilities of the SAU receptionist include:

- Handling the mail for all central office administrators
- Answering phone calls
- Managing student enrollment numbers.
- Managing building rentals
- Managing purchase orders
- Processing course reimbursements

The HR responsibilities of the SAU receptionist include:

- Accepting job applications
- Scanning new job applications into folders and following up on missing documentation
- Responding to phone calls from new applicants and current employees

- Managing e-verify and I-9 documentations
- Finger prints all new staff
- Coordinating getting pictures taken for employee badges
- Coordinates substitute applications and sets up the substitute interviews with school-based personnel
- Submits first reports of injury to the state and the Workman's Compensation company

Another person who supports HR is the Payroll Coordinator. Besides being responsible for payroll for all full and part-time school employees, including teachers, administrators, support staff and substitutes, she is responsible for the following administrative tasks

- Attendance entry for all staff
- Medicaid and retirement reporting
- Quarterly government reporting, which includes W-2, 1095/94 submissions

The Payroll Coordinator's HR responsibilities include:

- Employment verifications for salary assignment
- Wage schedules for workmen's compensation
- Processing unemployment benefits
- Managing 403b processes
- Verifying hours for both hourly and salaried employees
- Entering data into HR applications
- Managing employee audits
- Managing insurance and flexible benefits
- Supporting union agreements.

Another support for HR comes from the Assistant to the Superintendent. In addition to her duties supporting the superintendent and the Director of Curriculum, her HR responsibilities include:

- Tracking reimbursement credits for moving steps on the salary scale
- Preparing paperwork for the superintendent to sign confirming college credits and salary reimbursement
- Uploading data linked to teachers and students for state reporting

Staff raised a concern about the capacity to perform their work coupled with the additional HR responsibilities. At critical times of the year, these multiple responsibilities cause timelines not to be met and considerable stress on the staff. These additional HR responsibilities make their full plate of responsibilities and competing priorities even greater.

Recruitment and Hiring Process for all Staff

While there is no budget for recruitment of staff, HR uses free services and posts positions on the Milford Website, Edjobs, job boards, LinkedIn, newspapers and reaches out to colleges for specific vacancies. Current staff is encouraged to refer high-quality candidates for consideration.

The HR Generalist process mapped the MSD application process. The current process from posting, to making the job offer, to onboarding new employees is lengthy, cumbersome and paper

driven. It is important to note that currently HR is operating under lengthy processes and paper-based transactions which feel antiquated. The current process has multiple steps and not as efficient as it could be. The current process includes:

1. All new candidates apply with a paper application which can be found in the main SAU office or on the Milford website.
2. A position is posted by the HR Generalist after the principal or hiring manager submits a *Job Posting Form*. This newly created form ensures that the vacancy is budgeted and that there is justification for the vacancy.
3. Depending on current workload of the HR Generalist, it takes between 3 – 10 business days to post positions. By union agreement, vacancies are posted for 10 days, however, principals and hiring managers are able to review applicants before the posting closes.
4. The HR Generalist also checks the job description to make sure that the job description is up-to-date.
5. All candidates send their applications to the central office and the SAU receptionist scans them into folders that designate what the application is for. Principals and hiring managers have access to these applications.
6. Principals and hiring managers interview applicants and then make their recommendation for hire to HR. HR then makes the offer to the candidate.
7. There is often lag between receiving candidate recommendations from the principal or hiring manager to HR contacting the candidate to make the official job offer. Many times, candidates are verbally offered positions prior to notifying the HR Generalist. This sometimes causes problems if there is a question about whether the candidate meets the qualifications for a position. All teacher and administrative candidates are also interviewed by the superintendent for final recommendation to the Board of Education.

These cumbersome and paper-driven processes impact the way HR can be proactive about planning for significant hiring needs and not losing or frustrating high-quality candidates. Because there are not automated systems for tracking applicants and managing HR processes, it is difficult for HR to produce data reports such as turnover data, vacancy reports, applicants per vacancy ratios and employee performance. These data points are essential to ensuring HR efficiencies and better support the district.

Onboarding and Processing of all Staff

Once a candidate is offered a position, they need to be onboarded effectively to set them up for success. Entering the information about new employees, substitutes and coaches into *Infinite Visions* is also an inefficient process. All employee data is manually entered into the system by the HR Generalist or designee. There are a number of steps to the process and it takes a considerable amount of time to enter the information accurately. In late summer and at the beginning of the school year, inputting information means that other work is put on hold so that new employees can get processed into the district. Also, internal changes in location, grade level, or position must be entered manually as well. In particular, the flip from one fiscal year to the other in June and July requires practically fulltime attention from the HR Generalist. Usually, this data entry is done by the HR Generalist with significant help from the Payroll Coordinator. At this time, these two individuals are the only staff trained and eligible to enter data.

Payroll/Benefits

MSD has good benefits for teachers and administrators. Salary for teachers and administrators is also competitive. There is also tuition reimbursement for teachers. All employees have access to a sick leave bank. However, salary schedules for support staff are not as competitive and several people we interviewed believed the compensation schedules for support staff hinders the district's ability to recruit and retain highly effective support staff.

The HR Generalist works collaboratively with Payroll to assign salaries. However, there are not standardized guidelines about how specifically salaries are assigned, particularly related to flexibility for hard-to-fill or shortage areas.

A significant challenge is the timeline and process for managing open enrollment for benefits. Open enrollment occurs in the spring at the height of staffing season HR provides one-on-one support to employees if requested as there are often many unique benefit needs. The benefits enrollment process is paper driven and there are still issues with timely completion of benefit enrollment. The HR Generalist initiated a benefit enrollment fair, and manages enrollment with Google Doc.

Induction for New Staff

Induction and support of new staff is the responsibility of the principal or supervisor at the job location. While teachers are provided with some structure in inducting them into the district, there is not a comprehensive program for all staff, particularly the induction of non-certified staff. Our engagement with IT and Building and Grounds staff uncovered a breakdown in communication and readiness of staff email accounts, technology setup, and classroom preparedness on or before the employee's first day of work.

Performance Management

The teacher evaluation system has been implemented for several years, however in recent years meeting timelines and providing quality feedback to teachers has declined. The superintendent has made the implementation of the teacher evaluation system a priority in the current school year. The superintendent has established an expectation that observations and evaluations will be conducted in a timely manner and with fidelity. In order to support principals and hiring managers in documenting performance improvement, the HR Generalist created a form to use for developing performance improvement plans. Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, HR will be responsible for the compliance management of the evaluation system ensuring that principals and managers are evaluating staff with fidelity, establishing frequency of evaluations, and meeting timelines. The superintendent also noted that there is not a high-quality evaluation system for administrators in the district. Currently, administrative evaluations are essentially a checklist and not based on Professional Standards for Leaders. It does not appear that there have been standardized procedures for observing administrators and providing quality feedback to them for some time.

There is also no standard evaluation process for support staff and no monitoring or oversight by HR to ensure that quality feedback is given to the employees. Employees whom we interviewed shared that the current protocol is more aligned with teacher/instructional standards than with the type of work that support staff performs (i.e. IT, food and services, custodians, etc.). A best-in-class evaluation tool for classified staff should be aligned to what duties, core values responsibilities the employee performs.

Substitute Hiring and Employee Absenteeism

Candidates for substitutes are interviewed by the principals. If the candidates are found acceptable, they are entered into the substitute system. Substitute pools are insufficient to meet school demands and needs specific to the school community. The district does not heavily recruit for new substitutes. The daily sub fill rate is 60% to 70% which means that each day there are classes that are not covered by a substitute and principals are forced to utilize paraeducators or other means to cover classes. The standard sub-fill rate should be at least 90%. The pay rates for substitutes are \$75.00, \$85.00 and \$100.00 a day depending on the number of days subbed.

Review of the employee absentee data shows a significant use of sick leave. Similarly, to students, teachers need to be present and teaching. This is one of the strongest levers related to student achievement. Clearly, there is legitimate sick leave and personal leave and MSD employees should use their leave appropriately. However, there seems to be a pattern of overuse for some, because employees are sometimes forced to use unpaid leave. The national benchmark for public sector employees should be 4 days per year. Lowering use of sick and personal leave can diminish the need for substitutes.

Leave Processes

In 2017 – 2018, 38 staff utilized Family and Medical Leave (FMLA). FMLA management and processes present challenges to the district. Tracking payroll related to extended leave has become a difficult task to manage and HR works closely with the payroll coordinator to ensure that appropriate leave attributes are entered. The HR Generalist has developed forms and letters to provide some consistency to the process. Employee attendance is tracked in the ASOP system and *Infinite Visions*.

Investigatory Processes

There were 3 or 4 HR investigations that rose to the level of the central office in 2017-18. For employee investigations that rise to the level of the district, the HR Generalist will conduct the investigation and make recommendations to the superintendent if they warrant sanctions. The HR Generalist has provided consistent expectations to principals and managers about how to gather information and evidence when employee investigations are required.

Summary of Non-HR Staff Interviews

Business Administrator

The Business Administrator and the HR Generalist are collaborating together to improve position management oversight. This collaboration is positive, and both are working on streamlining processes to support employees. The Business Administrator has considerable experience in small districts in New Hampshire and has led improvement of business systems. As stated before, the Payroll Coordinator who reports to the Business Administrator has a number of HR responsibilities, and these extra duties impact the ability for the Payroll Coordinator to carry-out her regular and important financial duties.

Providing budget information to principals and other managers is important to the Business Administrator. Therefore, a profile for each school was developed to show the budget codes for each staff member. Using this profile will allow principals and hiring managers to better monitor each schools' budget and have the information needed to complete the *Job Posting Form* when there is a vacancy.

Additionally, the Business Administrator and the HR Generalist are working together to develop better processes for managing leave and commensurate compensation.

Principals

Our interview team met with three principals; two elementary and one middle school principal. They also reinforced that MSD is a great place to work. In general, they are happy with the quality of teachers. When asked about the current evaluation system for teachers, the principals shared mixed feelings on the existing system. It should be noted that review of the current teacher evaluation data reveals that there are not currently any teachers rated below standard in the district. There is no evidence that in recent years any teacher has been classified as underperforming. Therefore, this raises concerns about the fidelity of implementation of the current evaluation system and if it is meaningful. In every district, there are always teachers who struggle and one of the most important roles of the principal is to supervise and evaluate teachers. If a teacher is underperforming, an improvement plan should be developed collaboratively with the teacher and implemented in a timely manner.

Another significant employee challenge is staffing classified staff, especially when there are late openings. Additionally, principals reported that every day there are unfilled positions and finding qualified substitutes is a challenge. A better-defined evaluation system and professional development plan for staff that is more aligned to their work could help mitigate issues with classified staff.

When asked about the responsiveness of Human Resources, the principals indicated that sometimes when they call the central office for support, they need to leave a message, and at times, there is a delay in getting positions posted. The principals, however, acknowledge the limited capacity of the central office staff.

Director of Special Services

The Director of Special Services is responsible for overseeing all special education programs, evaluating all special education staff and the supervises the Alternative Center. The Director of Special Services reported that HR tries to support the recruitment and hiring of special education staff as best as they can. The Director indicated that he works closely with HR about salary issues, particularly as it relates to hiring hard-to-fill special education areas. He noted that salary limitations have impacted the hiring of special education staff.

During the interview, the Director indicated several areas of concern including:

- Recruiting and hiring high-quality special education staff is a challenge
- Posting positions takes too long and has made recruiting enough paraeducators a difficult task. It sometimes takes up to 10 days to get a job posted by HR
- Turnover in special education positions, particularly paraeducators is higher than other positions in the district.
- Because of the turnover of special education staff and difficulty in projecting the hiring needs to meet the IEP's of special education students, late hiring occurs. This is particularly harmful to students when there are few candidates available.

Director of Food Services

Over the past two years, there has been considerable improvement in the organization of the Food Services Department. The supervisor reported that the staff is committed to the health and well-being of the students of MSD and that they like their jobs. At the time of this report, there are two vacancies in Food Services. A challenge in recruiting staff is that all food services employees work part-time and receive no benefits. The director also noted that the current evaluation instrument is not aligned to the day-to-day work of the food services staff.

Director of Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds Lead reported that his staff is stable, and the turnover is low. MSD has an impressive Building and Grounds team. At the time of this report, there were 1.5 vacancies. The greatest challenge in hiring staff is compensation as the beginning hourly rate is below what comparable offerings are in other local industries. Most of the training for this team is done by the Building and Ground Lead and through Primex. When asked how staff is evaluated, the director noted that the current evaluation instrument does not align to the work of the staff and that few staff have been regularly evaluated.

Director of IT

The Director of IT oversees a small staff of 5 that supports technology in schools and also manages all IT systems for the district. IT staff work in schools to support the teacher and student technology. The biggest challenge for recruiting and keeping staff is the salary schedule which is not competitive with other technology companies. The director raised concerns about the differences in cost of living raises for classified staff versus teaching staff. The IT Department creates email accounts for new staff and noted that often there is lag time between the employee beginning their job and getting their access and email credentials. This time lag is due to the time

it takes to enter employee data into the Infinite Vision system. Similarly, to other operational departments, the current evaluation instrument is not aligned to the work of the staff.

Union Leadership

We spoke to union leadership who reaffirmed that MSD is a great place to work. In general, the district provides good benefits, including tuition reimbursement for teachers. There is a sick leave bank for all staff. While the representatives said that their jobs are demanding, retention of staff is strong. The representatives also stated that there could be better induction/orientation of new hires. Induction support is left to the principal or supervisor. Some interviewees were concerned about certification for para-educators and the lack of motivation to pursue it because there is no salary differential. There was a concern raised about the reduction of hours of paraeducators, especially when a new vacancy arises. The representatives reported that there is not consistent professional development for support staff. Teachers do have the opportunity to collaborate across the district and are observed by their principals. The evaluation process for custodians is not always relevant, because it is based on the teacher model. It should be noted that the union representatives for classified staff believe that salary increases have not been equitable, and compensation for them is not competitive. Representatives for classified staff would also like to be more involved in the hiring process by being part of interview panels.

Analysis of the Learnings from the Review

The mission of every school district is to provide the best possible educational experience to each and every student. All individuals working for any school district must contribute to this mission and believe in this mission. The Human Resources Department plays a critical role in ensuring that there is an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader at the helm of every school, as well as high quality people in all other positions in the district. The role of Human Resources is critical as 85-90% of a school district's budget is people. To contribute to workforce quality, Human Resources must focus on the "right work," which means that priorities must be strategically aligned to the mission and vision of the district.

The functionality and focus of Human Resources must be linked to workforce capacity and quality. This is the lens that is used to analyze what we learned from the interviews and review of the HR processes. A well-functioning Human Resources Department must ensure that the district is complying with current federal, state and local laws and regulations, have efficient and effective processes for recruitment, hiring, onboarding and evaluating employees, and aligning processes to the strategic direction of the district.

The interviews focused on learning about the efforts of HR to support the current employees and prospective employees through the various functions that the HR Department performs. To reiterate, the components reviewed were:

- Recruitment and hiring process for all staff
- Onboarding and processing of all staff
- Payroll/Benefits
- Induction for new staff

- Performance management and professional development
- HR Data metrics
- Organization and service delivery model
- Job description development and classification
- Substitute hiring
- Leave processes
- Investigatory processes

Our learnings from the interviews, review of HR processes and data show both strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Overview of Strengths

- MSD has a committed and small central office team that understands the important role that human capital holds in terms of outcomes for students.
- The central office team has a strong desire to learn best practices, and the Superintendent strongly supports continuous improvement, especially in the arena of Human Capital.
- MSD opened school with all teacher position filled and only six part-time support staff vacancies.
- The district retains employees in all employee groups, and MSD is viewed as a great place to work.
- The HR Generalist is working on improving and providing consistency of processes including recruitment, selection, onboarding and leave practices.
- The central office team is hard-working and dedicated, often working extra hours to handle the volume of work.
- The district recognizes the importance of training and development for teachers and has invested a significant amount of resources to that end.
- There appears to be positive relationships between employee unions and the central office in resolving issues.

Areas for Improvement

- Due to lack of capacity, HR spends most of the time executing on cumbersome, paper driven processes that are not efficient and outdated.
- Since HR functions are spread throughout the central office in multiple departments, a major theme throughout the interviews was the inconsistency of responsiveness. Processes simply take too long. As a result, those who interact with HR never know whether they will receive quality service or not.
- A significant factor in the ability for HR to be responsive and streamline practices is the lack of automation. There is no technology applicant tracking system and all applications for employment need to be handwritten and submitted as an attachment or through the mail.
- HR currently does not routinely collect and share data with schools or other central office departments to help drive decision-making and analysis in support of talent management.
- Those interviewed identified the greatest human capital challenge to the district was the ability to manage work in a timely manner (volume outpaces runway).
- The evaluation process for support staff is inconsistent and not based on the responsibilities of the job.

- Professional development is not always aligned to improving the job performance, particularly by support staff.
- Principals are not receiving sufficient strategic support from HR, largely due to burdensome processes.
- A 60% substitute-fill rate is significantly below an acceptable substitute fill-rate

The recommendations below reflect best practices research in Human Resources and are reflect the opportunities for improvement identified.

Recommendations

1. Consolidate HR Staff Responsibilities within the HR organization

a. Rethink HR organization and HR staff responsibilities

Due to understaffing at the SAU, the current HR functions of the District are spread across a number of individuals. This is problematic because often times the additional HR function responsibilities impede staff performing all the duties of their primary jobs. This routinely causes system breakdowns. For example, the entering of employees, substitutes and coaches into *Infinite Visions* is currently done by the payroll coordinator manually. There are a number of steps to the process and it takes a considerable amount of time to enter the data. In late summer and at the beginning of the school year, inputting data means that other work is put on hold so that new employees can get processed into the system. Also, internal changes in location, grade level, job change must be entered manually as well. In particular, the flip from one fiscal year to the other in June and July requires practically fulltime attention from the HR Generalist, Payroll Coordinator and Business Administrator. Usually, this data entry is done by the Payroll Coordinator. At this time, these two individuals are the only staff trained and eligible to enter HRIS data. Additionally, the distribution of HR functions reaches all the way up to the Superintendent, and the Superintendent's Assistant who currently conducts transactional HR functions. These activities include approvals of absences, sign-offs and reviews for CEUs and credit reimbursement.

The current HR Generalist is responsible for overseeing many HR functions for the District, including transactional processes, and accountability mechanisms for these unwieldy processes including; recruitment, employment, benefits, investigations, leave compliance, contract administration and record keeping, and performance management. This puts the District at risk in many ways in the event that she he or she transitions. Having these various HR functions also spread among a number of departments means that it takes considerable time to post and process positions. Timelines and milestones are not always met. Therefore, it is critical to review the organization of HR. More specifically,

- Consider revising the current HR Generalist's job description to reflect the responsibilities she performs, and structure the position in alignment with the goals and outcomes of the HR. These goals should be related to critical HR functions of

recruitment, hiring, performance management, investigations, contract administration and record keeping.

- Review the current scope of responsibilities related to employee benefits and leave and consider these functions may be better organized within the Business Administrator's unit.
- Consider adding a fulltime HR Assistant. With this 1.0 FTE supporting HR fulltime, this position can take over the responsibilities performed by the superintendent's secretary, be able to keep up with amount of paperwork and take on some of the responsibilities of the Payroll Assistant. This assistant can also be trained to manage the ATS when implemented. Rewrite a job description of a HR Assistant and ensure that this new position's responsibilities are communicated to all administrators and hiring managers.
- Relieve the superintendent from the transactional functions that she performs. These activities include sign-offs and reviews for CEUs and credit reimbursement. Designate the HR Generalist and/or the Business Administrator to sign off on these credits. Clarify the role of the superintendent in the interview process for teachers. The superintendent should personally interview all administrators and high-level instructional and operational staff; however, she may not have to personally interview teachers or other support staff if there are reliable interviewing and hiring processes in place. The superintendent can make the HR Generalist her designee. It is important, however, that the superintendent meet all new staff to welcome them and set expectations for becoming part of the MSD workforce.
- Much of the HR work is cyclical. There is significant work during the staffing season and also processing new employees and changing locations and positions for internal staff. Consider allocating HR a budget to hire temporary staff at these critical staffing and hiring milestones.

2. Improve HR Processes

a. Secure an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) for the district

An ATS will automate the posting to hiring process. Lessening the paperwork will also make the process more efficient. Principals and hiring managers should have access to candidate profiles and recommendations for hire can be automated. Additionally, new employee forms can be automated and emailed to the new employees. Automating these processes will improve the onboarding process and create conditions for efficient work streams. The ATS will help establish and maintain strong, positive working relationships with school principals and central staff to support the sourcing, assignment, induction, retention, development, and performance of high-quality candidates for all school-based positions because processes can be automated and streamlined. Better data about the applicant pool and hiring timelines will be more available. A well-functioning ATS can be a strong marketing tool and provide a better candidate experience that encourages candidates to choose MSD.

b. Enhance Recruiting Processes

- In order to do targeted recruiting, HR should share yearly hiring projections with the superintendent and business administrator, so that the budget can reflect the district's hiring needs. Reviewing what the staffing will be for each school, and what current staff may retire, HR can set staffing goals can be determined for specific areas.
- Continue to work with Academics and Special Education to identify hard-to-fill vacancies early in the hiring process in order to trigger specific recruitment outreach.

c. Operationalize Hiring Processes

The hiring process needs to be outlined in a Human Resources Standard Operating Procedure Manual. The manual should explain the roles of HR and principals and hiring managers. It is important to ensure that there are clear procedures and agreements for the following:

- Verifying vacancies
- Posting of positions
- Interviewing processes – All principals should use the same interview protocol. Interview questions that are used should align to the characteristics of each position. Best practices in selecting high quality employees should also include interview teams rather than only having a dialogue with the principal. Principals and hiring managers should also be responsible for contacting the candidates' previous supervisor for a reference.
- While there has been an effort to develop procedures and consistent forms, the forms should be reviewed to ensure they are simple and not duplicative in asking for information. If there are ways to auto load and automate the forms so that people do not have to fill them out multiple times, this would help to streamline the process and reduce errors.
- Assigning salaries – Principals and hiring managers should consult with HR before they speak to candidates about salary. HR in collaboration with the business office should provide clear guidelines to principals about the salary ranges. HR should make the salary offer.
- Recommending candidates for hire – Until there is an automated process, it is important for the principal and hiring managers to complete the recommendation form so that the candidate can be processed and onboarded in a timely manner. HR should make the final offer of a position.
- Review the process for data input and look for ways that data could be uploaded so there are not multiple data entry touch points. Hopefully, an ATS can be configured to integrate with Infinite Visions when an employee is onboarded. This will streamline and speed up the onboarding process.

d. Formalize HR File Management

- It is imperative that the HR files be organized. HR needs to decide what goes into an employee's personnel file and how it is organized. In the central office

file, application documents, employee evaluations, and any discipline documents should be housed securely. Investigation reports should be kept in a separate confidential folder with other confidential information, such as medical documents. Schools and offices should keep a local personnel file with employee observations, letters of commendation and other important local personnel documents.

3. Improve Consistent HR Functions

a. Prioritize Inducting New Hires

- Even though MSD has strong retention of teachers, research shows support for all new staff is essential. The district should develop a comprehensive and intentional induction program for all staff. If mentors are used, ensure that there is a vetting process for teacher mentors so that only the highest quality teachers are matched to new teachers.
- All employees, not only teachers should have the opportunity to be inducted effectively into the school district. For some of the other employee groups, consider monthly get-togethers to discuss any issues or concerns.

b. Re-Design and Standardize Performance Management

- All employees should be evaluated according to the directives from the state and expectations from the district. It appears that teachers are provided feedback and the evaluation system is executed to a greater extent than for other employee groups. However, the current implementation is still inconsistent. In recent years, there have been no teachers placed on improvement plans. In every district, there are always teachers who struggle and one of the most important roles of the principal is to supervise and evaluate teachers.
- Principals and central office administrators should be evaluated using high standards where quality feedback is provided to the principal aligned to their work and performance goals. It is recommended that an evaluation system be developed utilizing the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Goal setting and onsite observations, such as instituting Instructional Walkthroughs and data reviews be initiated.
- A committee should be brought together, comprised of stakeholders to review evaluation protocols for the employees other than teachers. This is particularly important for support staff. Tools should be developed and a timeline for rollout be determine. Employees should be introduced to the evaluation protocol and have the opportunity to ask questions and understand how they are to be evaluated. This is important since many staff in the district have not been evaluated consistently.
- HR plays an important role in the management of the evaluation systems, however the collaboration with Academics is critical. HR should monitor the

compliance of all evaluations in the district and ensure their timeliness. All final evaluations should be housed in the employees' personnel files in HR.

c. Commit to Effective Leave Management

- The management of FMLA is also challenging. While there have been efforts to coordinate the information needed to manage leave and to educate the employees on what constitutes FMLA eligibility, there is extensive use of this leave. The goal should be to process leave requests in a quick and efficient manner. The HR Generalist and the Business Administrator should work together to clarify roles and responsibilities including those of the principals, supervisors, HR and the Business Office. With the help of IT, consider developing a FMLA Leave Tracker that could provide flags for timeline milestones. Consider developing a FMLA Checklist. Create a Leave Team that meets every two weeks to review all leave and ensures timelines and return to work plans are developed.
- Employees should use their sick leave and personal leave responsibly. HR should conduct a thorough employee absentee analysis and substitute analysis. The analyze should identify the employee attendance rates and concurrent substitute fill rates. HR should also work closely with their union partners to analyze if there are any union requirements that force employees to request unpaid leave. The district should consider incentivizing employee attendance by recognizing those employees with outstanding attendance. Make outstanding attendance a goal for every employee.
- If the budget allows, consider assigning a permanent substitute to each school building to mitigate the insufficient substitute fill rate.

d. Update HR Policies

- We recommend a review of what policies are still relevant and a timeline for completing the updates. The district should use the resources of the New Hampshire School Boards Association as they have examples of policies that the district can use in revising and updating policies.

4. Use HR Data to Drive Decisions

a. Increase HR Data Collection and Data Use

- Data should drive the work of HR. There are basic HR data that will assist in gauging progress in the district. HR should use this data to identify quantifiable goals and objectives to improve HR services. Potential metrics include:
 - Hiring timelines -- % hired by month
 - Hiring cycle times – average days to fill a job (from posting to hiring recommendation)

- Vacancies filled on the opening day of school
- Onboarding cycle times – average days to onboard new teacher (from hiring recommendation to hiring completion)
- Retention rate for all staff
- Benefits management and leave management data
- Completion rate of evaluations and effectiveness
- Substitute fill rate (having an adequate substitute pool)

5. Ensure regular communication from HR to the superintendent, principals and hiring managers

a. Set up regular updates about HR processes and timelines with stakeholders.

Some examples are:

- Develop a staffing calendar that identifies key dates. Important staffing dates include early hiring goals, job fairs, transfer periods and reduction-in-force should be communicated.
- Aggregate all HR policies and procedures in a HR Standard Operating Procedures Handbook.
- Put together a HR Advisory Committee comprised of principals and central office staff to provide feedback and input into improving HR processes.
- Meet with union leadership on a regular basis to work on employee issues in a proactive manner. These meetings should focus on how HR supports all employee groups.

CONCLUSION

Employees in the Milford School District are hard-working and doing their best. There is a low turnover rate which is commendable. There is a great deal of positive energy about human resources that the district is eager to undertake in the upcoming years. However, HR is trapped in outdated and cumbersome processes and compliance activities that are preventing them from doing the human capital work needed by Principals and schools. With considerable effort to redesign paper-driven or outmoded processes, HR should be able to free up time to devote to strategic work that will greatly enhance the district's human capital management.

Addendum

Stop, Start, Continue Protocol

Considering the above recommendations, it is important to prioritize how to approach the work in an iterative way. The following list was generated with the HR Generalist as a result of our Stop, Start, Continue Protocol.

Prioritizing Actions

After reviewing the activities, and identifying what might be the most strategic work, we prioritized the following actions:

2018-2019

- Develop comprehensive HR calendar for actions
- Continue to redesign the hiring process
- Create Evaluation/Compliance procedures and communications
- Post select forms on line
- Create an Employee Handbook with accompanying Employee and Administration Tool Box
- Develop a systemwide Absentee Policy
- Increase the number of substitutes
- Redesign open enrollment
- Complete the RFP for the Applicant Tracking System

2019-2020

- Roll out Automated Application System
- Create data reports
- Revise HR Policies

HR Generalist's Tasks

During the visit, the team reviewed the HR Generalist's daily activities which included:

- Review emails/prioritize responses related to the following:
 - Benefits
 - Payroll
 - Credit reimbursement
 - Data – sharing with HR Group/vendors
 - Leave
 - Dealing with problems with employees
 - Work with union/principals
- Attends meetings
 - Ad hoc employee related meetings/drop-ins
 - Structured regular team – weekly meetings
 - Administrative meetings – principals, SAU staff
 - Review of evaluation process (one month)
 - Other meetings – safety-wellness
- Data Input – new employees, benefits, changes, absences
- Posting positions and follow-up communications – principals and offices
- Attends negotiations
- Conduct onboarding meetings
- Participate in RFP Committee
- Follow-up on Payroll issues
 - Employment verifications – unemployment's
- Manage FMLA – Check with employees – Process forms
 - Ensure coverage for employees
- Oversee substitutes
- Conduct and follow-up on investigations

Analysis of Work Activities

Low Effort/High Strategic (Continue)	High Effort/High Strategic (Start)
Employee Conflict resolution Performance management Meetings -strategic related to vision of school district Professional Development Tracking ATS	Corrective Actions Recruiting strategy Procedures Evaluation - role
Low Effort Low Strategic	High Effort – Low Strategic
Benefit Forms Online	Newsletter Data Input Cumbersome processes - efficient Recruiting/Posting/Selection/Onboarding