

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO RECRUIT, SUPPORT,
AND RETAIN HIGHLY EFFECTIVE STAFF

Legal Background

The Board of Trustees for the Rhode Island School for the Deaf (“School”) has “broad policy making authority” to operate the School, and the following specific powers and duties:

1. To identify the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children in the state;
2. To develop educational policies to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children served by the School;
3. To provide policy guidance and participate in budget development; and
4. To develop staffing policies which ensure that all students are taught by educators of the highest possible quality.¹

The Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education has reinforced the importance of highly effective staffing in its re-enactment of the Basic Education Program regulations (“BEP”), which became effective on July 1, 2010. The BEP requires that the School implement a system of human capital management by establishing “a set of policies and an array of strategies to recruit, hire, and retain highly effective district and school personnel.” (G-15-2.2(b)(1) & G-15-1.2(c)(4)).² These policies

must align to [the School’s] needs, focus on screening methods for determining candidate knowledge and skills to match the needs of the [School], promote early identification of openings, use research-based protocols and incentives to address [School] related factors affecting retention and its impact on mobility trends, and address staffing low performing schools with highly effective and experienced staff.

(G-15-2.2(b)(1)). Furthermore, the BEP, in conjunction with related state law,³ provides that the School’s Board of Trustees “shall maintain control of its ability to recruit, hire, manage, evaluate, and assign its personnel.” (G-15-2.2(a)).

The School’s mandate is clear: to ensure “that all students are taught by educators of the highest possible quality.”⁴ The BEP mandate is equally clear: to ensure “that learning is at all times the ultimate focus of every individual employed” and that such “student learning be the primary reference point for decision making, responsive policy

¹ R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 16-26-3.1(e)(1), (2), (4) & (5).

² References to the BEP

³ R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 16-2-9(a)(3)(4)(6)(7)(14), & (15).

⁴ R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-26-3.1(e)(5).

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

development, resource allocation, and personnel assignment and evaluation.” (G-12-4.1).

In the specific features of the policy to follow, the term “staff” applies broadly to include all School personnel, who serve in any capacity (e.g., full-time, part-time, consultant), and who have instructional and support responsibilities in providing services to students. Thus, the term includes but is not limited to administrators, teachers, school nurse teachers, librarians, social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, transition coordinators, paraprofessionals, and student support staff.

I. Human Capital Criteria and Criterion-Based Process

All staffing and assignment decisions at the School, and within school districts outside the School through an outreach or like program, including hiring, assignment/transfers, and terminations necessitated by consolidation or budgetary constriction shall ensure placement of the most highly effective staff to meet the student needs at issue.

Such decisions shall also ensure that each child with an Individualized Education Program (“IEP”), is afforded a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment and has available to him or her the full continuum of special education and related services, as determined by that student’s IEP, and as required under federal and state law.

The Criteria and Indicators

With input from his or her administration and the School’s personnel director, the Director and his or her designee shall identify the specific criteria or indicators to be used in making staffing decisions. As applicable, these criteria or indicators may include the following (not listed in order of importance):

1. Educational background and credentials, i.e., content expertise.
2. Specialized training, i.e., specific coursework.
3. American Sign Language proficiency or competency.
4. English Language proficiency or competency.
5. Number of years teaching, with certification, at School or elsewhere.
6. Experience in the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, at School or elsewhere.
7. Relevant job or work experience, at School or elsewhere.
8. Professional artifacts or services.
9. Job or work performance, as reflected on evaluations.
10. Overall effectiveness, as measured by student growth. This evidence may include but not be limited to test scores on state and local assessments; examples of student work at different points in the academic year; or other indicia of student achievement.
11. Performance on interviews.

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Criterion-Based Process

With input from his or her administration and the School's human resource specialist, the Director and his or her designee shall use such criteria or indicators to create and implement a criterion-based process to ensure placement of the most highly effective staff to meet the student needs at issue.

The processes for: (a) hiring to fill new positions/vacancies (b) making assignments/transfers; (c) terminating staff due to the elimination of positions (resulting from change in student need or budgetary constriction); and (d) terminating staff for misconduct or ineffective performance (G-15-2.2(c)), may vary with respect to each other.

All processes shall include at least one interview, which shall follow a consistent format for all applicants with a written set of questions.

All processes may also include a committee with membership comprised of such persons as instructional staff, parents, and students, as determined by the Director to be in the best interest of the School, which may conduct interviews and present candidates to the Director. In no event shall the committee make the final determination regarding any staffing decision.

II. New Positions and Vacancies

An existing position may become vacant through events such as termination, retirement, or resignation, and a new position may be created to accommodate a change in student need or enrollment. Whenever the School decides to fill such new position or vacancy, it shall invite applicants from both within and outside the School to apply through an internal posting and through advertising. These postings/advertisements shall set forth the requirements that the person to fill the position must satisfy to be eligible for further consideration. The minimal requirements include certification and highly qualified designation (as mandated by No Child Left Behind) in the areas for which the candidate is applying. All postings/advertisements shall remain open until the new position or vacancy is filled by the most highly effective applicant.

The School's personnel director or human resource department shall screen all candidates to be considered for a vacant or new position to ensure that each meets these minimum requirements.

The Director shall select the applicants best qualified for the position through the criterion based process. The successful applicant shall be the most highly effective candidate to meet the student needs at issue.

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

III. Assignments and Transfers

The Director shall regularly assess the needs of all students and evaluate the delivery of services to ensure that the School's program conforms to the law. After such assessment and evaluation, which should take place prior to commencement of the forthcoming school year, the Director shall make assignments of staff to ensure placement of the most highly effective staff member to meet the student needs at issue. Under all circumstances, the Director shall eliminate, consolidate, and reconfigure positions at the School based on his or her assessment of what best serves the interest of the students and the School.

IV. Elimination of Positions

There may be circumstances in which the School must eliminate positions and thereby reduce teaching staff because of a change in academic programming or student need, or as a result of budgetary constriction. If positions to be eliminated are held by teachers with identical certification and highly qualified status (as defined under No Child Left Behind), then the Director shall determine which teachers are to be retained and which are to be terminated through a criterion-based process by which the Director, with input from his or her administrative team, shall evaluate the candidates using the criteria or indicators set forth above.

V. Evaluation System/Termination of Ineffective Staff

The School shall implement an evaluation system, in accordance with state and federal law, that promotes the growth and effectiveness of staff, provides feedback for continuous improvement, and includes processes for disciplinary action and exiting of ineffective staff. (G-15-2.2(b)(2-4) & (c)).

Adopted by the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees on June 7, 2011.