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## Taking Human Resources Seriously in Minneapolis

Pat Pratt Cook glanced outside her office window, taking a moment to reflect on what her next steps should be. As chief human resource officer (CHRO) for the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), she had just left a meeting with a committee of district and unions officials responsible for implementing the recently negotiated hiring program, locally called “interview and select.” Progress on plans to train the school-based teams of teachers and administrators who would soon begin hiring teachers was slower than she had hoped. Three months had passed since officials of MPS and the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers (MFT) had signed the teachers’ contract calling for this new approach. As an experienced urban school district administrator, Pratt Cook realized that change moves slowly, but this was only one piece of the larger program that she envisioned for human resources at MPS.

Only eight months before, MPS Superintendent Dr. Bill Green had convinced Pratt Cook to leave Memphis City Schools (MCS) and return to work in Minneapolis. Since then much had been accomplished. The district had completed a comprehensive planning process leading to a five-year strategic plan. The new teachers’ contract had been negotiated, maintaining the district’s Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System (ATPPS), enhancing professional development for teachers, and revising teacher hiring practices. In addition, Pratt Cook had been working closely with chief academic officer, Bernadeia Johnson, to better integrate human resources into the district’s academic planning. Pratt Cook explained:

Everything we do, at the end of the day, ultimately relates back to what happens in the classroom. How we work and interact with our customers (teachers, support staff) is critical. If we’re not supportive of these key stakeholders, our students will be the ones who suffer the consequences.

Even as Pratt Cook and her team in human resources (HR) worked tirelessly with Johnson and others in academic affairs to better align the work of HR with the instructional needs of students, old obstacles remained and new ones emerged. Dramatic declines in student enrollments had led to large budget cuts. Pratt Cook was still struggling to change HR from a marginal department carrying out routine functions to a more central and dynamic enterprise that identified and developed talent throughout the district in support of better instruction. The teachers’ contract required a brand new set of changes to ensure that the process of interview and select would succeed. Many of these steps involved increasing the capacity of MPS principals to lead the process. This meant not only building

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Professor Susan Moore Johnson and Research Associate Geoff Marietta prepared this case. PELP cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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new skills, but also, changing old expectations. As Pratt Cook looked forward to the work ahead, she realized that the process of change had just begun.

## MPS and Dr. Green's PELP Revelation

In the 2007-2008 school year (08 SY) MPS enrolled 34,570 students, making it the third largest school district in the state of Minnesota and 135<sup>th</sup> in the US.<sup>1</sup> The district's student population was one of the most diverse in the country with 40% African-American, 30% white, 17% Hispanic-American, 9% Asian-American, 4.5% American Indian, and speaking over 90 different languages. Of these students, 16% received special education services, 23% were designated English language learners, and 66% received a free or reduced priced lunch. With a budget of just over \$650 million, the district employed 6,255 staff, including 3,302 teachers.

Green had been appointed interim superintendent in the fall of 2006 and accepted the permanent position in January 2007. He was not surprised by the challenges the district faced because he had served on the school board for eight years, three of which he was chair. As the fourth superintendent in three years, Green knew that the district needed stable leadership, especially given cuts of \$17 million from the operating budget (**Exhibits 1 and 2**).<sup>2</sup> One of his first tasks as superintendent was to assemble a leadership team. He reflected on his approach:

I valued and respected folks who had been in this system for a long time. I needed some of that institutional knowledge. But I also wanted to bring in people from the outside. As it turns out, they didn't all have to be experienced in their particular fields. They just had to be real smart; they had to be a certain kind of personality. This was going to be hard work, so we really had to play well with each other. We had to like each other.

Leveraging his contacts in the Minneapolis community, Green recruited Johnson from her job as deputy superintendent in the Memphis City Schools to head up academic affairs, former Minnesota assistant attorney general Steve Liss to be chief operating officer, former finance commissioner of Minnesota, Peggy Ingison, to be chief finance officer, and long-time educators Birch Jones and Eleanor Coleman to be chief of staff and chief of student support, family, and community engagement, respectively (**Exhibit 3**).

As Green chose his team, he was also leading the district through a rancorous process of closing schools. MPS had closed twelve schools the previous years, and he oversaw the shuttering of five more following his appointment as interim superintendent.<sup>3</sup> Many of these schools were located in the predominantly African-American north end of Minneapolis and some community members charged that the closings were discriminatory. Meanwhile, the achievement gap between white and African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students persisted (**Exhibit 4**). Green and his team worked hard through the 07 SY, holding dozens of community meetings to address these concerns. By the late spring, some trust had been reestablished with the community, although Green and the chiefs were exhausted.

### *The Reward: PELP*

Green thought that his team had done an outstanding job in leading the district through one of the most difficult and complicated school years in its history. They had worked through vacations and logged 12-hour days in order to get MPS back on track. Green explained: "After a year like the one we went through, I wanted something special for the chiefs. They deserved it. I knew I wanted some

kind of professional development, but I needed to take people away from 807\* and Minnesota.” Johnson told Green about the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), a professional development program run collaboratively by faculty from Harvard Business School (HBS) and Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), which focused on the management of large urban school districts. Johnson had attended PELP’s one week executive education program when she worked for the Memphis City Schools and told Green about the program’s rigor and helpful focus on creating a coherent system for supporting instruction (**Exhibit 5**). Green looked into the program and decided that it would be a perfect reward for his team’s hard work. In July 2007, Green and seven team members traveled to Cambridge to take part in the program.

Except for Johnson, the Minneapolis team members arrived at the ivy-covered buildings of HBS knowing little about the PELP program. Green recalled, “I really didn’t know what to expect.” He was satisfied that his team was far from Minnesota and he found the accommodations and state-of-the-art classrooms a far cry from the converted light bulb factory where they all worked. Green noted, “The campus was beautiful and the food was great.” After the first case discussion about Taco Bell and its continually evolving management strategy, Green and his team knew that the rest of the week would be different than anything they had ever experienced.

### *The Philly HR Case*

The program was intense, with 14-hour days filled with case discussions, team strategy sessions, and intense conversations about how to improve student achievement in urban schools. On the third day a case profoundly affected Green’s conception of HR. That case, “Reinventing Human Resources at School District of Philadelphia,” follows Tomás Hanna, the district’s senior vice president for HR, as he tries to transform the district’s HR office into a high performing department that is well integrated with other key offices. In his first 90 days Hanna had implemented a new site-based hiring process, improved the district’s relationship with the teachers union, and hired four new directors for the HR department. Past efforts to reform HR had largely failed and schools played little role in the appointments of teachers and principals. The HR department was widely seen to deal only with transactional functions, such as processing payroll and keeping records, rather than being central to the district’s strategy for improving instruction. Hanna hoped to transform HR in Philadelphia from the “...headache that needs to be fixed to a strategic partner.”<sup>4</sup>

Green saw many similarities between the HR department in Philadelphia as it existed before Hanna arrived and the current HR department in MPS. He said that dealing with HR was like “...getting a tooth pulled” and involved having “something painful and frustrating happen to you.” Green explained: “That was the only model I knew because I had only interacted with HR as a user. It was not a fun place to go and it seemed just like a fact of life to me, like the sun rising during the day.” But as he read the case and participated in the discussion, Green suddenly realized the important role HR could play in improving instruction. He reflected on his own district: “HR is not given the opportunity to be all that it can be. It has an institutional strategic benefit that starts with a very fundamental thing – every child should have the best teacher in the system.” Moving from that insight to meaningful action would take serious changes.

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\* The central office for MPS is located at 807 NE Broadway. District employees and community members refer to the office simply as ‘807.’

### *Recruiting Pat Pratt Cook*

Earlier that summer, when Pratt Cook still worked as head of the Memphis HR department, Green had urged her to return to Minneapolis as Johnson had done the year before. However, Pratt Cook insisted that she would not join Green's administration in Minneapolis unless HR was positioned to play a more strategic role in improving the MPS schools. She said:

Based on all of the conversations and the opportunities that I had in Memphis, I really realized how the work that HR does in collaboration with the academics office is so linked to each other. It's really important that we both clearly understand, not only have a vested interest in, how critical the work that we do is in making sure that we select the right people for the kids.

It wasn't until the discussion of the Philly HR case that Green understood Pratt Cook's viewpoint. It just so happened, that Pratt Cook was also in the classroom, attending the PELP program with her team from Memphis. It was her team's fourth year, but Pratt Cook's first time at PELP. In the middle of the Philly HR case discussion, Green glanced back at Pratt Cook and tried to catch her attention. He finally made eye contact and mouthed the words, "I get it."

Upon returning to Minneapolis, Green and his team went to work to reconfigure HR so that it could play a more strategic role in the district. HR would no longer be organized under operations, but rather would be its own separate department, with its head reporting directly to the superintendent. With approval by the school board, the former position of senior executive director of HR would be elevated to chief human resource officer (CHRO) (**Exhibit 6**). Green hoped that the reorganization would be enough to convince Pratt Cook to join MPS. He proposed the new structure to Pratt Cook over several phone conversations later in the summer. Convinced that HR now at least had the opportunity to play a strategic role in the district, Pratt Cook agreed to join MPS that fall.

### **Pratt Cook Arrives**

Pratt Cook arrived in October 2007 to find the HR department in worse condition than she had expected. It had been hard hit by budget cuts over the past several years. Furthermore, because there had been minimal teacher hiring due to school closures and declining enrollment, few people even thought of HR's role in the district. The entire budget for recruitment had been cut the previous year and HR no longer provided a centralized screening process for potential teacher candidates. In the past a group of 20 MPS teachers, which included mentor teachers, teachers on special assignment, and teachers recommended by principals and union officials, used a screening tool to create the initial hiring pool. Now, any applicant could enter the interview pool as long as he or she met such minimum standards such as not having a felony record or being license-eligible. Pratt Cook worried about the quality of teachers in MPS today and moving forward: "We may not be hiring in large numbers now, but the decisions we make today still have significant impact on students now and for the long term. Teacher quality is too important to student success to not make this a priority in recruitment, hiring and retention." Recruitment and selection weren't the only things affected by the budget cuts. The district had also done away with its orientation for new employees. Teachers, staff, and principals entering MPS no longer had a way to learn about key district policies and procedures such as the organization's mission and goals, healthcare benefits, or vacation requests. And a teacher or staff member with questions would find little help going to the HR office in 807. The HR position designated for greeting people, answering basic questions, and guiding employees to appropriate resources had been eliminated due to budget cuts.

Yet, what concerned Pratt Cook more than anything else was the culture of HR and its reputation in MPS. The department was isolated and had been neglected for several years. According to Green, HR had grown accustomed to being “sequestered in the bowels of administration.” With little attention being paid to their department, employees had developed their own methods for handling the day-to-day work of processing applications, administering payroll, and managing benefits. Some of the solutions worked, while others were at odds with what the district was trying to accomplish. The focus on these transactional tasks had also created a culture in the department that was disconnected from both the people it was intended to serve and from having an impact on instruction. Changing that culture would be one of Pratt Cook’s most difficult challenges, especially since she had no time to acclimate to her new environment.

## Teacher Contract Negotiations

When Pratt Cook arrived, contract negotiations between the district and MFT were already underway and she was expected to play a lead role in the process. The previous two-year contract had expired on June 30, 2007, but teachers agreed to continue working under its terms. By September, negotiations were at a stalemate and the historically collaborative relationship between the district and the MFT had deteriorated. Contentious exchanges between the parties were exacerbated by a state-imposed deadline to agree on a contract by January 15<sup>th</sup>. Otherwise, MPS would lose \$25 per student or nearly \$1 million. In its current financial condition, MPS literally could not afford to fail to reach an agreement with the union. At the heart of the negotiations was the district’s long-term effort to exercise more control over how teachers were hired and assigned. For a number of years MPS had wanted site-based teams composed of the principal and teachers to select new staff, both those who might request to transfer from other schools and new hires from outside the district.

This would replace the current process whereby teachers who already were employed at other schools could transfer to the positions they wanted on the basis of their seniority within the system. These “volunteer transfers” technically had to interview for the desired position, but the teacher with the most years of experience in MPS automatically got the job.<sup>5</sup> Teachers whose positions were no longer needed at one school and had been “excessed” followed a similar process. Then positions that were unfilled were open to applicants outside the system.

But, in the past couple of years the proposed interview-and-select hiring process had met intense resistance from the union and its leadership. The opposition surprised Pratt Cook, who recalled that the MFT had led the way on some of the nation’s most progressive reforms through the 1990s and early 2000s.

### *Past Collaboration*

From 1984 to 2006 Louise Sundin led the MFT as its president. After a strike was narrowly averted in 1984, the first year of Sundin’s tenure as president, she and district officials agreed to try their best to work together.<sup>6</sup> During her tenure, Sundin worked closely with MPS to develop ground-breaking reforms in teachers’ pay and professional development. According to Sundin, contract negotiations became more about how to meet district goals through collaboration and less about defining strict work rules. By 1989 Sundin and then-Superintendent Robert Ferrera had reorganized the district to give more power to individual school sites.<sup>7</sup> The site-based management initiative was later enhanced in the 1995 teachers’ contract by providing up to \$20,000 bonuses for schools that met their

target goals in student performance.<sup>8</sup> Other districts took notice and within a few years, Montgomery County Public Schools had modeled their own site teams after the ones in place in MPS.<sup>9</sup>

The most ground-breaking reforms resulting from the collaboration between MFT and MPS dealt with teacher evaluation and compensation. After contract negotiations ended in arbitration in 1994 over the issue of pay-for-performance with the union eventually winning, few thought that the district, let alone the MFT, would attempt to link compensation to teacher performance again.<sup>10</sup> However, three years later the two parties agreed to move in that direction by rewarding teachers who gained National Board Certification.<sup>11</sup> The contract also provided the foundation for a peer review evaluation system for teachers, including language that explicitly identified the achievement gap between white students and students of color as an area of deep concern. In 1999, Sundin and Superintendent Carol Johnson crafted an agreement calling for teachers to earn additional pay for taking on leadership roles in schools, serving on site committees, mentoring, and staying in hard-to-staff schools.<sup>12</sup> The contract was ratified by 85% of the teachers.

Then, in 2002, the district received a \$5 million grant from the state to launch a comprehensive alternative teacher compensation program first called Professional Pay or "ProPay."<sup>13</sup> The plan included so-called "1-2-3" courses, in which teachers implemented action research projects designed to improve instruction within their classrooms. During the process, teachers participated in reflective video exercises and received coaching from peers. By 2003, over 75 different 1-2-3 courses had been offered and 2,400 action research projects completed.<sup>14</sup> With support from Sundin and MFT, ProPay became a Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), a model originally designed by the Milken Family Foundation as a comprehensive school improvement model.<sup>15</sup> It was founded on four principles: multiple career paths for teachers, instructionally focused observations, ongoing applied professional growth, and professional based compensation.<sup>16</sup> The district left the decision to enter TAP up to individual schools, which needed a 70% vote of support by the teachers at the school in order to implement it. Under the plan teachers were paid according to "career increments" and by earning "professional growth credits."<sup>17</sup> MPS's TAP eventually evolved into the Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System (ATPPS).

Although teachers voted to continue ATPPS in June 2006, many of them and the public were growing more dissatisfied with the relationship between the MPS and MFT. After 22 years as head of the MFT, Sundin lost her re-election bid to high school teacher Robert Panning-Miller, whose campaign focused on the need for the union to be more independent from the district.<sup>18</sup> Panning-Miller took 56% of the vote, saying that the relationship between MFT and the district had become "...too comfortable at the expense of teachers."<sup>19</sup> Then five months after Sundin's defeat, for the first time in at least 20 years, a majority of the MPS Board of Education turned over in an election. Four newcomers joined the seven-member board leaving only one person with more than one term of experience.<sup>20</sup>

### *Current Strains*

Some saw the election of Panning-Miller as evidence of how worried teachers were about losing their jobs. In three years, nearly 6,000 students had left for neighboring suburban schools and charter schools; with them went teachers' jobs. Even experienced, tenured teachers found themselves looking for new positions at the end of each school year. Over the seven year period from the 01 SY to the beginning of the 08 SY, MPS employed 1,351 fewer teachers, a decline of nearly 30%. In addition, because teacher layoffs were seniority-based, the district lost many of the more recently hired black teachers.<sup>21</sup> From the 01 SY to the 05 SY, the number of black teachers in MPS declined by 30.6%, while white teachers saw a decrease of 18.7%.<sup>22</sup> The district even added a link on its website

providing layoff information for teachers that answered such questions as “Will I get unemployment?” and “What happens to my medical insurance?”<sup>23</sup>

The teachers who remained after each year of layoffs were beginning to feel overworked and unappreciated. Budget cuts had forced many to pick up administrative duties previously completed by school or central office staff. While average class size for the district had remained constant, the uneven outflow of students left some schools overcrowded and others at half capacity. Teachers were also concerned about the quality and capacity of school principals and assistant principals. MPS’s move to site-based management in the early 1990s had greatly increased the power of school administrators, in some cases with negative results. Some teachers felt that principals had abused the autonomy and they blamed the district for allowing the mistreatment to occur.

In addition to the demoralizing impact of budget cuts and the uncertainty of decentralization, was the repeated turnover in district leadership. Four superintendents had come and gone in recent years, each expecting teachers to implement new reforms, only to leave MPS once those reforms were underway. Some saw the continuation of TAP through all the turmoil as a miracle in itself. With a new superintendent and board, and facing further job losses, teachers began to take a “this too shall pass” approach to working in the district. Consequently, when the board proposed during negotiations of the teachers’ contract to replace the seniority-based transfer process with interview and select, Panning-Miller and the MFT strongly objected.

### *Bargaining for Interview and Select*

From the onset of the negotiation the district argued that it was difficult to hold principals accountable for performance if they had no say about who taught in their school. Although the rationale for including the interview-and-select provision seemed clear to Pratt Cook and her colleagues at the district office, Panning-Miller and the MFT argued that granting principals more authority over hiring would exacerbate an already significant problem. From the union’s perspective, many principals lacked the expertise to lead the process. Moreover, they said that principals might try to “game the system” and hire favorites over qualified experienced teachers. Some teachers also argued that, because schools received an allocation for each teacher based on the average teacher’s salary in MPS, principals might be enticed to stretch the buying power of their school budget by hiring cheaper, less experienced teachers through the interview-and-select process. Declines in student enrollment, which would lead to ever smaller budgets, only heightened their concern. Finally, there was great uncertainty about what it would mean to have school-based teams hire teachers. The current transfer system was known and had predictable outcomes, at least for the senior teachers.

The district and MFT negotiated from their respective positions and it seemed as though no agreement could be reached. As Steve Liss, COO of MPS, commented:

At one point it came to me and it wasn’t very profound, but it’s just that MFT wanted to write the contract for the worst principal and we wanted to write it for the best principal. They were writing it for their fears of the worst principal, so whatever possible abuse they could think of, they wanted to protect against that and we wanted to provide maximum flexibility to the site.

MPS chief negotiator, Emma Hixson, Pratt Cook, and the district team, refused a settlement that did not include interview and select. Finally, after months of continuous negotiation and final weeks of marathon all night sessions leading up to the state-imposed deadline, MPS and MFT came to agreement on the new contract (**Exhibit 7**).

### *The 2007-2009 Contract*

The new contract, which also included a two percent pay raise for 08 SY, was approved by nearly 70% of the teachers. The interview-and-select component was in the form of a “memorandum of agreement” (MOA), which meant that it had to be renegotiated in the next contract. Nonetheless, most saw the provision as marking a “new day” for MPS.<sup>24</sup> According to the conditions of the contract, over forty selected schools would become interview-and-select sites in the 09 SY with the system extending to remaining schools in the 10 SY.

The MOA called for an interview-and-select team, composed of at least one administrator and two teachers at each school site. Interview teams were to be chosen by the principal from a pool of teachers and administrators nominated by the MFT steward and principal.<sup>25</sup> Candidates would apply for an open teaching position through an online system. The interview-and-select team would then review the submitted applications and choose a group of up to ten candidates for interviews. According to the MOA, all candidates had to come from within MPS; five had to be the most senior teachers who applied and the other five were left to the team’s discretion.<sup>26</sup> However, MPS could bring external candidates into the process by first signing them to a “contract unassigned.” These outside applicants then could be considered for open positions by interview-and-select teams. The team then would conduct interviews and select one candidate by consensus to fill the position, without regard to seniority. If the team could not reach consensus, the principal would make the final decision for hire.

Panning-Miller was dissatisfied because the new contract did not get to the root problems in MPS: “It still doesn’t address class size, bring in more state aid, solve the flaws of No Child Left Behind, and certainly not the lives of our students outside the classroom and what they bring with them every day.”<sup>27</sup> Other teachers were more optimistic about what it could achieve. Said one first grade teacher, “You hope in the end, when it’s all said and done, it’s a level playing field.”<sup>28</sup> A second grade teacher emphasized, “I understand there’s some fear, but I think the only people who should be afraid are those who don’t like what they’re doing and are just hanging in there for job security.”<sup>29</sup> Still some were worried that the new provision might overburden teachers and principals. Furthermore, most teachers and even some principals had little expertise in interviewing or hiring. For Pratt Cook and the MPS leadership team, this was just one of the many new challenges brought on by the new interview-and-select process.

## **Implementing the New Contract**

Pratt Cook, Johnson, Liss, Green and others on the MPS leadership team were ecstatic when the new teacher contract was approved by the teachers and board. But they also knew that it marked the start of new challenges for the district. Teachers had put their trust in the district’s leadership that the interview-and-select process would proceed as touted, free from favoritism or wrongdoing by principals or interview teams. To ensure that the school sites were prepared to conduct their own hiring, there would need to be high quality and inclusive training sessions for the teams. The skills of individual principals also had to be improved and, most importantly, the pool of teachers that the schools would consider had to be top-notch.

### *Training Interview-and-Select Teams*

One of the first steps in implementing the new contract was to develop a training program for interview-and-select teams. In fact, the MOA required training for all team members and even



stipulated that a training module be developed and placed on the HR website for those who weren't able to attend in person. Pratt Cook had little time to develop the training curriculum. Online postings for positions began April 25<sup>th</sup> and interviews were being held May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. She organized a subcommittee composed of principals, teachers, HR staff, and union representatives to create the training curriculum. It was one of the first times in recent years that the parties had worked together on an initiative and getting it right was not easy at first. There were differing ideas about what should be included in the training curriculum and how the process should be conducted.

The goal of the training program was to give principals and teachers the skills to select the best teacher for the open position. Training needed to address how the teams would plan and conduct the interviews as well as document the process of selection. In addition, teachers and principals had to have a firm grasp of what they legally could and could not ask during the interviews. One of the most important tasks of the training subcommittee was to make sure the interview-and-select process was as transparent as possible. To fulfill that goal, they worked to develop a consistent format and rating system for all the teaching positions in the district. The group wrote sample questions and tasks that applicants might be asked to do. Pratt Cook explained:

If the interview team's going to interview a media specialist and they want that person to engage in some kind of activity beyond an interview, we're going to come up with some examples and have the indicators and rubric of the different kinds of activities that they can have these individuals participate in. We've decided that for the interview itself, that we will have a standard rating scale that everybody will need to use in order to ensure that there's consistency in how teachers are evaluated.

To make the whole process more efficient and also ensure that each candidate would be assessed even-handedly across the district, Pratt Cook and the subcommittee also implemented a consistent résumé format for all teachers applying to open positions.

As the subcommittee created and implemented the different pieces of the interview-and-select process, it became clear that getting a teaching job in MPS was about to become much more competitive, which both excited and worried Pratt Cook. A more competitive process could lead to having the most qualified teacher in every classroom, but the new demands would also mean that some of the current employees would be unequipped to compete. To ease the transition, the subcommittee worked in collaboration with Lynn Nordgren to develop a training session for teachers on interviewing skills and résumé tips. Nordgren, an MFT union official, had provided similar trainings to teachers for a number of years. There was some initial confusion around the teacher training when, unbeknownst to the subcommittee, Panning-Miller went ahead and scheduled the dates for the sessions. Although the situation was eventually cleared up, Pratt-Cook had hoped that all pieces and process of the interview-and-select training could be integrated and developed collaboratively by the district and MFT.

### *Ensuring a Quality Pool of Teachers*

Just as important as ensuring the capacity of interview-and-select teams was the need for the pool of teachers being interviewed to be of the highest quality. Pratt Cook wanted to make sure that MPS was attracting high quality candidates. This would require not only retooling the HR department, but also shifting the district's approach to recruiting teachers in an environment of declining enrollment. In the past five years, budget cuts had essentially wiped out teacher recruitment and most open positions were already spoken for by senior teachers. Interview and select potentially reversed that dynamic, but the sudden change left MPS somewhat unprepared. With few outside

applicants, the interview pool might only include current employees who had been excessed from their schools.

However, expanding recruiting efforts demanded additional resources, which MPS simply did not have. Pratt Cook looked for ways she could do more in HR with the resources at hand. As she said:

Right now, I feel like we're a department of specialists, and I really don't feel like we have the luxury of being a department of specialists. We really need to have people who are HR generalists, that have a broad background knowledge about really good HR practices. Resources could then be reallocated to divert resources to teacher recruitment, induction and retention.

She considered creating a customer service center model similar to that in Chicago Public Schools. The center would be staffed by a core group of people who could answer any question related to HR. This might free up some HR staff to concentrate on recruitment efforts. In any case, Pratt Cook knew she had to deal with the perennial problem in public schools, how to do more with less.

### *Increasing Capacity of Principals*

To address the long-term goal of increasing the capacity of principals in the district, Pratt Cook worked with Johnson and her team in academic affairs. Meeting weekly, they developed the Minneapolis Principals' Academy, a year-long, rigorous professional development program for a group of 20 to 25 aspiring principals. The program would begin in July with two separate one-week sessions and an additional eight days of training scheduled throughout the year. The curriculum followed the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) standards and was taught by national and local experts in the field of educational leadership. Only those who completed the Academy could interview for principal and assistant principal positions, a condition that drew some criticism from candidates already in the school leadership interview pool. But Pratt Cook and Johnson were resolute in their decision to make those who were already in the principal and assistant principal pool, apply to the Academy. To them the Academy was instrumental in increasing the ratio of quality applicants per principal opening as well as the diversity of those applicants. Looking to the future, Johnson and Pratt Cook were also considering creating a training academy for district-level leaders.

Another key strategy identified through the district's strategic planning process was an effort to redesign the principals' role so they could focus more of their time on instructional leadership rather than building administration. Led by Johnson, Pratt Cook, and the special advisor to the superintendent, Jill Stever-Zeitlin, MPS was investigating the possibility of a pilot program for school administrative managers (SAM), who deal with such tasks as bus scheduling, student discipline, facilities management, and budgeting, allowing the principal to concentrate on teaching and learning in the school. Schools in Kentucky with SAMs had already shown some success increasing the amount of time principals spent on instruction.<sup>30</sup> The SAM might also play an integral role in the interview-and-select process, facilitating communication among everyone involved and coordinating interviewing sessions. Starting with five schools in the 08 SY, Pratt Cook and Johnson hoped that if successful, the SAM would allow principals to increase their percentage of time spent focusing on instruction to 60-80% of the school day.

## Aligning and Realigning

Pratt Cook and Johnson continued to meet weekly, looking more deeply into the district's complex compensation and evaluation systems. Plans were underway to overhaul how teachers were evaluated and to include student performance on state assessments as a key performance indicator. Pratt Cook commented:

We really want to be able to have a direct link between the teacher assessment and student performance, because right now there's nothing that we have in place that really makes that connection. It is our hope that through negotiations with MFT that we will be able to come to an agreement on the teacher assessment tool in the very near future. The district does have the ability to implement an assessment tool not tied to compensation without the union's agreement. However, we would like to develop the instrument in collaboration with the MFT. We are committed to continue to push the need for an assessment tool, because the need to be focused on teacher results is too critical to student success.

Pratt Cook hoped that the district would eventually be able to tie student performance directly to compensation, making the MPS ATPPS truly pay-for-performance. She admitted, though, that such a system would require a strong and trusting relationship between MPS and MFT.

Recommendations from the new strategic plan for MPS also would increase the demands on teachers. One goal was to have all students take algebra by eighth grade. Johnson and Pratt Cook realized that they would have to look at the skills and knowledge of middle school teachers. The middle school licensure endorsement might not require teachers to have enough content knowledge to adequately prepare students for algebra. For Pratt Cook, that meant recruiting differently for those positions and for Johnson, it meant that the instructional strategies for teaching middle school math would have to change. Ultimately, these changes were just the next steps in a continuous process of aligning the district's resources with their instructional goals. As Johnson summarized:

What we're really saying is that the instructional core--the teacher, the student, the content--that's really critical. We can't always control students' experiences outside the classroom. But, the teacher, and teaching quality, and what content knowledge teachers have, and how they know how to teach that content is critical and within our control.

### *Looking Forward*

For Pratt Cook, the last year had been full of changes and progress. The HR department was gradually taking on a more strategic role in the district and the interview and select process was finally underway. But even greater change and opportunities were on the horizon. MFT had held elections on May 20<sup>th</sup>, and Nordgren, who had a history of working collaboratively with the district, soundly defeated Panning-Miller as president, capturing 67% of the teachers' vote. Nordgren had run on a platform that promoted professionalism and progressive unionism.<sup>31</sup> To Pratt Cook, Nordgren's strong win revealed the teachers' desire to work in partnership with the district to improve student learning. The election also would require Pratt Cook, Johnson, and the MPS central office team to revisit their strategy and plans for the future. Working in collaboration, rather than in opposition, with the teachers union meant that more could be accomplished going forward, but it raised new concerns among principals.

Although principals welcomed interview and select, many were already remarking that the process brought with it greater accountability. There would be no free-wheeling leadership from the principal's office. Pratt Cook commented, "Now, principals have a format to follow; they just can't

do it their own way.” Specific interview questions had to be asked and the interview-and-select teams were required to document why they selected a particular candidate, and to provide a summary of strengths and areas for development for every teacher interviewed. Principals were ultimately responsible to ensure that the process was followed and Pratt Cook hoped to embed interview and select in the principals’ performance evaluations. The new program granted new autonomy to the schools, but that autonomy came with new obligations for principals to collaborate with teachers.

Complicating matters was the fact that MPS was still in the process of negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement with the principals union, the Minneapolis Principals’ Forum. The principals’ contract had expired June 30, 2007 with the parties agreeing to work under the old agreement until a new one was signed. Pratt Cook intended to link the principals’ pay to their performance evaluations, which would include interview and select and student achievement as components. Johnson and Pratt-Cook felt that it was important to tie principal performance to student outcomes. They were pushing for resources in the principals’ contract to be diverted to reward principals who demonstrated positive outcomes and results. And Pratt Cook could see more challenges on the horizon, all of them the result of her recent successes. Just as her team finished developing a 20-item checklist to assess the fidelity of implementing interview and select at schools, she received a complaint from the teachers union that a principal had already tried to skirt the process. Pratt Cook realized that there was still work to be done.

**Exhibit 1** Minneapolis Public Schools Revenues 2003-2007 (in millions \$)

	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
Program Revenues:					
Charges for Services	10.0	9.5	9.6	10.8	13.5
Operating Grants and Contributions	203.2	165.5	158.7	140.5	155.0
General Revenues:					
Property Taxes	88.3	110.9	108.0	97.0	117.4
State and Financial Aids	320.8	329.2	313.9	327.7	278.6
Investment Earnings	4.6	2.3	5.1	13.5	15.4
Miscellaneous	13.2	15.2	14.1	19.6	12.0
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>640.1</b>	<b>632.6</b>	<b>609.5</b>	<b>609.2*</b>	<b>591.9*</b>

\*Does not include capital grants and contributions of 9.0 and 19.6 in 05-06 and 06-07 school years, respectively

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, "Annual Financial Reports 2004-2007," Minneapolis Public Schools Web site, <http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us>, accessed April 2008.

**Exhibit 2** Minneapolis Public Schools Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Growth
Kindergarten and Pre-K	4,582	4,470	4,350	4,125	3,679	3,720	3,470	-4.5%
Elementary	25,549	24,839	22,802	19,260	17,962	16,787	16,221	-7.3%
Secondary	20,080	20,539	20,106	18,204	17,475	16,754	16,013	-3.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,211</b>	<b>49,848</b>	<b>47,258</b>	<b>41,589</b>	<b>39,116</b>	<b>37,261</b>	<b>35,704</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, "Annual Financial Report," Minneapolis Public Schools Web site, <http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us>, accessed April 2008.

**Exhibit 3** Selected Minneapolis Public Schools Leadership Bios

**Eleanor Coleman, Chief of Student Support, Family, and Community Engagement:** Eleanor has been involved in education and with community based organizations for a span of over forty years. Her career began as a classroom teacher. She moved through the ranks as a principal and associate superintendent to her current position. Coleman is also a doctoral candidate focusing on the overrepresentation of African American juveniles in suspension rates and its impact on academic achievement.

**Dr. William Green, Superintendent:** Superintendent Green is an associate professor of history at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Dr. Green served on the Minneapolis Board of Education from 1993-2001 and was board chair from 1996-1998. Superintendent Green holds a bachelor's degree in history from Gustavus Adolphus College. He also holds a master's degree in educational psychology, a doctorate in education, and a juris doctorate from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. A native of New Orleans, La., Dr. Green has contributed more than 30 articles to scholarly and popular press publications.

**Peggy Ingison, Chief Financial Officer:** Peggy was appointed chief financial officer for Minneapolis Public Schools in January 2007, where she oversees a budget of \$650 million. She has assembled a public service career in the state of Minnesota spanning the last three decades. Most recently she served as assistant commissioner and state budget director from 1996-2004 and commissioner of the department from 2004-06. Peggy graduated from Bemidji State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting.

**Bernadeia Johnson, Chief Academic Officer:** Bernadeia Johnson was named chief academic officer for Minneapolis Public Schools in August 2006. In that capacity she is responsible for the district's academic division including the academic superintendents and principals. Previously, Bernadeia was the deputy superintendent for Memphis City Schools, serving as a key member of the leadership team. She received her bachelor's degree in speech pathology from Alabama A & M University and her master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of St. Thomas. Bernadeia is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Minnesota.

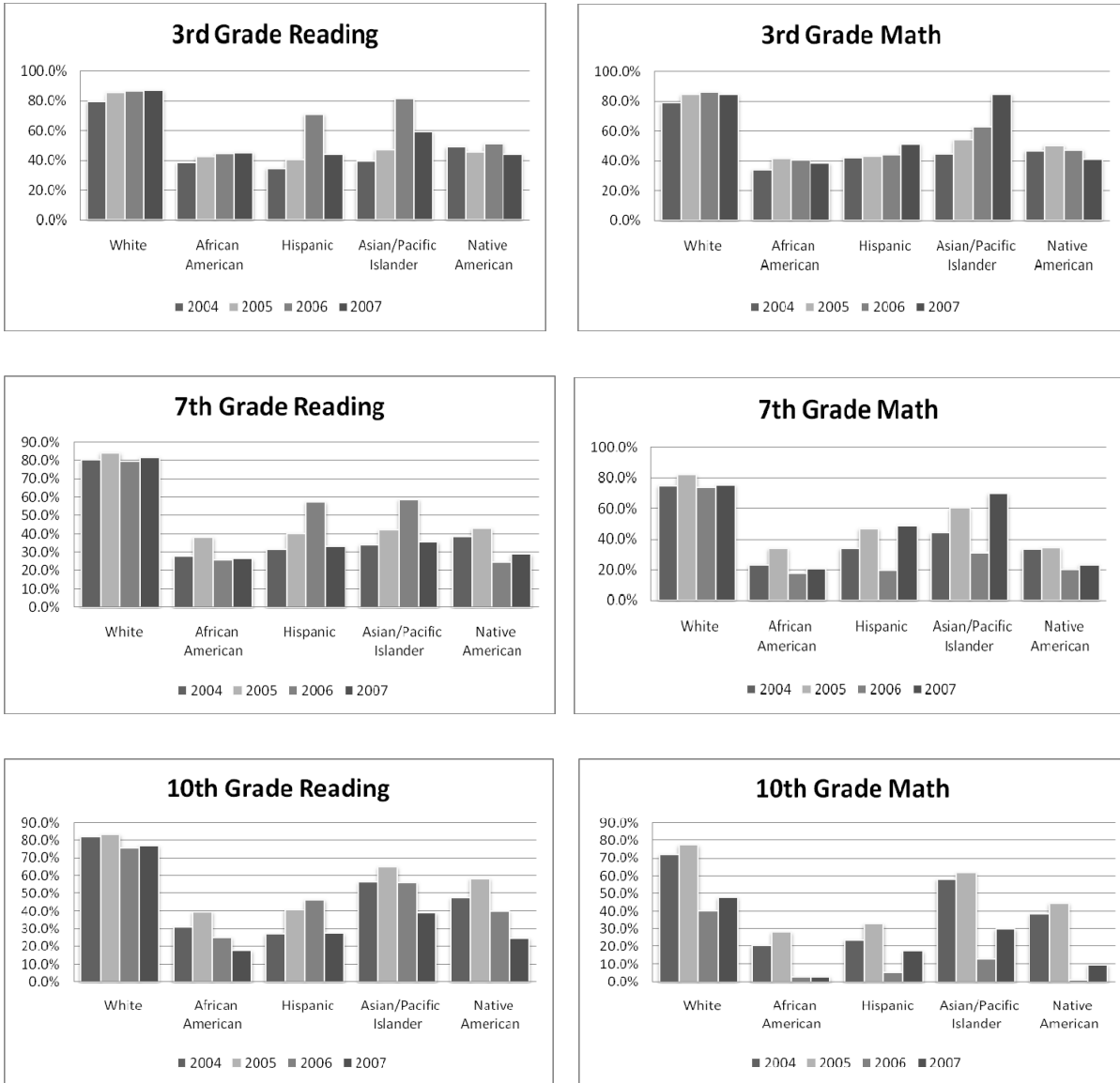
**Steve Liss, Chief Operating Officer:** Prior to coming to MPS Steve worked served for 16 years as an assistant attorney general in the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General. He most recently held several key leadership positions in that office and was directly responsible for coordinating all legal services for the Minnesota Department of Education. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Pennsylvania, a master's degree in broadcasting and mass communications from Boston University, and a juris doctorate from Georgetown University.

**Pat Pratt Cook, Chief Human Resources Officer:** As chief of human resources, Pat has spear-headed progressive approaches to attracting and retaining quality staff for urban school districts for almost 15 years. Prior to working in Minneapolis Public Schools, she was the executive director of human resources for Memphis City Schools, a district of 118,000 students. Her additional 15 years in social work and social services for special needs children and adults has given her the perspective of an educator. She holds a double master's degree in management and human development with an emphasis on workforce diversity from St. Mary's College in Minnesota.

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools and Casewriter Analysis

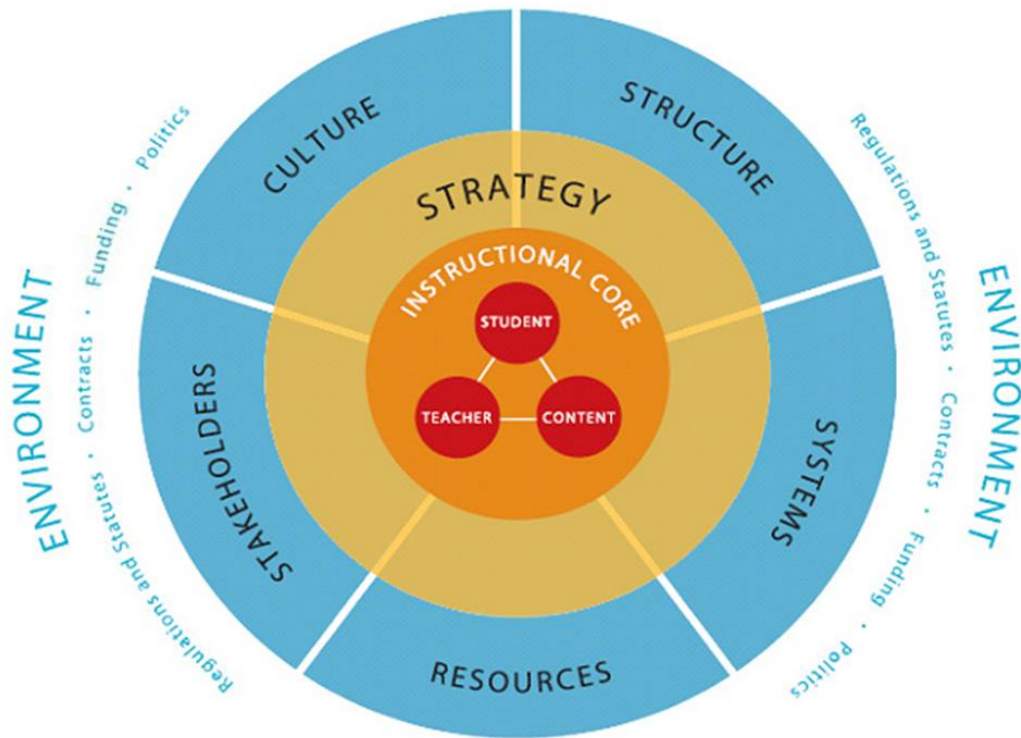
**Exhibit 4** Minneapolis Public Schools Assessment Results 2004-2007

Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards



Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, "Research Evaluation and Assessment," Minneapolis Public Schools Web site, [http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/Districtwide\\_Assessment\\_Results.html](http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/Districtwide_Assessment_Results.html), accessed August 2008.

Exhibit 5 PELP Coherence Framework

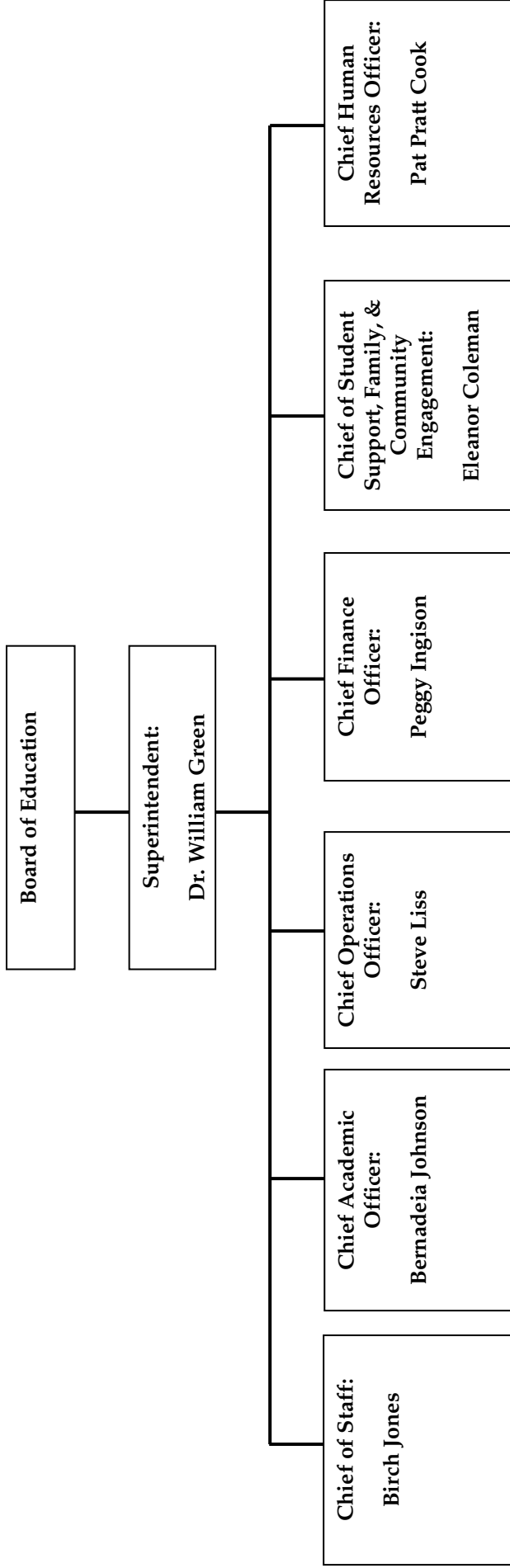


Adapted from Tushman and O'Reilly's Congruence Model, 2002

Source: Public Education Leadership Project at Harvard University, "PELP Coherence Framework," PELP Web site, <http://www.hbs.edu/pelp/framework.html>, accessed April 2008.



**Exhibit 6** Proposed Reorganization of Human Resources in MPS



## Exhibit 7 Old and New Contract Language on Teacher Hiring

	2005-2007 Contract	2007-2009 Contract
<b>General Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested teachers holding the required licensure must interview in order to claim positions in seniority order.</li> <li>All vacancies that were posted and remain vacant shall be filled permanently with remaining excessed, unassigned and realigned teachers.</li> <li>Only seniority earned within the teacher bargaining unit shall apply for the purpose of reassignment and transfer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers at site are canvassed for interest in reassignment to any vacancy at the site; principal may select a site teacher.</li> <li>Each interview site shall establish a pool of interviewers selected by the steward and principal. Each site interview team shall include at least one administrator and two teachers from the pool and selected by the principal.</li> </ul>
<b>Voluntary Transfers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A teacher may participate in any bidding session as a voluntary transfer only if they interview and obtain an approval signature of the principal, supervisor or designee for the vacancy on which the teacher bids</li> <li>Teachers who have applied for a voluntary transfer may claim, in seniority order, any vacancy for which they are properly licensed and have obtained the approval of a principal, supervisor or designee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selected schools and programs...have the ability to interview and select teachers from a list of interested candidates that include five most senior applicants along with five other internal teachers who have signed up on-line and expressed interest in vacancies at specific locations. This will affect the staffing for the 2008-2009 school year.</li> <li>The remaining schools and programs in the district will move to the "interview and select" system during the 2008-2009 school year, affecting staffing for the 2009-2010 school year.</li> </ul>
<b>Excessed Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers excessed due to staff reductions or returning from leaves of absence of more than one year shall have two options at bidding; they may exercise their right to claim a position in the licensure area/department from which they were excessed or to claim a position as a voluntary transfer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prior to excessed teacher interview/placement session, interview teams will have access to excessed teacher list and can schedule interviews and make selection.</li> <li>Excessed teachers will attend an interview and select session to fill remaining vacancies.</li> <li>After the excessed interviews are completed teachers not selected will be placed in vacant positions by seniority as long as they meet the minimum qualifications.</li> </ul>

Source: Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, "2005-2007 PreK-12 Teachers' Contract," Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Web site, <http://www.mft59.org/>, accessed April 2008; Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, "Tentative Agreement," Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Web site, <http://www.mft59.org/>, accessed March 2008

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