

Regardless of the student's post-program placement plans, it is a good idea to encourage all students to complete the FAFSA ahead of state deadlines, which often occur at the beginning of the calendar year. Another reason to encourage students to complete the FAFSA early is that many state and school-based funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Planning and Staff Recruitment

Program directors, teachers and other program staff should plan the education component on an annual basis, using the planning time to structure their classrooms, research and order materials, develop curriculum guidelines and recruit staff. While some of this planning should be ongoing, creating deadlines for each of these activities in the education timeline will be helpful to keep the process on track. Through a well-developed planning schedule, the strengths and weaknesses of the education component will become clear well before the program cycle begins. This will also help guide the program's development of a strategic recruitment plan for teachers and other education staff.

Staff Recruitment and Selection

When asked what is different about YouthBuild, young people often answer, "The staff really care about you." Staff have high expectations for students and encourage and support them in their growth. Another value that students frequently mention as being central to their progress is the fact that the staff do not judge them for what they have done in the past but accept them for who they are now and support their aspirations for who they want to become. The past is the past. The future is the focus.



A caring and dedicated staff clearly committed to student success is a key feature of high-quality youth development programs, and YouthBuild programs are known for adhering to the principles of youth development in all components. However, finding qualified staff to run the education component is not an easy task. Successful YouthBuild teachers should possess a combination of several qualities: knowledge of their role, experience with young people, and a deep respect for their intelligence and capacity for learning. All staff, including instructional staff, must be able to work as part of a team in a way that is creative, energetic, responsible, and open to supervision. Therefore, recruiting and selecting teaching staff is the first step to ensuring that program operations support its vision.

On the flip side, the opportunity to teach at a YouthBuild program is unique and extremely rewarding, and the many advantages should be emphasized in the recruitment process. YouthBuild teachers make a difference in the lives of their students in myriad ways.

A driving force at every YouthBuild program is the strong and positive program culture, which stems from core beliefs, values, rituals, and practices. Research on YouthBuild programs shows that students describe the program in similar ways as a result of the consistency of the program culture. Students report that YouthBuild programs are "like a family," that the "staff care about you and make sure you succeed, and the teachers care that you really learn." This program culture is also supportive of its staff. All great YouthBuild programs should have a strong professional development component that emphasizes continuous feedback and improvement. Excellent programs also foster a culture of collaboration among staff. Teachers at YouthBuild programs are not islands to themselves; they should work in tandem with other teachers and staff to ensure that students succeed.

While student outcomes are important at every program, the program should define student success in a holistic manner. Teachers at YouthBuild programs have the opportunity and should be expected to form strong relationships with students and invest in their overall success. Therefore, each instructional staff person should be evaluated not only in terms of literacy and numeracy gains but also his or her ability to connect with students and help them navigate academic and personal obstacles.

Unlike many other school environments, YouthBuild maintains a low teacher to student ratio. This allows teachers to deliver effective individualized instruction and to ensure student success. For teachers, this is an empowering classroom environment. Teachers at YouthBuild have tremendous flexibility in terms of choosing the best and most appropriate instructional strategies and curriculum. For many teachers who have found school district requirements too rigid, this is an extremely attractive aspect of working in a YouthBuild program.

The positive YouthBuild program culture is a powerful recruitment tool that should be highlighted to potential candidates, and, if at all possible, salaries that are competitive with local school districts should be offered.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on school conditions that support teaching and learning, see Chapter 2 of this manual.

Recruitment Timeline

Schools with highly effective and talented teachers have a sound recruitment timeline and begin and complete their hiring process early. Research indicates that teachers and instructors who are highly effective and more responsive to feedback tend to apply for positions early in the hiring season. Teachers are not likely to wait too late into the summer to make career decisions. This underscores the importance of creating an effective recruitment timeline. Waiting until the end of the school year or the summer to recruit and hire candidates is a common pitfall for many YouthBuild programs. Schools and the local school district, which may have an early hiring process, will compete for talented teachers.

Ideally, a recruitment plan should be ongoing so that there is a strong candidate pool to recruit from even if late notifications of potential vacancies are received. If an ongoing recruitment process is not possible, the program should develop a recruitment calendar that takes into account important benchmarks in the program cycle. For example, if students are enrolled in September, the program should begin recruiting candidates in October and should aim to complete the hiring process by the end of May. Establishing a thorough recruitment process is time consuming since it will take time to review the submitted materials for each teaching position. The scheduling of interviews, including demonstration lessons, should begin in January. Depending on the number of candidates and vacancies, offer letters should go out in March, with the hope of completing the process by the end of May.

An important element of the hiring process is early awareness of the number of vacancies to be filled for the upcoming year. The program director should build this into the program culture and communicate clearly its importance to the success of the program and students. Respecting young people and ensuring their success is every staff person's responsibility and includes early and honest communication with the program director.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on creating a recruitment timeline, see the [New Teacher Project](#) and [National Charter School Resource Center](#).

Recruitment Strategies¹

Preparing for recruitment is almost as important as the search itself. In fact, a Harvard Business School study found that more than 75 percent of staff turnover in any work environment could be tracked to poor hiring practices. Preparing well and expressing the school's vision and expectations clearly and consistently will help identify the best matches among potential candidates. When creating a plan, staff should answer the following questions:

- Whom and what qualities/characteristics does the school need?
- Where should the search take place?
- How should the program position itself for effective recruitment?

Begin the recruitment process by selecting a hiring committee. Consider including members of the board and partner organizations, teachers, and students. The program director should be an integral part of the recruitment team.

When establishing a recruitment committee, consider the following:

- **Student involvement.** Because YouthBuild is not simply an education or workforce development program but also a leadership development program, students should have a voice in the hiring process. In fact, youth involvement is critical. Often, the greatest insight on potential applicants comes from young people. Many programs have found involving young people leads to the selection of stronger candidates and greater student engagement in the education component. Young people do not necessarily have to be involved at every step, however. Most programs include young people in the final selection of candidates after a rigorous interview process and reference checks.

This is an excellent opportunity to create a culture of respect for the intelligence and leadership potential of young people by allowing them to be involved in the governance of their own program. This is an ideal opportunity to involve the policy committee if one exists within the program. Young people may need to be trained to participate in the process meaningfully, which will require building time into the recruitment timeline. Involving young people in the hiring process also sends a powerful message to potential candidates about the program's approach to leadership development and its philosophical accountability to the beneficiaries of the program.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on developing a policy committee, see the [Leadership Development at a YouthBuild Program](#).

¹ This section is adapted from *Mobilizing and Motivating Your Staff to Get Results: A Technical Assistance Guide for Charter School Leaders* developed by the Charter Friends National Network and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. <http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/mobilizing%20motivating%20%20staff.pdf>

- **Diversity.** It is also important to build a diverse team that includes staff who reflect the student population. Employing staff who can relate to the struggles of the young people sends a strong message to students. Having a diverse group of members in the selection committee can bring different perspectives to the selection process. Various research studies show that identification with teachers and other staff members leads to deeper engagement and confidence on the part of the students.

Recruitment Materials

Developing a well-written and clear description of the position is a crucial aspect of recruitment. A well-written job description articulates the major work area, goals, behavior expectations and competencies for each role including any extra duties generally expected of the position. A job description should include:

- **Standard Qualifications (including youth and leadership development commitment).** Identify required and desired qualifications and characteristics. Consider creating a job description which states the desired qualification or characteristic next to the goals. This will help candidates assess themselves prior to applying for the position. A few examples of categories that the program should consider including in the job description are:
 - technical expertise and skills (e.g. subject matter knowledge, instructional assessment and practice, classroom management skills)
 - deep commitment to youth development principles and skill in implementing these principles in the classroom and across the program
 - respect for young people
 - awareness of typical issues that YouthBuild students face
 - behavioral competencies (e.g. responsiveness to feedback, positive attitude, team orientation, self-awareness and self-development, leadership skills etc.)
 - ability to connect with students and help them navigate academic and personal obstacles
 - commitment to the centrality of leadership development of young people in the classroom and at the program and a desire and skill to implement practices that foster leadership development.

Education and experience are important qualifications to list. However, if there is too much focus on these aspects, it may overpower the underlying knowledge, skills and competencies required. Specific qualifications can also be listed under desirable qualifications to help enlarge the pool of candidates without sacrificing the quality of applicants.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a sample job description for a GED instructor and sample recruitment brochure, *Recognizing the Value of Human Capital*, see the [Tool Bench](#).

Selection Process

The selection process should be an opportunity for the recruitment committee to learn about the candidate but also for the candidate to understand and form impressions of the program, staff, and students. To ensure the hiring process is interactive and informative, the program should develop various activities that involve the input of teachers and students and allow potential candidates the opportunity to observe the school in action by inviting them to observe classroom or construction site activity as part of the interview process.

Below is a sample list of activities to include in the process:

- resume review
- application essay and writing sample (e.g. describing a candidate's teaching philosophy)
- teacher portfolio review
- phone interview
- in-person follow-up interview
- teaching sample (e.g. demonstration lesson)
- classroom observation
- group discussion



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For sample interview tools and a sample list of activities along with skills and competencies you can evaluate, see the [New Teacher Project's Teacher Talent Toolbox](#).

Evaluating Candidates

It is important not only to identify the desired activities and competencies in potential candidates but also to develop a method to evaluate the skills and competencies. As with developing rubrics for students, a program should develop indicators that show what each competency should look like within a particular selection activity. This may involve creating a rating system which will help assess and compare each candidate. For example, a rating system may be a scale for answers, such as the following.

Target Response	The materials and answers demonstrate the candidate has experience but also can implement action that will make a difference.
Acceptable Response	Use this rating when the materials meet the minimal criteria set for the role and the candidate has acceptable knowledge of the topic.
Unacceptable Response	Candidates who have no answer or an incorrect response to a question usually receive this rating.

A number rating system to evaluate the experience level of a candidate may look like:

1	2	3	4
No Experience	Limited Experience	Average Experience	Excellent Background Experience

When designing the selection criteria and rating system, keep in mind that an effective and well-designed interview process will be:

- reliable and consistent
- efficient
- low-inference
- non-leading



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For sample rating tools, please visit the [Tool Bench](#).
- For more information on developing an effective recruitment strategies, see the [New Teacher Project's Teacher Talent Toolbox: Recruitment and Hiring](#).

Interview Techniques²

Research indicates a strong link between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. An interview is one of the most important and interactive components of the hiring process and also provides an indication of a potential candidate's effectiveness in the classroom. It is an opportunity to learn about the candidate and also for the candidate to learn about the program.

Screening Candidates

The interview should be a multi-step process. The first level of review, the screening process, should begin with an assessment of submitted materials. These should include:

- resumes and cover letters
- academic transcripts, standardized scores, and certifications
- portfolios
- writing samples and teaching philosophy
- video-recording of a sample lesson (if the teacher is not being asked to conduct a demonstration lesson)

The hiring committee should rate each of these materials against the rubric being used.

Invite the highest rated candidates for a phone interview. Prior to conducting the phone interview, the hiring committee should create a set of questions. It is important to ask each candidate the same questions, so that candidates can be considered in an objective manner. A good rule of thumb for phone interviews is five or six questions. Some sample questions you may ask are:

- Tell me about your best teaching situation.
- Name a teaching accomplishment from your previous experience that characterizes your work.
- Describe a typical lesson that you taught in your previous experience.

² This section is adapted from *How to Hire the Best New Teachers: Using Behavior-Based Interviewing* developed by Marcy Clement. <http://farwestgreat.org/ADV/07-08/ADV0610BhvrQuesPres.pdf>

These questions help to narrow the pool of candidates. The next step is to invite the highest rated candidates for an on-site interview.

On-Site Interviews

Based on the review, invite the highest rated candidates to the next level of assessment to determine whether the candidate possesses the desired skills and will be a good fit with the school environment. A school/teacher fit is extremely important for teacher effectiveness, satisfaction and retention.

Select behavior-based questions to ask candidates. In order to conduct a fair selection and evaluation process, every candidate should receive the same general set of questions. As long as the committee is able to cover a range of the important questions, allow flexibility in taking some questions deeper, based on the candidate's responses. We strongly recommend that the committee build in time for candidates to teach a demonstration lesson either as part of the on-site interview process for all candidates or reserved for the top two or three. Sample demonstration lessons provide insight into how candidates interact with the young people, evaluate their knowledge and skill in the content area and classroom management, determine their instructional approach, and examine each candidate's fit with the school. When evaluating a demonstration lesson, look for flexibility, creativity, ability to communicate ideas, respect for young people, and skill in the candidate's area of expertise.

The lesson will also give students an opportunity to interact with potential candidates. Often, young people have astute insight about adults that interact with and support them well. Be sure to build time into the hiring process for students to share their thoughts on the demonstration lesson. Involving students will make them feel more ownership of the YouthBuild program, and it will demonstrate value and respect for their opinions.

Whether or not teachers are asked to conduct demonstration lessons, consider inviting candidates to observe student and teacher interaction in either the classroom or the construction site. Remember that the interview process is a two-way information-gathering opportunity. Demonstration lessons and classroom observations allow candidates to gain a better understanding of the student population and school culture. This information will help them make a decision on whether they will be a good fit with the program environment.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a sample recruitment process checklist, see the [Tool Bench](#).

Behavior-Based Interview Questions

One emerging best practice in teacher hiring is behavior-based interview questions. These questions go deeper than traditional interview questions because they require candidates to discuss past experiences and apply their knowledge and skills to specific scenarios. It is important to note that behavior-based interview questions are not hypothetical questions. These questions often ask candidates to:

- reflect on a specific time when a candidate used a strategy or skill
- describe an experience
- discuss how a candidate handled a specific situation
- explain his or her approach to an issue

This process of questioning will help your program evaluate candidates' ability to problem-solve, as well as their values and attitudes toward students and their work. For example, the committee could ask a candidate to reflect on a problem she resolved in her teaching experience or ask her to describe a classroom management problem that she resolved by discussing the situation surrounding the problem, the action she took to resolve the issue, and the result of her action. It is also useful to ask about a situation that could not be resolved despite best efforts.

Understanding the YouthBuild model is essential for all staff working in the program. If staff do not exhibit the philosophical core and spirit of YouthBuild, students will not receive the strong support, or experience the caring environment, they need to succeed. Behavior-based questions will help determine the respect and depth of concern teachers have for young people.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a sample list of questions your program can ask candidates using the behavior-based interviewing method, see the [Tool Bench](#).

Strategic Places for Recruiting Staff

There is a wide range of sources that programs can utilize to recruit teachers, although the effectiveness of recruitment sources will vary by region, state, local district, and by program. Therefore, develop a multi-pronged strategy for recruitment, and track which strategy is most effective.

One of the most effective recruitment tools is word-of-mouth. Consider involving board members and partner organizations, including post-secondary education partners, in the recruiting of instructional staff. If there are colleges and universities, particularly Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU), in the local area, be sure to connect with their education programs. Doing so will help you identify an ongoing pool of highly qualified candidates. Even if no immediate openings exist, connecting with post-secondary institutions and future teachers will help the program build a relationship and reputation. Consider incorporating social media into the recruitment efforts to increase their reach.

Partnerships with local schools, community-based organizations, or local charter school resource centers may provide opportunities to host a job fair or open house. This may yield a larger volume of candidates and will help you raise the program's profile among potential candidates.

Consider recruiting through:

- local media (e.g. newspapers, radio and television)
- Internet sites, particularly sites that specialize on the non-profit sector (e.g. Idealist, Opportunity Knocks, Young Nonprofit Professional Network, etc.)
- education networks with large job banks (e.g. ASCD, AERA, U.S. Charter Schools, etc.)



- national teaching job banks (e.g. National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse, Teach.gov, etc.)
- volunteer organizations (e.g. AmeriCorps, VISTA, etc.)

Involve staff and partnership networks in helping you generate effective recruitment strategies and track the recruitment sources of all candidates as they enter the recruitment pipeline in order to determine the most effective sources of recruitment for the future.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a sample teacher recruitment analysis and planning tool, see the [Tool Bench](#).