

## Hiring and Interviewing: WebX Alternative Assignment

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I just listened to the June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 recording of the WebX featuring Cloquet Middle School Principal, Tom Brenner. The following notes are the summarized highlights of that interview by committee discussion:

Tom began by emphasizing the following three key features to his hiring philosophy:

Look for candidates that are strong in content

Find qualified applicants; take the time to get a good pool

You can either help teachers get better or hire good teachers

Questions from the class ranged from education law to education philosophy but some of the key (truncated) questions and responses that I gathered from the discussion were as follows:

Q: How to increase pool of candidates? 45 candidates 5 years ago, 5 now...?

A: Pressure vs rewards discouraging new teachers

A: Need to raise the bar and respect them as experts they are.

Q: What if no candidates are good enough?

A: Reopened the position. Beat the bushes at local colleges. MASSP.

A: Never settle for less than excellence

A: Interview and a lesson: take the time to find high quality teachers

Q: What stands out in resumes?

A: Letter from principal

A: Nothing. Get to know them first. Try to bring in as many as possible

A: Show me passion for job then look through paperwork

A: Looking for "Plays well with others" before looking at resume

Q: Who do you bring in?

A: Subject specific teachers, Para, School board rep, AP, Counselor

Q: Diversity as a motivating factor?

A: First and foremost high quality teachers

A: Want staff to reflect student population

Q: Second interview process?

A: Group interviews, follow up, content related test/questions, lesson

Q: Candidates get a star for coach, extracurricular activities?

A: Yes, potential for building relationships

Q: Co-teaching vs resource room?

A: Co-teaching; Changed culture in school from resource room of 24 to 4

Q: After hire follow up?

A: Mentorship program

A: Clear expectations

A: Observations planned and otherwise

Julie closed with questions harkened that harkened back to our earlier assignment surrounding the quality hiring process and the laws surrounding the interview process. Those questions included:

Q: Same questions to everyone?

A: Yes. But not same follow up.

Q: What happens to people who don't get hired?

A: Expect a call by specific date.

A: Call personally

Q: When someone calls for a reference?

A: Very honest

A: Would you hire that person again? Yes, absolutely, no way...

Overall I think this discussion paralleled the AASA article "Hiring for Attitude" referenced on our D2L site. It seems that "attitude" is a big part of Mr. Brenner's hiring philosophy. That coupled with strong content knowledge.

The concepts of Multiple Measures, Candidate Performance, the Hiring Stage, the Feedback Loop, Equitable Distribution, and a Bright Future can all be found in Mr. Brenner's brief discussion.

**Multiple Measures:** Tom places passion for the job in the highest regard and offers candidates a multitude of ways to demonstrate that. He devalues the routine and mundane paperwork and instead places the emphasis on confident display of content knowledge and referrals from past supervisors.

**Candidate Performance:** Mr. Brenner demonstrated this trait when conducting follow up interviews, providing content area tests, allowing time for prospective teachers to actually teach a lesson.

**The Hiring Stage:** Here Tom talked about bringing in a team of people to help screen the applicants ahead of time and then involving many of those key players in the hiring process. He always makes it clear that he has the final vote but encourages input from a variety of stakeholders.

**The Feedback Loop:** This standard is met by Tom's insistence on personally calling each candidate interviewed. He offers frank and honest feedback when it is solicited and makes a timely decisions so as not to leave candidates hanging.

**Equal Distribution:** This topic seems more suited to district-wide discussions but on the micro scale it appears Tom has worked to place teachers and co-teachers in areas of greatest need at his middle school. I see this evident in his focus on co-teaching in mainstream classes for special ed students versus filling the special ed resource rooms to maximum capacity. He also addresses equal distribution in his desire to have his staff reflect the diversity of his student population.

**A Bright Future:** I believe Tom has the future of his school and his students at the heart of his hiring decisions. Phrases like "sometimes you have to hire on potential" point to the passion he has to be willing to cultivate great teachers who will best serve his students.

I am sorry to have missed the interaction between the current WebX speaker and my own cohort but thoroughly enjoyed this recording. In part because Cloquet Middle School is about 20 minutes from my home. So I know the district and the clientele of which he speaks. Also, his philosophy lined up with not only the article I referenced above but several of the resources provided for this class.