HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW FINAL REPORT

PREPARED FOR:
ROCK ISLAND-MILAN SCHOOL DISTRICT 41

APRIL, 2024

Completed by: Beth Dalton, Ed.D., pHCLE

www.iaspa.org

Table of Contents

Introduction

A human resources (HR) review aims to study and evaluate an organization's HR policies, practices, and procedures. The review provides a systematic approach to assessing and improving various aspects of an organization's human resources function, helping ensure legal compliance, manage risks, and improve efficiency.

By conducting an HR review, a school district can gain valuable insights into its HR practices, identify areas of strength and vulnerability, and implement changes to enhance the overall effectiveness of its human resources function. This process contributes to the organization's overall success by ensuring that HR practices align with organizational goals and comply with legal and ethical standards.

Scope

The American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) has established standards that guide school districts' human capital practices and processes. The standards are divided into domains and objectives that guide the work of a school district's human resources department. The full document can be found at https://www.aaspa.org/hcle-certification.

These domains and objectives serve as the outline for the human resources review. Each domain was analyzed for evidence of implementation, compliance, and strategy, as well as the cross-cutting domains of process management, risk management, and experience management.

Review Process

The review process includes multiple steps, beginning with an exploration of the district website and any readily available documents related to human resources. Next, an interview with the Key Leader occurs, during which individuals responsible for various human resources tasks are identified. The Key Leader is then provided with a list of documents requested for submission. Interviews with those involved in HR functions follow. If additional or specific documents are mentioned during these interviews, they will also be requested for review.

Simultaneously, a policy review, document review, and licensure audit take place. Once all interviews are complete, the submitted documents are reviewed to verify reported practices. All collected data is compared to the established standards, and a report is generated outlining strengths and vulnerabilities. This report concludes with recommendations for improvement.

Document Review

Documents were submitted by request and examined to determine if policies, procedures, and practices exist.   In addition, the documents were reviewed to assess the implementation of the cited processes.

The following documents were reviewed:

- RIESPA Contract 2022-2025 FINAL
- 2023 - 2026 AFSCME - RIMSD Contract-FINAL
- RIEA 2024-2027 Contract Agreement
- Staffing Plans for each building
- Enrollment Projection FY24 thru FY29
- Job descriptions for various positions, certified, administrative, and educational support personnel
- Sample posting from Frontline for a teaching position
- Sample posting from Frontline for an educational support position
- Current job postings on Frontline
- Applications and documentation of the pay rates of 5 Support staff hired this year
- Applications and lane placement documentation of 5 Certified staff hired this year
- List of job fairs attended 20-24
- Copies of student teaching agreements with universities
- Middle School Science Teacher Interview Questions
- Special Education Teacher Interview Questions
- Elementary Physical Education Teacher Interview Questions
- Interview Questions (Elementary Teacher and Other)
- Paraprofessionals (Interview Questions)
- HR Assistant Interview Questions
- Confidentiality Notice and Ethics Agreement for Recruiters
- Recruitment Materials
- Examples of use of the District Brand when Recruiting
- Examples used to advertise the Employee Value Proposition
- Social Media Postings
- Recruitment Plan with Goals (Score Card)
- Scorecard for the Recruitment Team
- RIMSD Recruitment Team Presentation
- Revised Onboarding Checklist - 90 Day Checklist
- Recruitment Guide for Recruiters 2020.pdf
- Lead-Teacher Mentor Job Description
- Deputy Superintendent Performance Task
- Sample Welcome Team Plan - 2024-2025
- The Hiring Process, Certified Staff Members

- Recommendation to Hire Form
- Personnel Recommendations for the Board of Education
- Welcome Team Plan Sample
- Offer Letter Email
- Non-Affiliate Salary Process/Structure
- Remote Work Guidelines
- New Hire Packets for each employee group
- School District Fingerprint Form
- Employee Questionnaire Form
- I-9 Form 2023 (shared from Frontline)
- IL- Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status
- Illinois - Notice of Enrollment in IMRF
- W-4: 2025 Employee's Withholding Certificate
- IL-W-4
- Direct Deposit
- Employee Health Examination Form
- Faith's Law form
- Substitute List
- IEA Illinois Virtual Instructional Coach and Building Mentor Program for New Teachers
- Agenda for Welcome Team Point of Contact Training
- Welcome Team Training
- RIMS Reference Check Form
- GAP ANALYSIS for Human Resources
- Analysis of Human Capital Metrics
- Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Top Talent Report
- Welcome Team staff handbooks for each building
- Welcome Team Member List 24-25
- Employees by Location with Counts
- Orientation Agendas Dec 24, Feb 25
- New Hire Pledge
- Lists of new hires invited to orientation
- Evaluation Document for New Teacher Orientation
- 2022 - 2023 Summary of PD
- 2023 - 2024 Summary of PD
- 2024 - 2025 Summary of PD
- 2022 - 2023 summary agendas for InService
- 2023 - 2024 summary agendas for InService
- 2024 - 2025 summary agendas for InService
- 2023-2024 January Inservice brochure
- Opening Institute Agendas FY23, FY24, FY25
- 2024 Teaching & Learning Annual Conference
- 2025 Summer Professional Development
- 2024 Summer (and beyond)Professional Development Results
- List of GCN mandated trainings

- Mandated & Recommended Trainings for School Personnel
- Principal PLC Meeting Evaluation tool
- Principal PLC Meeting slide deck
- Work calendars for staff, administrators, 10-month & 11-month secretaries
- Upslope Administrative Guidelines
- Employee Handbook 24-25
- Open Enrollment Insurance Emails and reminders
- Sample Email of Open Enrollment Meeting
- Benefit Checklists for RIEA, RIESPA, AFSCME, Administrators, Non-Affiliates, Head Start
- YWCA Workplace Wellness
- YWCA Emp Discount
- Spousal Carve-Out Affidavit
- Rock Island SD 41 Enrollment Guide 2024
- Rock Island EN - Quick Start Instructions
- Reliance Dental and Vision
- Payroll Withholding Options-Portal Instructions 2024-2025
- It's OK to not be OK EAP
- IMRF VOLUNTARY ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION
- Fitness Discount flyer 2024
- Benefit Checklist for New Hire Onboarding
- BCBS APPLICATION AND POLICY CHANGE DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING
- BCBS Application
- 403B Monthly Change List
- Administrative Compensation Information Manual 24-25
- Payroll_Guidelines_for_Coaches__Sub_Teachers
- Non-Affiliated Compensation booklet 2023-24
- Job Evaluation Salary Sample Job
- Job Analysis Questionnaire - Template
- Job Analysis Questionnaire - Accounts Payable Specialist
- Exempt Employees Receiving Overtime Pay
- ELIGIBILITY FOR STEP AND COLA INCREASES
- Personnel files of randomly selected classified staff
- Personnel files of randomly selected certified staff
- New Hire Checklist
- New Hire to be Paid Form
- Screenshots from the payroll system of fields that require manual entry
- Contract Change Form
- Change of Name, Address, or Phone Google Docs
- Employee Leaving System-Final Pay Form
- Light Duty Guidelines
- Sample Verification of Employment letter
- Sample sick leave bank letter
- Volunteer Handbook

- Superintendent Self-Evaluation Form
- The Council's Superintendent Model Evaluation
- Sample Teacher evaluations
- Sample of Administrator evaluations
- Sample of Principal evaluations
- Paraprofessional Evaluation Form
- Custodian Evaluation Form
- Library Office Paraprofessional Evaluation form
- Library Paraprofessional Evaluation Form
- Building Supervisor Paraprofessional Evaluation Form
- Nurse Evaluation Form
- Hall Monitor/Security Evaluation Form
- Employee Handbook 2024-2025
- UpSlope Solutions website
- Flex Spending Information
- Flex Spending Open Enrollment email
- Salary Reduction Form
- Resignation letter example
- Intent to Retire form
- Miscellaneous Pay Form
- Evaluwise Form Notification to Evaluate Administrator
- Cabinet Member Non-School Leader Evaluation Tool
- 2023_Evaluwise Overall Summative Rating List.xlsx
- 2024_Evaluwise Overall Summative Rating List.xlsx
- 2025_Extra Income Data.xlsx
- 2025_Salary Data.xlsx
- Extra Duty Pay List
- Tuition Pool for Paraprofessional Information
- List of Winter coaches document
- Request for Approval of Additional Training- Graduate Credit
- Example of recent grievance
- List of those on FMLA leave
- FMLA Leave Information Letter
- FMLA Request form
- Examples of FMLA designation forms used
- FMLA, Workers' Comp, ADA Outline
- Memo to Board 1st year Status Towards Tenure
- Memo to Board 2nd year Status Towards Tenure
- Memo to Board 3rd year Status Towards Tenure
- Memo to Board 4th year Status Towards Tenure
- Memo to Board Administration Status Towards Tenure
- Employee Credential Report
- Joint Evaluation Committee Minutes Jan 2024
- Teacher Unsatisfactory Appeal Process

- RIF Committee Procedures 22-23
- 2023_EIS Employee Evaluations.pdf
- 2024_EIS Employee Evaluations.pdf
- 2023_EIS Position Detail (with Salary) Roster Report.pdf
- 2024_EIS Position Detail (with Salary) Roster Report.pdf
- 2024_EIS Position Detail Roster Report.pdf
- 2025_EIS Position Detail Roster Report.pdf
- EIS Unfilled Positions Report FY24 and FY25
- Teacher Seniority List
- RIESPA Seniority List
- Secretary Seniority 2023-24
- CAFETERIA SENIORITY LIST 2023-2024
- 2023-24 Custodian Seniority List
- List of those receiving attendance bonus pay
- Custodian evaluation
- Paraprofessional evaluation
- Exit Questionnaire
- Letter Requesting Completion of Exit Questionnaire
- HR - FY25 Budget as of February 2025
- Employee of the Year Flyer
- Shout Out promotional video
- Satisfaction Survey Fall 2024 Results
- School Report Cards/5 Essential Surveys
- Review of Board Meeting minutes of the last four months
- Review of the District 41 website
- Board of Education Policies - Section 5 Personnel

Staff Interviews

Interviews were conducted with school administrators and staff who reportedly complete HR functions for the District.

Interviews were conducted with:

- Dominique Moore, Asst Supt for Human Resources
- Debbie Shivers, HR Business Partner
- Patricia Walls, Talent Acquisition Manager
- Noelle Jones, HR Coordinator
- LaKisha Randle, Admin Center Secretary
- Jen McVay, Benefits Specialist
- Redrick Terry, Director of Communications
- Jen Andrus, Senior Payroll Specialist
- Melanie Lloyd, District Data Administrator
- Annaka Whiting, Chief Financial Officer

- Jeff Dase, Deputy Superintendent
- Megan Braun-Howard, Dean, Rock Island High School
- Jadiem Wilson, Principal
- Stacey Golz, Administrative Coordinator of Teaching and Learning
- Steve Quick, President of AFSCME
- Andrew Hains, President of RIEA
- Donna Manning, President of RIESPA

This HR review was initiated by the recently appointed Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. Her predecessor was reassigned to a school-based leadership position after many years in the position. She was hired mid-year. In her short tenure, she has identified gaps in the Human Resources department with regard to knowledge, processes, and procedures. In addition, there is limited institutional knowledge to rely on, as there has been significant turnover throughout the school district's central office. This school year is the first year for the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and the Chief Financial Officer. Given all of this change and the concern for processes and procedures, an assessment of the human resources department is warranted to identify areas of strength and areas of potential improvement.

TALENT ACQUISITION

Talent acquisition in a school district is a strategic and ongoing process designed to attract, recruit, and retain high-quality educators and support staff to meet the district's educational goals. It goes beyond traditional hiring by incorporating long-term workforce planning, employer branding, and proactive candidate engagement to ensure that schools are staffed with the best possible talent. This multifaceted process demands thorough planning, strategic foresight, purposeful recruitment activities, and a fair, unbiased, and legally compliant hiring process.

At its core, talent acquisition involves identifying the district's staffing needs, which can include teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, custodians, food service workers, and other essential personnel. This requires collaboration between human resources, building leaders, and district leadership to forecast vacancies and understand the skills and qualifications needed for each role. School districts often face unique hiring challenges, such as teacher shortages in specialized subjects, competitive job markets, and retaining staff in high-need areas. As such, thoughtful planning is required.

Talent acquisition planning involves forecasting future workforce requirements based on organizational goals and current staffing capabilities. Forecasting entails understanding short-term needs and long-term strategic objectives to align recruitment efforts accordingly.

Secondly, strategy plays a crucial role in talent acquisition by outlining the methodologies and channels for identifying and engaging potential candidates. The methodology may involve leveraging various recruitment channels, such as job boards, social media platforms, professional networks, and industry-specific events, to maximize outreach and attract diverse talent pools.

To attract top talent, purposeful recruitment activities are essential in effectively engaging with prospective candidates. The recruitment activities include crafting compelling job descriptions that accurately reflect the role and organizational culture, conducting proactive candidate sourcing through networking and referrals, and utilizing effective screening and assessment methods to evaluate candidates' qualifications and fit.

Thirdly, school districts must engage in employer branding efforts, highlighting what makes their schools a great place to work. This may include showcasing a supportive work environment, professional development opportunities, competitive salaries, strong benefits, and community engagement initiatives. School districts also leverage recruitment strategies such as job fairs, partnerships with universities, internship programs, and outreach to diverse talent pools to ensure an inclusive hiring process.

Once candidates are identified, the recruitment process includes application screening, interviews, reference checks, and background investigations to ensure the selection of qualified individuals. Modern talent acquisition strategies often incorporate technology, such as applicant tracking systems, social media recruitment, and data analytics, to streamline the process and improve decision-making.

Lastly, ensuring a fair, unbiased, and legal hiring process is fundamental to maintaining integrity and equity within talent acquisition efforts. This involves adherence to equal employment opportunity principles, conducting structured interviews based on job-related criteria, mitigating unconscious biases through training and standardized processes, and complying with relevant employment laws and regulations to uphold a transparent and equitable recruitment process for all candidates.

In conclusion, effective talent acquisition goes beyond filling vacancies; it involves strategic planning, purposeful engagement with candidates, and a commitment to fairness and legality throughout the hiring process. By adopting these principles, organizations can attract and acquire skilled individuals who meet immediate staffing needs and contribute to long-term organizational success and growth.

Ultimately, talent acquisition in a school district is about more than just filling vacancies; it is about building a high-performing workforce that contributes to student success and long-term educational excellence.

Planning and Preparation

The first step in talent acquisition is determining the staffing needs for the upcoming school year. This requires analyzing current staffing and forecasting future needs, ideally using past enrollment data to identify patterns. Coordinating with all departments and schools is essential to determine the total staffing requirements for the district.

District 41 is working towards using data to support staffing planning. Recently, an external demographic study was completed to gauge enrollment patterns. In addition, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources met with each building leader to discuss current and future staffing needs. These discussions and the demographic data are being used to define the staffing needs for the next school year.

While these efforts address some aspects of planning, position control is an ongoing concern. Position control is a process that tracks the workforce by position rather than by employee, allowing for more accurate budgeting, preventing unauthorized hiring, and ensuring adherence to Board of Education-approved positions. This process is crucial for a public school district funded by limited resources. Currently, position control represents a potential vulnerability for District 41. Although there are processes for developing the staffing plan, there is no defined procedure for comprehensively managing or tracking positions.

While staffing plan meetings and documents are used to prepare for next year, they do not reflect the current approved positions in the district. The document completed during the staffing meetings with each school does not align with the information provided for this review. When comparing these staffing plan documents to the 'Employees by Location with Counts' provided for this review, discrepancies in both employees and counts arise. Hence, there is concern regarding the actual approved positions.

In addition, when inquiring about existing open positions, this reviewer was informed that all teaching positions were filled; however, a review of the Staffing Plan document for each building revealed that some certified positions, such as speech-language pathologist and English Language Learner teacher, were vacant. The absence of a position control system contributes to this discrepancy. Without an established, defined list of positions, uncertainty about the existence and vacancy of those positions may arise. The district did submit an Unfilled Position report, which reflected a vacancy.

These examples emphasize the necessity of a position control system. A process for managing all positions should be implemented to track when a position is created, when it is filled, and who occupies it. Conversely, if a position is eliminated or closed, there should be a procedure that documents the change and the reasons for it. Ideally, a consistently maintained and updated position list should be shared with the Board of Education regularly to ensure accountability and transparency.

The lack of a position control system is not the only topic requiring attention in planning and preparation. In 2018, a formal gap analysis of the Human Resources department

was completed. This analysis examined 16 areas related to human resources, focusing on people, processes, and technology. It recommended the addition of administrative staff in human resources and the development of standard operating procedures. The analysis identified the most significant weakness as the lack of policies and procedures, followed by another area of deficiency: communications. Although this report highlighted these two major concerns, it seems little has been done to create documented procedures for the Human Resources department. The absence of written procedures impacts every aspect of the department's work and has severely impacted Human Resources operations, further compounded by recent turnover within the department. All of these factors contribute to ongoing communication issues pointed out by administration, faculty, and staff, causing confusion about roles and where to seek guidance and assistance from the department.

Following the gap analysis, some changes were made in the Human Resources department. The department added another staff member; however, the position was filled by a member of the teachers' union. This presents significant challenges to the functioning of the department. First, there are potential contractual restrictions given the number of days and the timeframe the person is able to work. Human Resources functions occur year-round and cannot be limited to specific times of the year. Secondly, since the individual in the position is a union member, they cannot or should not be privy to confidential information that is regularly handled by the Human Resources department, thus restricting what this department team member can assist with during busy times of the year.

A similar confidentiality issue also exists with another Human Resources team member who is a union member in a clerical role, yet fulfills some confidential duties. This conflict also needs to be resolved to allow the Human Resources department to fully function without concern for issues with labor relations or confidentiality.

Additionally, an imbalance of job duties and responsibilities seems to exist within the HR department. Currently, there are five individuals in Human Resources, each with specific assigned duties. However, there appears to be little cross-training or sharing of responsibilities during peak times of the year to enhance department functioning. Many department members have expressed concerns about the workload of the Human Resources Coordinator, who seems overwhelmed by the breadth of their duties and responsibilities. As new team members, they have been significantly affected by the lack of written processes. Overall, to ensure optimal functioning of the Human Resources department, a reorganization of team members and their assigned duties is necessary. Additionally, concerns about conflict of interest and confidentiality must be addressed.

The planning process in talent acquisition also includes managing substitutes. District 41 employs both daily on-call teacher substitutes and assigned building substitutes. The HR department manages daily on-call substitute hiring; however, candidates are not interviewed; they are added to the list once they apply and submit credentials. Therefore, there are no quality controls in place. Additionally, there is currently no

orientation for new substitutes, nor is there a substitute handbook to establish expectations. As such, there is potential for performance issues with substitutes.

On-call substitutes are used on a sporadic basis to fill absences that occur as the school year progresses. On the other hand, building substitutes are used daily, with many schools having one. The use of building substitutes comes with positives and negatives. On the positive side, they become part of the school community, get to know the students and staff, and usually know the curriculum and instructional strategies used by the regular teaching staff, potentially offering the students a better educational outcome. However, the use of building substitutes comes with potential adverse consequences. While they become part of the school community, the use of building substitutes must be monitored, as they can attain tenure depending on their licensure. A review of substitute licensure revealed that several building substitutes in District 41 hold a Professional Educator License (PEL), so they are eligible to attain tenure. Currently, no one is tracking this potential tenure status, posing a vulnerability for the district.

District 41 employs not only substitute teachers but also substitute paraprofessionals, custodians, cafeteria workers, and secretaries. While Illinois School Code imposes limitations on the use of substitute teachers in specific roles, such restrictions do not apply to other substitutes. Having a pool of substitutes in each of these categories can be beneficial; however, caution must be exercised when using substitutes instead of potential hires who would be eligible for union membership. It has been reported that some positions are filled with substitutes instead of officially hiring someone. Therefore, the substitutes are not union members, yet some are reported to receive benefits. This warrants exploration, as the implications of such a practice could be seen as an unfair labor practice. As such, a review of all substitutes and their use is warranted.

Effective staffing plan development should be strategic and contribute to effective succession planning. It should involve all stakeholders, particularly department heads and building leaders. This inclusive approach ensures that proposed changes are understood and supported, allowing for smoother transitions and alignment with the district's broader goals. Human Resources' involvement in strategic planning guarantees that staffing changes align with organizational objectives, supporting educational outcomes and the district's mission. Current District 41 leadership appears to attempt to involve both the district office and building leadership in staffing decisions. However, given the recent widespread turnover in the district, the capacity for succession planning and long-term strategic planning regarding human resources is challenging.

Developing accurate job descriptions is another critical aspect of talent acquisition planning and preparation. Job descriptions should outline the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for each position, guiding the interview and evaluation processes. They also protect the district from potential discriminatory claims and can engage potential candidates by generating excitement about the role. Currently, job descriptions are

reported to exist for all positions in District 41, including most major extra-duty stipends. The structure and content of the job descriptions are primarily consistent, incorporating most elements considered best practices. Notably, it was shared that some job descriptions may be outdated. A schedule for reviewing all job descriptions does not exist; therefore, implementing such a review process would eliminate future concerns about this issue.

The job application is another way in which the district can protect itself from future risk. If the application contains the recommended acknowledgments and agreements, it creates the opportunity to address employee misconduct or non-compliance if presented in the future. A review of the current District 41 job application indicates that it has not been updated to reflect the new Faith's Law requirements, including the completion of a Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Form or a release of sexual misconduct-related information from previous employers. In addition, the application lacks a question related to acknowledging social media inquiries. Each of these omissions exposes the district to potential risk. In addition, the current application contains a question regarding 'highly qualified' status. This term was sunset with the expiration of No Child Left Behind in 2015. Furthermore, the application is lengthy and may request duplicate information. A review of all data requested on the job application is warranted to verify that the data on the application is actually used in the screening and hiring process. In these times when applicants may be job 'shopping,' it is important to view the application process from the candidate's perspective, seeking only information that is vital to hiring decision-making.

Recruitment

Once a district identifies its staffing needs, it shifts to finding suitable candidates. Developing a comprehensive recruitment plan is crucial for attracting qualified individuals. Successful recruitment involves strategically locating candidates who match the district's needs and encouraging them to apply. This process is often driven by leveraging the district's brand and sharing its employee value proposition. An employee value proposition is the value an employer offers to employees for their commitment to the organization. This includes salary, benefits, career development, and work-life balance.

A recruitment plan is a strategic framework that outlines how an organization will attract, evaluate, and hire qualified candidates to meet its workforce needs. It includes details such as the positions to be filled, the ideal qualifications of candidates, sourcing strategies, timelines, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process. When thoughtfully developed, a recruitment plan not only streamlines hiring but also aligns talent acquisition efforts with the organization's goals and resources.

A recruitment plan is important because of its ability to provide structure and consistency to the hiring process. It helps ensure that recruitment efforts are proactive rather than reactive, allowing organizations to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates in a timely and efficient manner. Additionally, having a clear plan in place promotes transparency, reduces the likelihood of hiring delays or missteps, and

supports improved decision-making by aligning hiring activities with the organization's broader goals. Ultimately, a solid recruitment plan contributes to building a strong workforce, which is essential for long-term success.

An effective recruitment plan also includes the analysis of return on investment (ROI) from past recruiting practices. This analysis examines the costs associated with previous recruitment efforts, such as advertising expenses, recruiting fees, time invested by internal staff, and onboarding costs. These costs are measured not just monetarily but also in time, against the outcomes achieved. Outcomes may include the number of applications received, the percentage of hires, the quality of hires, the retention rates, the time-to-fill metrics, and the overall impact on organizational performance. By assessing ROI, organizations can identify which methods and channels yielded the best results and which were less effective or cost-prohibitive. This data-driven insight allows for more informed decisions, ensuring that future recruitment efforts are efficient and cost-effective.

Incorporating ROI analysis into the recruitment plan elevates its strategic value. It shifts the focus from simply filling vacancies to making long-term investments in human capital that contribute positively to the organization's success. It also supports accountability and continuous improvement in the hiring process, resulting in better hires and a more substantial return on recruitment expenditures.

While recruitment efforts are ongoing in District 41, a specific, defined recruitment plan is lacking. Recruitment initiatives in District 41 are currently unclear. It seems that many of the previous strategies employed have been paused due to the administrative changes in the HR department.

In the past, District 41 engaged a recruitment team for its efforts. The team was composed of individuals ranging from paraprofessionals and security employees to classroom teachers and instructional coaches, and included only one administrator: the Assistant Director of Grants, Assessments, and Accountability.

While the diversity of positions represented on the recruitment team can be valuable, it is difficult to explain why building leaders do not participate on the recruitment team or attend job fairs, which is much of what the recruitment team does. Additionally, if the target audience at a job fair is teaching staff, it would be logical to have either people in leadership positions or recruiters from the human resources department attend the event. It is potentially challenging to justify having a paraprofessional or a security team member miss time from their assignment to travel out-of-state to speak with teaching candidates at a job fair or on-campus recruitment activity.

It appears that those on the recruitment team have been provided with a Recruiter Guide developed in 2020 to assist them in their recruitment practices. The Guide defines the code of conduct for recruiters and offers guidance on permissible questions they can ask potential candidates.

The human resources budget includes monies to support the district's recruiting efforts. Much of the recruitment budget has been used to attend job fairs. It funds the registration and travel of those attending various job fairs.

District 41 has a history of participating in various job fairs, which can effectively attract candidates and utilize the district's brand to encourage applications. It's common for building leaders trained in recruitment strategies and bias mitigation to join, making recruitment a team effort rather than the sole responsibility of HR. However, District 41 sent no building leaders and only one administrator to a job fair last school year. It appears no formal training in recruitment or bias mitigation has been provided, other than the distribution of the Recruiters Guide.

During the 23-24 school year, ten members of the recruitment team attended eleven job fairs, both in-person and virtually. Job fairs were attended in person locally in the Quad City area and at other Illinois universities, as well as universities located in Texas, North Carolina, Alabama, and Ohio. A couple of the universities, those in Ohio and Alabama, are identified as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), while universities in Texas are designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). This may explain why those universities were selected.

A Strategic Talent Leadership Assessment (STLA) completed in 2021 notes that 90% of candidates hired in District 41 graduated within 120 miles of the district. Therefore, attending job fairs at colleges and universities outside of that range must be motivated by another reason, such as identification as an HBCU, HSI, or as an additional potential source for diverse candidates. Regardless, recruiting efforts should focus on those with high yields regarding return on investment. This was a recommendation noted in the 2021 Strategic Talent Leadership Assessment. There is no evidence that any return on investment analysis is done to guide recruiting practices.

There are other recommendations from the Strategic Talent Leadership Assessment that remain relevant regarding the recruitment efforts of District 41. The Assessment recommended that Building Principals be engaged in recruitment efforts; however, it does not appear that this has occurred. In addition, the Assessment suggests strengthening student teacher placements and relationships with local universities. District 41 is located near Augustana College and St. Ambrose University, both of which offer degrees in education.

It is recommended that District 41 develop stronger partnerships with these local universities to become a preferred placement location for student teachers, helping attract the best candidates and fill future positions. An analysis of hiring needs can guide the targeting of specific universities for student teachers or interns. Building deeper relationships with local universities could also support the creation of a "grow your own" program to transition paraprofessionals into licensed teaching staff.

Hosting student teachers is an effective recruitment strategy, allowing the district to evaluate potential hires in real time. Student teachers should be carefully selected and placed to assess whether they are a good fit for future employment. Although District 41 uses student teachers for recruitment, the opportunity exists to enrich the relationship with St. Ambrose University, Augustana College, and Western Illinois University due to their close proximity to the district. It was reported that there are currently three student teachers in the district, which seems low given the size of the district.

Planning for talent acquisition also involves establishing a brand identity to attract candidates. Crafting a compelling narrative that showcases the district's values, achievements, and unique offerings can serve as the foundation for this brand identity. This narrative should not only emphasize the district's commitment to academic excellence but also highlight its culture, opportunities, and community. Visual elements such as logos, color schemes, and imagery reinforce the brand, creating a lasting impression on potential candidates and distinguishing the district from others in the competitive education landscape. Leveraging digital platforms like social media, the district website, and recruitment portals helps build brand recognition. Consistent messaging across these channels fosters brand recognition and attracts a diverse pool of candidates. Engaging current staff, students, and community members by encouraging them to share their experiences and testimonials can humanize the brand and make it more relatable to potential candidates. This process can foster a sense of ownership and pride in the district's identity. Investing in a strong brand identity enhances the district's appeal to prospective candidates and strengthens its reputation within the community.

Currently, District 41 has a defined brand for recruitment. This includes the tag lines of 'Be a Rock' and 'This House Rocks'.   Documents have been developed for recruitment efforts that focus on branding and specifically aim to convey the employee value proposition of District 41 for teacher candidates. However, these documents tend to be quite wordy, which can obscure the employee value proposition within the messaging.

It is recommended that the district highlight its benefits in all messaging, which include some uncommon and generous compensation and benefits outlined in the collective bargaining agreements. For teaching staff, these benefits include board-paid TRS contributions, incentives for good attendance, bonuses for National Board Certification, and post-retirement bonuses. For classified staff, benefits include board-paid IMRF. For paraprofessionals, there is a tuition pool for educational coursework and additional pay for those with degrees. Not all of these benefits apply to all employee groups; however, these features should be emphasized during recruitment to differentiate District 41 from other districts and employers.

Job postings are another way to support recruitment. In District 41, job postings are reported to be completed promptly, with building leaders requesting job postings through a Requisition form in Frontline. The form is routed to administration, after which

the position is posted. This multi-step process may slow the timeframe for posting open positions.   Although functional, this process could be more efficient if an effective position control system were in place. Human resources could then initiate postings as soon as a vacancy arises, allowing building leaders to concentrate more on activities that directly impact student achievement.

Currently, open positions are posted on the District website and K-12 Job Spot; however, social media is not being used for recruitment. It was reported that in the past, social media was utilized, but it is not currently in use.

Job postings include job descriptions and the required salary range. However, a review of the current postings reveals that there are multiple postings for what appears to be the same position. For example, there are three separate postings for Speech Language Pathologist - District and one for District Speech Language Pathologist. In addition, there are postings for ten different types of substitutes. From a candidate's perspective, these multiple postings can be confusing and may deter someone from applying.

Alternatively, to seek external candidates for positions, a district can create internal candidates through 'grow your own' programs. Currently, there is a " grow your own " program offered through a course at the high school. It is unclear how human resources interacts with the students enrolled in this course. This is an untapped resource.   Furthermore, a future teachers academy after-school club for fifth and sixth-grade students exists at three elementary schools, with plans to expand the program to the junior high. Further exploration of these programs is encouraged.

Finally, District 41 should focus its recruitment efforts on data from past hiring experiences. Several data sources can inform this plan. First, analyzing previous recruitment efforts can provide insights into which strategies have been effective. Currently, no data is collected or analyzed regarding those who apply for positions or those actually hired into them.   Evaluating data related to past successful hiring can inform future recruitment strategies and help assess the return on investment of prior recruitment efforts.

Although the district's application system can collect recruitment data, this feature is not currently used, making it difficult to assess past recruitment success. Second, analyzing demographic information of interviewed candidates can help shape future recruitment strategies. Additionally, there is evidence of strategic or targeted efforts to recruit minority candidates by attending job fairs at historically black colleges and universities; however, no data exists that demonstrates any results of those efforts.

Utilizing data gathered from the Recommendation for Hire form, which requests the names of all interviewed candidate,s will provide valuable information. Together, this data can steer future recruitment efforts, ensuring the district attracts the most qualified and diverse candidates.

Hiring

A legally compliant hiring process goes beyond the interview stage and plays a crucial role in ensuring fair treatment for all candidates while protecting the organization from legal liability. The primary objective is to select the most qualified candidate in a way that adheres to anti-discrimination laws and reduces bias. This goal is supported by several key practices.

At the foundation of a compliant hiring process are clearly defined job requirements, qualifications, and responsibilities. Job descriptions should avoid language that may be perceived as discriminatory or exclusionary. The application process must refrain from requesting sensitive or non-job-related information that could lead to claims of bias. Candidate screening should be structured, consistent, and based on objective criteria to mitigate unconscious bias and support fair decision-making.

Interviews should be conducted by trained team members using a standardized set of job-related questions. Incorporating multiple assessment methods, including performance-based tasks where applicable, further enhances fairness. Reference checks must also be conducted consistently and focus on job-relevant information. Transparent communication with candidates throughout the hiring process is essential, as is securely retaining hiring documentation to support the integrity of decisions. Following an offer of employment, all pre-employment requirements must comply with local, state, and federal laws, ensuring that fairness continues through onboarding.

In District 41, the hiring process begins at the building level, with support from the Human Resources (HR) department. A document titled " *Hiring Handbook: A Guidebook for Site-Based Administrators* " outlines the steps necessary for a building leader to hire a new employee. The process is initiated when a hiring manager submits a Requisition to Hire form. Once the form is approved by the administration, the position is posted.

A screening team is appointed by the hiring manager to review applications and resumes. Team members involved in screening and interviewing are expected to sign a confidentiality and ethics agreement; however, it remains unclear whether this step is consistently followed across the district. Once candidates are selected for interviews, an interview team is formed, which may or may not include the same individuals as the screening team. Both groups typically represent a cross-section of stakeholders from the department or school where the new hire will be placed.

The HR department provides a set of interview questions aligned with the job description. While teams can modify these questions, they must ensure that all candidates are asked the same ones. A basic scoring rubric is included to support consistency in evaluation. Currently, performance-based assessments are not used when hiring teaching staff; however, there is interest in incorporating such practices in the future.

After the interviews, the team ranks candidates, and the hiring manager makes a final decision based on reference checks. A standard set of reference questions is provided, and the completed reference check documentation must be submitted with the Recommendation to Hire form. This form also captures the names of interviewers and interviewees, providing valuable data for identifying potential patterns or biases.

The process for hiring non-certified staff closely mirrors that of certified positions, with the addition of a skills screener for secretarial roles. Although interviews are typically conducted by teams, performance tasks are rarely utilized. Moreover, there has been no recent training on screening or interviewing. Nevertheless, consistent interview questions, rubrics, and reference check forms are in place to help reduce potential bias. While building leaders generally describe the process in similar terms, there are concerns that practices vary across the district's 14 school buildings.

While all hiring should be managed through the human resources department, it was reported that some departments, Nutrition and Operations, previously had employed individuals without involving the HR department. Additionally, building leaders would hire substitutes without use of the HR department as well. The new Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources immediately stopped these practices upon their discovery.

Once a finalist is chosen, the HR department contacts the individual, typically via email, to make a formal offer. The email includes the salary, Board of Education approval date, HR orientation details, and start date. It also outlines compliance with Faith's Law, onboarding paperwork through Frontline Central, and the requirement for a physical exam. While efficient, this impersonal approach may not align with best practices, which favor personal communication to begin fostering a positive relationship with the district.

Currently, new hires are not asked to sign a contract or letter of acceptance, although the collective bargaining agreement for educational support professionals specifies that contracts will be issued upon hire. Additionally, it is recommended that newly hired teachers are asked to sign a document committing to the district. This process can deter job shopping and result in fewer candidates withdrawing their acceptance.

Once the offer email is sent, a personnel file is created and forwarded to another HR team member to complete the required hiring documentation. While some documents are completed through Frontline Central, others remain paper-based. It is unclear why all forms are not completed electronically, given their availability and the system's built-in tracking and monitoring features. Background checks are conducted through the Regional Office of Education and supplemented with checks of the Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Database, the Sex Offender Database, and third-party background screening (e.g., Verifent) to comply with Faith's Law.

It was reported that when the new Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources arrived, there was a huge number of unfiled personnel records. One of the first tasks

they completed was getting the records filed and putting a process in place to ensure all records are filed in a timely manner.

The hiring process is tracked using a paper-based New Hire Checklist shared among HR staff. This checklist lacks clarity regarding task ownership and often appears incomplete. A review of personnel files revealed many incomplete New Hire Checklists, creating questions about whether or not all steps in the hiring process were completed. The form also references outdated processes, such as IMRF enrollment and contract issuance, which do not apply. Additionally, steps required by recent changes in law, such as Faith's Law background checks, are not reflected. The checklist should be updated and digitized to reflect current requirements and clarify responsibilities.

As noted, a limited sample of personnel files was reviewed, including those of staff hired more than five years ago, between one and four years ago, and recently. The review revealed inconsistencies. While most files contained applications, some did not. Hiring paperwork was also filed inconsistently, and many files lacked evaluations. No financial documents were found, as they are reportedly maintained in the business office. These discrepancies suggest a need for a thorough review of records retention and personnel file maintenance practices.

Equity in compensation decisions is another critical element of a fair hiring process. In District 41, pay rates for new hires are determined by a single HR staff member to ensure alignment with collective bargaining agreements. These assignments are reviewed by another HR team member and the Assistant Superintendent. A review of recent salary placements confirmed consistency across hires.

Hiring managers often maintain informal communication with selected candidates to keep them engaged during delays. Additionally, building leaders regularly contact candidates who were not selected to foster positive relationships for future opportunities. Once onboarding is complete, HR manually enters new hire data into the payroll system, creating their profiles and assigning paid time off and salary settings.

Final approval of hires is granted by the Board of Education. Personnel recommendations are consistently taken to the Board of Education, yet lack information. The recommendation should include the candidate's name, position, salary, and anticipated start date. Although substitutes do not require Board approval, District 41 currently includes them in personnel reports. Start dates are not consistently documented in recommendations, and this practice should be standardized for transparency and accuracy.

Finally, viewing the hiring process from the candidate's perspective is essential. In today's competitive labor market, candidates often participate in multiple recruitment processes simultaneously and weigh their decisions based on the overall experience. A process that is too lengthy or lacks communication may drive qualified candidates away. Large interview panels may also discourage some applicants, resulting in a

negative impression of the district. District 41 has not formally assessed its hiring process from this perspective, but anecdotal feedback suggests that communication gaps may be areas of concern.

In conclusion, while District 41 has many foundational elements of an effective hiring process in place, several gaps and inconsistencies raise concerns. A more strategic, systematized, and candidate-centered approach is needed to attract, retain, and effectively manage talent. The HR department should lead the development of a well-defined, documented, and consistently implemented hiring process that ensures legal compliance, promotes equity, and fosters a positive experience for candidates.

<u>Talent Acquisition - Strengths</u>

1. Permanent daily substitutes are used for the continuity of instruction
2. Substitute pool for teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, cafeteria workers, secretaries
3. Job descriptions exist for all positions and include a consistent structure
4. The recruitment team concept is used when recruiting
5. Recruiter Guide developed
6. Human resources department budget includes funds for recruiting
7. Some recruitment training is provided to the recruitment team members
8. The district participates in some job fairs
9. Some strategic or targeted minority recruitment efforts
10. Student teacher partnerships exist with some universities and colleges
11. Attempts to use district branding when recruiting
12. Unique benefits exist that can be used when recruiting and developing a district brand
13. Job postings are posted in a timely manner
14. Attempts to use the employee value proposition when recruiting
15. Grow Your Own program is offered at high school
16. Future teachers' academy after-school club at some elementary schools
17. Hiring Handbook exists
18. Building leaders are highly involved in the hiring practice of teachers working in their building
19. Interviews are done using screening and interview teams
20. Interview teams are asked to sign a confidentiality and ethics agreement
21. A consistent set of interview questions exists for each position
22. Consistent reference questions are available for use
23. Performance tasks are used when hiring secretarial positions
24. Demographic data for those interviewed and hired is requested on the Recommendation to Hire form
25. The hiring packet contains all required documents
26. Background checks and mandated database queries are completed for all new employees

27. Use of a third-party vendor, Verifent, to comply with Faith's Law and employment verifications
28. All salary placements are done by one person in the human resources department
29. Building leaders maintain contact with declined candidates to keep them warm for future opening consideration
30. The Unfilled Position report was submitted this year

Talent Acquisition - Areas of Vulnerability

1. No consistent, formal process for the development of a staffing plan
2. Lack of position control process
3. No written procedures for human resources processes
4. Two positions in the human resources department are filled with union members
5. Imbalance of workload in the human resources department
6. No orientation or substitute handbook to guide working expectations
7. Lack of monitoring of the potential tenure status of daily building substitutes
8. Potential labor issue by hiring individuals as substitutes instead of employees
9. Some substitutes are offered benefits
10. Turnover in the human resources department makes succession planning challenging
11. No scheduled periodic review completed to update job descriptions
12. The job application does not include the new Faith's Law requirements
13. The job application does not contain recommended questions pertaining to social media inquiries
14. No formal recruitment plan or strategy
15. Building leaders do not participate in job fairs
16. Lack of using social media to recruit
17. Multiple job postings exist for the same position
18. Demographic data of those interviewed and hired is not consistently completed on the Recommendation to Hire form, nor is it analyzed to inform future practices
19. The hiring process for teaching staff does not include performance-based activities
20. No analysis of current recruitment practices for their effectiveness
21. Interviewers are not formally trained in mitigating bias or legal interviewing practices
22. Consistent use of the recommended process from the Hiring Handbook
23. Jobs are offered via email rather than personal contact
24. Newly hired teachers do not sign a contract with the district
25. Hiring paperwork is done via paper when electronic versions are available.
26. The hiring process is tracked using a manual process, lacking a clear definition of who is responsible for each step/task of the hiring process
27. Personnel files are missing all the necessary documents

28. Hiring process requires manual entry into many systems by multiple human resources team members
29. Positions taken to the Board of Education for approval do not include detailed information.
30. Substitutes do not require Board of Education approval, yet are presented for approval
31. No consideration of the hiring process from the candidate's perspective

Talent Acquisition - Recommendations

1. Create a collaborative process for the development of a strategic staffing plan using all available historical information
2. Develop a process for position control that clearly defines how positions are created and managed
3. Create and establish written processes for all human resources functions
4. Remove union members from the human resources department
5. Reallocate duties and responsibilities in the human resources department
6. Create a substitute handbook and an orientation program
7. Identify a process to monitor the potential tenure status of building substitutes
8. Review the use of substitutes within the district, ensuring compliance with the collective bargaining agreements
9. Establish a review cycle of the job descriptions
10. Update the job application to include references to Faith's Law and social media inquiries, and remove inquiries about highly qualified status
11. Review the job application for redundancy and confirm all aspects are actually used in decision-making
12. Develop a strategic recruitment plan to increase the candidate pool, using a variety of methods, including social media and job fairs
13. Engage building leaders in the recruitment process
14. Review job postings, develop a consistent process for posting openings to avoid duplication of postings
15. Enhance the employee value proposition by highlighting the unique employment benefits offered in all branding materials
16. Require full completion of the Recommendation to Hire form and analyze the demographic data of those interviewed and hired to inform future recruitment strategy and identify potential bias
17. Integrate performance-based activities into the hiring process for teachers
18. Analyze the success of recruitment strategies for their return on investment
19. Make connections with the existing grow your own programs in the high school and elementary buildings
20. Train interview teams on legal hiring practices and mitigating bias
21. Ensure consistent use of the identified hiring process
22. Implement the use of employment contracts for all new teacher hires
23. Transition all hiring paperwork to an electronic format using Frontline Central

24. Develop an easily accessible Google document or electronic tracking system for hiring activities, including assigning who will be doing what, which will allow monitoring the status of the hiring process and increase accountability
25. Review practices and the process for the management of personnel files
26. Conduct stay interviews to determine the employee value proposition from the perspective of current employees, from which you can begin to create the district's brand
27. Enhance and expand relationships with local universities and colleges for the placement of student teachers
28. Begin offering positions via phone calls instead of email
29. Revise personnel recommendations taken to the Board of Education to include start dates and termination dates
30. Cease taking new substitutes to the Board of Education for approval
31. Expand the use of Frontline Central or implement another process as a human resource information system that includes tracking the hiring process, as well as other career management events

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Talent development in school districts is a strategic process aimed at identifying, nurturing, and enhancing individuals' skills, abilities, and potential within the organization. In a rapidly changing educational landscape, talent development is crucial for districts to remain competitive and adapt effectively to evolving needs.

By investing in talent development initiatives, school districts aim to achieve several key objectives. First, they ensure that educators and staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles. This includes providing opportunities for professional growth through workshops, training programs, and continuous learning initiatives.

Central to talent development is an effective performance management system. Performance management involves setting clear expectations, providing regular feedback, and evaluating individual performance to ensure that staff members meet organizational goals and personal career aspirations. A robust performance management system helps identify areas where educators and staff excel and where they may need additional support or development. By integrating performance management with talent development, school districts can create a comprehensive approach that not only addresses immediate performance issues but also supports long-term professional growth and development.

Secondly, talent development enhances employee satisfaction and retention by providing professional development opportunities through mentoring programs, leadership training, and succession planning to cultivate future school leaders and administrators from within the organization.

Moreover, talent development fosters a culture of continuous improvement and performance feedback. Regular feedback and coaching assist individuals in understanding their strengths and areas for development, promoting their professional growth, and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, recognizing and rewarding achievements and contributions is essential to talent development. This practice not only motivates educators and staff but also fosters a culture of excellence and dedication within the district.

Lastly, aligning talent development initiatives with the district's strategic goals and educational priorities ensures that resources are focused on areas that directly enhance student outcomes and overall district performance.

By prioritizing talent development, school districts not only invest in the growth and success of their employees but also enhance their ability to provide high-quality education and support to students. It fosters a dynamic and innovative environment where educators and staff are able to reach their full potential and contribute effectively to the district's mission of educational excellence.

Orientation and Onboarding

Orientation is the first opportunity for a district to develop its employees. Orientation offers a general introduction to the school district, covering topics such as its mission, values, policies, and essential job details. It usually occurs during the first few days of employment or just before the school year begins. The primary goal of orientation is to help employees feel welcome and to assist them in understanding the fundamental aspects of the school district and their role.

Onboarding, however, is a more comprehensive and long-term process designed to integrate new employees into the school district. Its purpose is to equip them with the necessary tools and information for success, helping them become fully productive team members. Onboarding encompasses a broader range of topics, including job-specific training, team dynamics, district culture, ongoing feedback, and long-term career development. It often involves a series of activities and check-ins over an extended period.

Orientation in District 41 primarily focuses on newly hired teaching staff. It was reported that a new teacher orientation was held just before school opening in the fall. It lasted for three days. The first day included an introduction to the human resources team, technology distribution, a review of the employee handbook, an overview of the benefits offered, and discussions about safety, security, and absence management. The second day shared strategies for positive behavior, classroom expectations and routines, and building relationships/community in the classroom. The third day covered multi-tiered systems of support for students, an overview of Skyward for grading and attendance, and breakouts specifically designed by the Teaching & Learning department,

disaggregated by position. An evaluation of the day was conducted using the ISBE evaluation form; however, it appears that the data is not used for program improvement.

Until recently, there had been no orientation for mid-year hires or classified staff. However, the new Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources initiated an orientation program for all new hires that takes place shortly after Board of Education approval. Orientation sessions are held once or twice a month, and all recently approved hires are required to attend. During the orientation session, topics covered include those from day one of the previously described new teacher orientation: an introduction to the HR team, technology tools and resources, staff handbook orientation, a review of benefits, safety and security, badges, and absence management. Some additional specialized training occurs as needed for specific positions. No feedback is collected to measure whether the needs of new hires are met.

While the orientation program covers many topics, it does not appear that the Educator Evaluation Plan document and process are fully shared and explained to all newly hired teachers as required by Illinois School Code. Best practices would offer a comprehensive review of the evaluation rubric, an explanation of how the final rating is determined, and what occurs in the event of a final rating of 'needs improvement' or 'unsatisfactory'. An email informing the individual that they will be evaluated and by whom is not welcoming to a new hire.

Following orientation, a Welcome Team in each building is responsible for further onboarding. Welcome Team members are selected by the principal. Typically, there are three people on a Welcome Team at an elementary school, five at a junior high, and the high school utilizes the department heads for this role. Welcome Team training was held just before the school started this fall. The Welcome Teams are coordinated by two Lead Mentors who receive a stipend for their work. During the training, building teams were tasked with updating their respective building handbooks. The team's goal is to provide support to all new hires in the building. A 90-day checklist for Welcome Teams exists, but its use is determined by the team in each building. Welcome Team members are compensated as they complete tasks through miscellaneous pay submissions approved by the Lead Mentors and human resources. While this Welcome Team program was described by human resources, the building leaders interviewed questioned whether the Welcome Team was in place this school year. Therefore, the program should be reviewed for consistent implementation and to determine if the concept meets the needs of new hires.

While a Welcome Team may exist in a building, it is not a comprehensive mentoring program. A formal mentoring program for teachers reportedly existed in the past. Additionally, although an MOU is included in the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers, a district-run plan is not currently being implemented. It is unclear when the program ended and transitioned to its current state. It has been reported that instructional coaches are used to support new teachers with curricular issues. Yet, no formal process or data is available.

Currently, mentoring is provided through the Illinois Virtual Instructional Coach and Building Mentor Program run by the Illinois Education Association (IEA). The Virtual Instructional Coach & In-Building Mentor Program offers wraparound professional support to new teachers and clinicians in their first, second, and third years in the profession. New teachers can choose to participate and are paired with either a building mentor or a virtual instructional coach. The IEA compensates mentors and instructional coaches for their work.

While this program may offer support to new teachers, it is neither monitored nor connected to the district in any way. Mentoring programs are an effective way to support new teachers as they provide structured guidance, professional support, and practical insight during a critical period of transition into the classroom. New teachers often face a steep learning curve as they adapt to curriculum expectations, classroom management, school culture, and administrative responsibilities. A mentoring program pairs these new educators with experienced teachers who can offer encouragement, share best practices, and serve as a sounding board for challenges and questions.

The strength of mentoring lies in its ability to create a sense of connection and reduce the isolation that many new teachers feel. It fosters professional growth by encouraging reflective practice and providing timely feedback in a supportive, non-evaluative setting. As a result, new teachers are more likely to develop confidence, enhance instructional strategies, and manage classroom dynamics more effectively.

Additionally, mentoring contributes to improved teacher retention. By offering meaningful support early in a teacher's career, schools demonstrate their investment in the success and well-being of their staff. This support can lead to higher job satisfaction and a stronger commitment to the profession. Over time, mentoring helps build a collaborative school culture that values continuous learning and shared expertise, benefiting not only the individual teacher but also the broader school community.

Performance Management

Performance management refers to the process of planning, monitoring, and assessing the performance of individuals to ensure that goals are effectively met and employees experience growth. It involves a systematic approach to managing and improving employee performance, thereby enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. Performance feedback includes not only evaluation but also communication about workplace expectations and disciplinary processes. Transparency about expectations builds trust and improves morale. Crucial for fostering a culture of continuous improvement, aligning efforts with district goals, and maximizing the growth of both employees and students, performance management plays a vital role in employee development, motivation, and the overall success of the school district.

A review of District 41's performance management practices reveals significant inconsistencies and systemic gaps across key areas: licensure tracking, educator and

staff evaluations, handbook usage, and disciplinary procedures. These gaps have implications for compliance, employee development, and the overall effectiveness of human resources operations within the district.

An assumption of performance management is that all employees hold the proper endorsements for the positions they occupy. This vital aspect must be monitored to ensure compliance with Illinois School Code. One of the most critical findings pertains to the district's approach to licensure tracking. Currently, there is no centralized, consistently maintained system in place to verify and monitor educator licensure. Building-level administrators are expected to verify licensure and endorsements during the hiring process, but no ongoing monitoring is performed by the Human Resources department. This fragmented approach increases the risk of staff members being assigned to teach courses for which they are not properly endorsed, which is a direct violation of Illinois School Code. In fact, several instances of improper endorsements have been identified in District 41. These situations should be addressed immediately to avoid compliance issues.

Building administrators report difficulties in obtaining accurate information about licensure status when planning course assignments and master schedules. Since they must ensure that each teacher's endorsements align with their assigned subjects and grade levels, timely and reliable data from HR is essential. Without it, administrators are left to cross-check information themselves through the state Educator Licensure Information System, a task for which they may not have sufficient training or time.

Best practices dictate that licensure verification should not be a one-time process completed only at hiring. Rather, it should be part of a routine system managed centrally by HR, with regular audits and proactive renewal reminders integrated into the process. HR should have a dashboard or tracking tool in place that allows for easy access to licensure data and expiration dates for all certified staff. This would ensure compliance with state regulations and support effective staffing decisions at the building level.

A primary component of performance management in any school district is its evaluation system(s). Evaluations of the teaching staff are guided by the Educator Evaluation Plan. District 41 uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the foundation for its certified staff evaluations, in accordance with Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) guidelines. The evaluation system itself appears well-structured and provides opportunities for professional feedback and growth. The plan also offers guidance and examples for determining the Professional Practice and Student Growth ratings. Directions for developing a Professional Growth Plan or Remediation Plan are also provided.

In addition to the formal and informal observations included in the Educator Evaluation Plan, educators are required to develop an Educator Growth Plan that includes setting personal and student growth goals. All classroom teachers (general education, special

education, and English Learner education) must create or modify their Educator Growth Plan each year.

Of note, the Educator Evaluation Plan was updated to move the formal evaluation of tenured educators to a three-year cycle.   However, it contains an inaccurate interpretation of the new tenure law, which moves tenure attainment to three years for all hired after July 1, 2023. The Plan notes that "teachers hired after July 1, 2023, can only attain tenure after three years of consecutive service if they receive two excellent ratings in their first three years. If they do not have at least two excellent ratings in the first three years, they remain on a four-year tenure cycle."   This is inaccurate in that tenure attainment was changed to three years for all educators holding a Professional Educator License, regardless of excellent ratings. Since this is Illinois School Code, a district and union cannot negotiate otherwise. Tenure is not granted by a district; rather, it is attained through consecutive years of service. A district cannot deny granting tenure to someone who has fulfilled the terms according to Illinois School Code.

For evaluation to be most effective, feedback and employee engagement are essential. The first step in engaging an employee in the evaluation process is to inform them of their evaluation status. The Illinois School Code requires that certified staff receive a notice regarding their evaluation status for the coming school year before the first day of student attendance. They must be informed if they are due for evaluation and who their evaluator will be. In District 41, all evaluations occur through the use of Evaluwise, a third-party application. It is reported that Evaluwise informs the evaluator who is due for evaluation; in addition, Evaluwise also notifies those scheduled for evaluation of that fact.

The rules governing teacher evaluation in any school district are typically developed through discussions, usually through bargaining with union leadership. Since the implementation of PERA, new evaluation rules have been established. This includes the formation of a PERA joint committee. The PERA joint committee is tasked with identifying measurement models for the assessments used to calculate student growth. The PERA committee has reportedly met in prior years, but it has not yet convened this school year. Minutes of the last meeting, held in January of 2024, indicate discussions about changing tenure evaluations to a three-year cycle, revising the unsatisfactory appeal process, implementing accelerated/portable tenure, updating the evaluation plan, and considering simplification of the evaluation process in the future.

Written teacher evaluation plans make the evaluation process transparent to employees. In addition, the guidance offers the potential for reliable, consistent evaluation ratings from evaluator to evaluator. However, for this to occur, deliberate calibration activities need to happen. Without a consistent method for aligning the interpretation and application of the Danielson Framework, evaluation results may vary widely across buildings and administrators. This lack of inter-rater reliability undermines the credibility and utility of the evaluation process and may result in inconsistent

treatment of staff. Districts with strong evaluation systems typically offer regular calibration sessions, joint observations, and feedback norming activities to maintain fairness and rigor. Failure to calibrate rating practices between evaluators reduces inter-rater reliability. No inter-rater reliability activities have occurred recently in District 41, increasing the likelihood of varied expectations, standards, and ratings between evaluators.

An annual notification of evaluation is also to be sent to Principals. In District 41, the Deputy Superintendent sends a notice each fall to inform building leaders of the process, timing, and who their evaluator will be for the coming school year. The District 41 document meets state requirements except for the ratings used. The plan currently in use features the ratings of Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished instead of Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Proficient, and Excellent.

An evaluation of the Superintendent should also take place annually.   The Superintendent's evaluation in District 41 includes a self-evaluation process and an assessment of their stewardship of assets and administration of Board policies.

Best practices in evaluation are not isolated to certified/licensed staff; they are also an expectation for all non-certified/classified individuals. Evaluations are required every other year for the members of the Rock Island Educational Support Professionals Association (RIESPA) and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) unions. The RIESPA collective bargaining agreement contains the evaluation forms for paraprofessionals, library office paraprofessionals, library paraprofessionals, building supervisor paraprofessionals, nurses, and hall monitor/security employees. The form for the evaluation of members of AFSCME is not part of the collective bargaining agreement. A random sample of three paraprofessional, three custodian, and three secretary personnel files was reviewed for the completion of the evaluation. Of the nine files reviewed, only two contained any evaluations, and those found were dated in 2016 and 2019. Overall, evaluation data for fifty-five paraprofessionals, eight secretaries, five security, and three cafeteria staff were found in Evaluwise, though employee numbers exceed these counts. Therefore, it appears that the evaluation practices as outlined in either collective bargaining agreement are not being followed.

This represents a missed opportunity to support and develop a significant portion of the workforce. Evaluations for non-certified staff are equally important as those for certified personnel in maintaining performance standards, morale, and service quality. When evaluation systems are underutilized or inconsistently applied, it becomes challenging to identify underperformance, reward high achievers, or provide targeted support where it is needed. This inconsistency also complicates the justification of personnel decisions, particularly in cases involving discipline or promotion.

There are multiple identified potential problems with evaluation when tracking is not occurring. For teachers, the lack of evaluation tracking can have a significant impact. It is possible for a non-tenured person to continue being employed after several years of poor performance. This unfortunate series of events could result in that person gaining tenure within the school system. This, combined with the recent change in tenure law from a four-year process to a three-year process, makes the retention of underperforming teachers more problematic, as they will gain tenure at an earlier pace. If the human resources department does not monitor the evaluation process and leaves it to building leaders, the retention of poor performers is more likely, especially since building leaders may not be aware of the change in tenure law.

The state of Illinois has established a system of accountability for evaluations through the Employment Information System (EIS). Final summative evaluation ratings must be reported to ISBE annually via the EIS. In District 41, the data in Evaluwise is exported for the annual EIS report. A review of the EIS Evaluation report confirms that 94% of the data in Evaluwise was reported to the EIS Evaluation system. However, a review of the lists of non-tenured individuals in years 2, 3, and 4 was compared against the list of those in Evaluwise and in EIS. Of the 73 individuals noted as being in years 2, 3, and 4, only 45 were reported via EIS. Since the tracking of evaluations is done in Evaluwise, it is unclear whether the omitted evaluations are due to improper setup in Evaluwise or failure to complete the assigned evaluations. Further exploration into this discrepancy is warranted and shows that human resources needs to assume a role in tracking the completion of evaluations.

This lack of evaluation monitoring affects all bargaining groups. To improve in this area, the district should consider implementing a process for tracking the completion of all evaluations. In conjunction with this, completed evaluations should be placed into personnel files. It does not appear that evaluations are consistently placed in personnel files. It was reported that this task was previously handled by the HR Benefits Specialist, though they indicated that they no longer have access in Evaluwise to do so. It is unclear whether this task was reassigned to a different individual or is simply not being performed.

While the purpose of evaluation is to develop and grow employees, evaluation data can and should also be used to assist in determining the retention of certified staff. Typically, the human resources department holds ongoing discussions with building leaders about the progress and development of non-tenured certified staff to gauge the need to non-renew anyone not making expected progress. Currently, it appears that there are no formal conversations about the retention of teaching staff consistently taking place across the system. Building leaders are left to independently make retention decisions and attempt to counsel out those they wish to release or non-renew. The lack of communication regarding retention decisions places the responsibility on building leaders to initiate them, which can result in the continued employment of

individuals who do not fit into the district's culture or who are not demonstrating adequate skills and abilities to complete their assignments.

Evaluation data can play a crucial role in a school district by serving multiple purposes that contribute to the overall effectiveness and improvement of educational outcomes. It provides a clear and objective measure of performance for educators and staff, helping the district identify individuals' strengths and areas where additional support or professional development is needed. This enables the creation of targeted development programs to meet specific needs and enhance overall performance.

The data from evaluation ratings can inform professional development planning, ensuring that teachers and staff who receive lower ratings in certain areas are offered specific training and resources to address those gaps. Conversely, those with high ratings can be recognized as potential mentors or leaders in their areas of expertise.

Additionally, evaluation ratings can play a crucial role in career advancement and succession planning. High-performing educators and staff can be recognized and developed for leadership roles within the district, ensuring that the district retains top talent and prepares for future leadership needs through a structured succession planning process.

For those who receive lower ratings, the district can develop Professional Development Plans (PDPs) that outline specific steps and support mechanisms to help individuals improve their performance. Regular follow-up and reassessment ensure that progress is made and necessary adjustments are implemented.

Furthermore, evaluation ratings provide valuable data that can be used for broader decision-making processes within the district. This includes effectively allocating resources, identifying trends and patterns in performance, and making informed policy decisions aimed at enhancing educational outcomes. Regular evaluations and the use of ratings ensure accountability within the district, as staff members understand that their performance is being monitored and assessed against established standards. This can drive a commitment to maintaining high professional standards and improving their practice.

Of those 124 evaluations reported via EIS, 87 (70%) received ratings of Proficient, 34 (28%) received ratings of Excellent, and 3 (2%) received a rating of Needs Improvement. An analysis of the evaluation data does not take place; therefore, the data is not utilized in the aforementioned ways.

The evaluation process, when conducted fairly and transparently, fosters open communication between staff and administration. Constructive feedback based on evaluation ratings builds trust and creates a collaborative environment where staff feel supported in their professional growth. By integrating evaluation ratings into these

areas, a school district can create a more effective, supportive, and accountable environment that ultimately leads to improved educational outcomes for students.

The second major feature of performance management involves communicating and managing employee workplace policies and expectations. This communication is most frequently done through an employee handbook. In addition to providing clarifying guidelines and information for administrators and employees about policies and practices, handbooks serve as a way to consistently communicate with employees, thereby reducing the risk of employment-related claims. Handbooks can convey the school district's mission, values, and desired culture, helping to answer questions that arise during orientation and throughout ongoing employment. Furthermore, handbooks educate and support employees in working and performing successfully while also assisting administrators in managing effectively. A comprehensive handbook is critical to the success of the human resource functions of a district.

Currently, in District 41, there is a district employee handbook, and each school building also has its own handbook. The building handbooks are developed and maintained by the respective welcome team members from the building, with guidance from HR. A review of the building handbooks revealed that many are not updated annually, contain broken links, and lack consistent content. The district employee handbook, although consistently provided and reviewed with new hires, seems to be directed at non-certified or licensed individuals in several sections and does not include information relevant to teaching staff, even though such information would be a valuable reference. The existence of multiple handbooks may confuse employees and provide conflicting information.

For districts where the majority of employees are unionized, the collective bargaining agreements guide many processes. However, a handbook can consolidate the terms of the collective bargaining agreements so that both employees and the administration have to consult one document instead of multiple ones. The key to using a handbook in this situation is ensuring that it is updated whenever a change to any collective bargaining agreement occurs that would impact practice. Additionally, care must be taken to ensure that the handbook does not extend beyond a topic covered by the negotiated agreement, which could be construed as an unfair labor practice.

Employees receive an overview of the district employee handbook during their orientation, ensuring everyone gets a copy. However, it is unclear whether a similar process exists that guarantees all employees receive a copy of the applicable building handbook. The district employee handbook is updated and posted on the district intranet each year.

As noted earlier, substitute teachers also lack a dedicated handbook. As substitutes often struggle with unclear guidance, such a handbook is designed to communicate performance expectations for this group of individuals.

To address these gaps, the district should consider revising its current handbook into a comprehensive, annually reviewed employee handbook that includes clear sections for each employee group. The handbook should be accessible online, updated annually, and cross-referenced with union contracts, evaluation protocols, and disciplinary processes. This would promote transparency, ensure alignment with policy, and enhance consistency across buildings.

The final aspect of performance management pertains to workplace disciplinary issues or investigations. Both policy and law necessitate that the district provides a harassment-free environment, as well as one that is free from discrimination. Addressing workplace disciplinary issues and conducting investigations are essential components of maintaining a professional, equitable, and legally compliant work environment. When disciplinary issues arise, there should be a commitment to resolving them promptly and fairly to ensure all employees understand the standards of conduct and the repercussions of violating them.

Discussions between employees and their supervisors may address minor disciplinary issues, aiming to provide constructive feedback and guidance to resolve problems. If informal resolution is inadequate or if the issue is more serious, formal disciplinary action may become necessary. This can include written warnings, suspension, or other appropriate measures. Employees should be informed of the nature of the disciplinary action, the reasons for it, and the expected improvements in behavior or performance. All formal disciplinary actions should be documented and maintained in the employee's personnel file, detailing the incidents, the steps taken to address them, and any follow-up actions. Throughout this process, the district should remain committed to supporting employees, offering resources such as training, counseling, or mentoring to help them meet performance and behavior expectations.

When allegations of serious misconduct arise, such as policy violations, harassment, discrimination, or other illegal activities, the district should conduct a thorough and impartial investigation. An investigation should be initiated upon receipt of a complaint or when an incident is reported, and it should be performed promptly to ensure timely resolution. Confidentiality is paramount, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis to protect the integrity of the investigation and the privacy of individuals. Investigations should be conducted impartially, without bias or preconceived judgments, maintaining an objective and fair approach to ensure all parties are treated fairly. Gathering relevant information involves interviewing the complainant, the accused, and any witnesses and reviewing documents, emails, and other pertinent evidence.

The findings should be documented upon concluding the investigation, and recommendations for any necessary corrective actions should be made, including disciplinary measures, policy changes, or additional training. The investigation results must be communicated to the involved parties, ensuring transparency while respecting confidentiality. The district should take appropriate steps to address the findings and

prevent future issues. Additionally, the situation should be monitored following the resolution of the investigation to ensure that the corrective actions are practical and that no further problems arise. The district aims to uphold a safe, respectful, and legally compliant work environment for all employees by addressing workplace disciplinary issues and conducting thorough investigations.

Currently, the district utilizes a third-party application, UpSlope, to guide building leaders through disciplinary decisions and ensure consistency in documentation and policy application. UpSlope is a research-backed program that provides monitoring solutions for supervisors, human resources departments, and school systems seeking to ensure that disciplinary actions are taken in accordance with established guidelines. The system streamlines the disciplinary decision-making process with an assessment instrument that aids in identifying and evaluating circumstances before decisions to act (or not to act) are reached.

Most administrators have previously received training in the use of this solution and are undergoing retraining this school year. It is believed that using Upslope removes bias and emotion from disciplinary actions.

Upslope requires an administrator to input the facts of a situation into the system. It then provides three options to proceed, allowing the administrator to decide which option to pursue. While this disciplinary structure and support are available and training has been provided, it remains unclear if it is consistently used.

In District 41, it is reported that minor disciplinary issues are addressed at the building level, while more serious events requiring investigations involving employees are overseen and managed by human resources. Building leaders shared that they often give direction to the employee without using UpSlope.

The performance management systems at District 41 demonstrate intent but lack the necessary systems and follow-through for full effectiveness. There is a need for stronger central oversight, better-defined processes, consistent training, and the use of technology to track, analyze, and act on performance data. Addressing these issues will enhance compliance, support employee development, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for students and staff alike.

Training and Development
Training and development involve processes designed to enhance employees' workplace skills, knowledge, and capabilities. These activities are crucial for both individual and organizational growth. As noted earlier, training initiatives or topics can be identified through evaluations or as a response to disciplinary issues. Ongoing collaboration between the Teaching and Learning and Human Resources departments is vital to effectively addressing employee needs.

District 41 offers a professional development program through its Teaching and Learning department, providing activities for professional growth to all staff. Professional development opportunities are available throughout the school year and on Institute Days. Staff are surveyed multiple times yearly to identify professional development needs and recruit individuals to present at the offered professional development opportunities. Administration from various departments reviews the survey results and determines professional development based on these findings.

Sessions on Institute days are tailored to meet the needs of various job positions, ensuring that the content for all teaching groups is directly related to their job responsibilities. Training is also provided to paraprofessionals and clerical staff on these days. Additionally, paraprofessionals can attend sessions designed for teaching staff. A typical Institute day includes over 40 distinct sessions that attendees may choose from, with additional sessions created for specific groups, including English language learner teachers and music teachers.

The Deputy Superintendent is responsible for developing the knowledge and skills of the building leaders. They are currently focusing on effective leadership practices, school improvement, and employing coaching strategies for enhancement. The content appears well-designed, and feedback is collected from participants for the purpose of improvement. Additionally, these meetings support building leaders' ability to manage their budgets and use SMART goals.

Beyond these specialized training days, employees must complete training mandated by Illinois School Code and Illinois Administrative Code. District 41 fulfills these mandates using the Global Compliance Network (GCN), an internet-based training service. A review of GCN usage indicates that training requirements are tailored based on job assignments, which is a positive step. For example, athletic coaches are required to complete specific training, such as AED and Concussions in Schools.

A schedule of mandatory trainings has been developed. Still, it does not appear to have been updated recently, with current mandatory trainings omitted and the frequency of required trainings not reflecting the current Illinois School Code. It's also unclear whether all new hires must complete essential trainings within a specified timeframe based on their position, such as DCFS Mandated Reporter training, Cultural Competency, Educator Ethics, or Asbestos training. While the district has established deadlines for completing assigned training, it is uncertain whether there is consistent follow-up to ensure compliance or monitor completions. A comprehensive review of all mandatory training aspects is recommended to ensure the district complies with the Illinois School Code.

Talent Development - Strengths

1. The three-day new teacher orientation program includes topics from human resources, technology, curriculum, engagement, and some specific sessions disaggregated by position
2. Orientation session held year-round to support mid-year hires
3. Welcome Team has a 90-day checklist to support new hires
4. The current evaluation process provides opportunities for teachers to develop personal and student growth goals
5. Evaluations are all managed through a third-party provider, Evaluwise, which should allow for effective tracking and monitoring of evaluation completion
6. The Teacher and Principal Evaluation processes are compliant with Illinois School Code
7. A district handbook exists, which is reviewed and shared at hire
8. Most classified staff are subject to a probationary period upon hire
9. Disciplinary issues are supported by a third-party application, UpSlope, which all administrators are trained to use
10. Staff are surveyed multiple times a school year to identify professional development needs
11. Activities on Institute Days are differentiated for different job positions
12. Mandated training requirements are differentiated by job assignment

Talent Development - Areas of Vulnerability

1. The evaluation data from the new teacher orientation program is not used to improve the program
2. Orientation sessions held mid-year are not evaluated
3. The teacher evaluation plan is not shared or explained during the new teacher orientation
4. Welcome Team implementation is inconsistent
5. A comprehensive mentoring program is not provided by the district to support new teachers
6. No one monitors or tracks endorsements held by teaching staff leading to teachers instructing courses for which they are not endorsed
7. Educator Evaluation Plan includes an inaccurate interpretation of tenure acquisition
8. The PERA joint committee has not met this year
9. No formal conversations about the retention of certified staff occur
10. No inter-rater reliability training has occurred with evaluators
11. Evaluations of classified staff are not consistently completed, which is in direct conflict with the collective bargaining agreements
12. All evaluation data not reported to the Employment Information System as required by School Code
13. No one is monitoring the completion of evaluations for any employee group
14. Evaluation data is not disaggregated to drive professional development
15. Multiple handbooks exist, which may pose confusion for employees

16. A substitute handbook does not exist that outlines expectations and Board policy mandates
17. Handbooks cannot be used in place of collective bargaining
18. UpSlope is not consistently used by administrators
19. Mandated training does not include all required training and frequency requirements
20. No evidence exists that new hires are required to complete DCFS Mandated Reporter training in their first six months of employment
21. No evidence that anyone monitors the completion of the GCN assigned training

Talent Development - Recommendations

1. Evaluate the new teacher orientation and mid-year orientation program to determine if it meets the needs of participants and to improve its effectiveness
2. Integrate an orientation to the Educator Evaluation Plan into the new teacher orientation
3. Develop a district-led mentoring program that exists not only to support new teaching staff but also to integrate them into the culture of District 41
4. Review the Welcome Team concept for consistent implementation and effectiveness
5. Develop and implement a process to maintain licensure and endorsements held by all teaching staff
6. Clarify the process of tenure attainment within the Educator Evaluation Plan and with PERA committee members
7. Schedule PERA Joint Committee meeting
8. Establish a process of communication between HR and all evaluators regarding the retention of non-tenured certified staff
9. Revise the summative ratings used in the Principal Evaluation Plan to comply with Illinois School Code
10. Initiate inter-rater reliability activities for those completing evaluations
11. Identify a process to track that all evaluations occur as required by School Code, collective bargaining agreements, and Board policy
12. Ensure that all required evaluation data is reported to the Employment Information System
13. Create and implement a process to ensure the placement of all evaluations in personnel files
14. Disaggregate the evaluation data for use in professional development planning
15. Develop comprehensive handbooks for certified staff, classified staff, and substitutes, including references to Board policy and all terms and conditions of employment that do not attempt to expand upon previously negotiated topics
16. Verify that all administrators use UpSlope when addressing disciplinary issues
17. Review the required mandated training for each job group
18. Establish a process to monitor the completion of assigned mandated training
19. Integrate DCFS Mandated Reporter training into New Teacher Orientation

TOTAL REWARDS

Total rewards refer to the comprehensive set of monetary and non-monetary benefits that employees receive in exchange for their work and contributions to the school district. This approach goes beyond base salary to include a broad range of rewards such as health and wellness benefits, retirement plans, paid time off, professional development opportunities, recognition programs, work-life balance initiatives, and a positive organizational culture. The total rewards model is designed not only to meet employees' financial needs but also to support their personal and professional well-being.

The concept of total rewards recognizes that employees are motivated by a diverse set of factors. While competitive compensation remains important, non-financial elements—such as feeling valued, having access to growth opportunities, receiving consistent feedback, and working in an inclusive environment—can be equally influential in employee satisfaction. A well-rounded total rewards package acknowledges and supports the varied priorities of a diverse workforce, including different generations, roles, and life stages.

By offering a comprehensive and thoughtfully designed total rewards strategy, school districts can more effectively attract and retain high-quality staff. In a competitive education landscape where shortages of certified teachers and support personnel are increasingly common, the ability to differentiate the district through strong total rewards offerings becomes essential. Employees who feel that their contributions are recognized and that the district is invested in their success are more likely to stay committed and contribute meaningfully to student outcomes.

When employees are truly engaged, they not only experience higher levels of job satisfaction but also develop a stronger emotional connection to the district's mission and values. Engaged employees are more likely to demonstrate discretionary effort, support their colleagues, and foster positive school climates. In turn, this supports student achievement, builds community trust, and strengthens the district's reputation. Conversely, a lack of attention to total rewards can lead to disengagement, turnover, and challenges in recruitment.

Key drivers of engagement, and, by extension, of the success of a total rewards strategy, include the district's culture, the quality of leadership, open and transparent communication, opportunities for career development, and consistent recognition of employee contributions. A culture that encourages collaboration, values diversity, supports professional growth, and maintains clear and respectful communication will strengthen the overall impact of total rewards. Additionally, providing flexibility and supporting work-life balance are increasingly viewed as vital components of employee well-being and long-term retention.

Ultimately, a strategic total rewards approach aligns the goals of the school district with the needs and expectations of its employees. When implemented thoughtfully, it enhances the employee experience, supports organizational effectiveness, and contributes to building a workforce that is resilient, motivated, and committed to the success of every student.

Compensation and Benefits

When considering compensation and benefits, it is essential to go beyond merely offering a salary and insurance. The total compensation package must be clearly communicated to employees to attract and retain talent. Open communication about how pay decisions are made, along with ensuring that employees perceive fairness in compensation practices, is critical to building trust within the organization. When employees understand the rationale behind their pay and believe it to be fair, their confidence in the organization is strengthened.

Pay equity plays a significant role in supporting diversity and inclusion efforts. Transparent communication about pay practices fosters an inclusive workplace by ensuring that compensation is free from biases related to gender, race, or other protected characteristics. This transparency promotes fairness and reinforces the organization's commitment to equity, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive environment.

Moreover, the benefits offered must align with employee needs. When employees feel their needs are met, job satisfaction increases. Satisfied employees are generally more engaged, productive, and committed to their work. Non-monetary forms of compensation or benefits aim to enhance overall well-being and job satisfaction. These benefits may include health, dental, and vision insurance, paid time off (vacation and sick leave), flexible work arrangements, employee assistance programs, and wellness initiatives. Health, dental, and vision coverage are foundational elements that ensure employees and their families have access to essential healthcare services. Retirement plans, such as 403(b) or pension plans, promote long-term financial security. Paid time off helps employees maintain a work-life balance, which reduces burnout and enhances productivity. Employee assistance programs offer support for various personal and professional challenges, including mental health services and financial counseling. Wellness programs can encompass gym memberships, health screenings, and stress management workshops, which enhance both physical and mental well-being.

A competitive benefits package is essential for attracting and retaining talent within the school district. When employees feel valued and supported through a comprehensive compensation and benefits offering, their loyalty to the organization increases. This, in turn, reduces turnover and the associated costs and disruptions caused by frequent staff changes.

District 41's employees are represented by three labor unions: the Rock Island Education Association (RIEA), the Rock Island Educational Support Professionals Association (RIESPA), which includes paraprofessionals, security personnel, and nurses, and the

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents custodians, secretaries, and maintenance staff. Human Resources typically participates in contract negotiations to apply its knowledge of the specific needs of each employee group.

Collective bargaining agreements govern the salaries and benefits of unionized employees. HR places teachers on a salary grid based on their years of experience, granting a maximum of 15 years of service credit. It is important to note that the salary schedule amounts included in the collective bargaining agreement do not include contributions to the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). The Board of Education covers 100% of the employee TRS contribution and also pays the employee contribution to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF). Salary placement for all union members is handled by a single HR team member, ensuring consistency.

Administrator pay and benefits are outlined in the annually revised Administrative Compensation Information Manual, which defines salary, retirement benefits, and paid time off. Administrative positions are classified into levels, with each level having an associated salary schedule.

For non-affiliated staff, a structured salary process outlines how compensation is determined. The process includes a job analysis, pay scale analysis, and a job evaluation point method. The job evaluation point method was developed to evaluate the skills, accountability, and effort required to perform a job. The point calculation determines the salary range for each position. This point-driven process is endorsed by the Society of Human Resources Management as a way to determine salary ranges without bias. The Non-Affiliated Employee Compensation Information Booklet includes details about salary increases, insurance coverage, paid time off, and retirement incentives. It is unclear whether existing positions are reviewed regularly or only when a position is created or filled. A market analysis of all positions is recommended every five years.

While consistent salary placement is important, annual communication with employees regarding compensation enhances transparency and fosters understanding. For teachers and educational support professionals, annual salary notifications are contractually required. Best practice includes issuing these notifications to all employees each year and placing them in personnel files. Currently, District 41 does not issue annual salary notifications.

Employees may receive additional compensation for various reasons, including extracurricular stipends, teaching overloads, attendance bonuses, paraprofessional degree status, and shift or enrollment differentials. All extra duty compensation should be transparent and supported by documentation. A form exists for miscellaneous pay not specifically addressed in collective bargaining agreements, which requires administrative authorization. Stipends defined in the teacher contract are communicated through spreadsheets from the Athletic Director and principals.

Given the presence of multiple unions, benefits differ among employee groups. All employees receive health insurance, with cost-sharing terms negotiated in each agreement. Other benefits vary by bargaining unit.

Benefits administration and communication are the responsibility of HR. This includes onboarding new hires and assisting employees in accessing benefits. However, the benefit selection process at District 41 is labor-intensive. New employees receive a folder explaining the available benefits and must schedule a phone meeting with Clarity, a third-party vendor, to make their selections. These meetings involve discussions of all benefit options and their per-paycheck costs.

Annual open enrollment occurs in September. HR sends emails with premium information and reminders for employees to schedule a mandatory meeting. Optional benefits include dental, vision, voluntary life insurance, and accidental death and dismemberment coverage. Open enrollment also requires the scheduling of a phone meeting with Clarity. While supportive of employees, the process remains time-consuming and is necessary even when no changes are made.

The open enrollment process is burdensome for HR. Although employees receive confirmation of their selections, a usable report is not sent to HR. As a result, HR must collaborate with the technology department to interpret data and then manually input it into the payroll system. While Clarity offers an online selection process, it has previously encountered issues and was discontinued. The involvement of multiple providers, such as Reliance, Blue Cross, and Chubb, further complicates the process.

A second open enrollment in November allows employees to participate in a flexible spending plan for pre-tax medical or dependent care expenses. TASC administers the plan, ensuring compliance with IRS regulations. Employees complete a payroll withholding form, and HR collects and enters the data manually into both the TASC and payroll systems. Those enrolled in a flexible spending plan receive a card to access their flexible spending account dollars.

Each union contract includes a sick bank, which is supposed to be managed by a sick bank committee according to contractual criteria. However, union leaders report that managing the sick bank is problematic. Most records were previously maintained by the former Assistant Superintendent and were not transitioned to the current administrator, leaving data on balances and usage unavailable.

Tuition reimbursement is available to members of the educational support professionals union. There is a pre-approval and post-completion process, but it is unclear how the reimbursement cap is monitored. Teachers are not eligible for tuition reimbursement but must seek pre-approval for graduate-level coursework if pursuing lane changes. Lane changes may be made in September or February.

Retirement benefits for various unions differ significantly, ranging from no additional benefit to percentage increases in the final years of employment. As noted earlier, the Board of Education pays the employee contribution to TRS for teachers and IMRF for all

other employees. This is a valuable benefit and should be emphasized during recruitment activities.

If a district offers any retirement incentives or bonuses, it is essential that they must monitor a future retiree's pay leading up to retirement for potential excess pay. When a TRS member retires, the employer may be required to pay TRS an additional contribution, thus a penalty, for any salary increase that is used in the final average salary calculation that exceeds six percent. Typically, this is done by monitoring all earnings of those in the retirement track, including the extra duty pay or stipends earned year over year. This monitoring must occur during the four years leading up to retirement, as this is the time frame used in calculating retirement benefits. Frequently, language is included in a collective bargaining agreement that limits year-over-year earnings for those in the retirement track, which helps prevent penalties. No such language exists in the teachers' contract. Regardless, the district should track year-over-year earnings for all individuals in the retirement track or eligible for retirement. It was reported that no one is tracking salary increases or earnings of those in the retirement track to mitigate or control penalties.

The district offers participation in deferred compensation 403 (b) programs for employees through Lincoln Financial. Currently, District 41 collaborates with a third-party vendor to ensure compliance with IRS regulations governing the operation of 403(b) plans.

The district also employs a third-party administrator, United Heartland, to process workers' compensation claims. However, there does not appear to be a documented written process in place. Human resources shared that they gather medical information from employees, monitor claims, and oversee employees returning to work. Workers' compensation leave should align with Family Medical Leave so that the district can effectively address long-term absences. It is unclear if this alignment is happening, since FMLA leaves are not consistently monitored, alignment is unlikely.

While the management of workers' compensation requires attention, the more significant concern is that this confidential process is managed by one of the human resources employees who is a member of one of the bargaining units. This situation presents a potential confidentiality issue and conflict of interest.

Currently, the district manages unemployment claims independently. In the event of a claim, HR must investigate the claim and submit the necessary documentation to contest it. Challenges to unemployment claims require the submission of supporting documentation. If the challenge proceeds to a hearing, the preparation can be extensive. Several vendors offer support for a nominal fee to manage, track, and handle all aspects of unemployment claims. The district should consider contracting with a third-party vendor to address unemployment claims.

In addition to monitoring current unemployment claims, there are ways to mitigate future unemployment claims submitted by substitute teachers. Each year, it is recommended that substitutes receive an intent to work notice towards the end of the school year for the following year. This notice prevents substitutes from having the opportunity to file unemployment claims during school breaks, including summer break. A copy of this notice should be sent to substitutes each year to avoid future unemployment claims; however, it does not appear that such notice is currently sent.

Employee work calendars are essential for several reasons, benefiting both employees and employers. In terms of attendance and leave management, work calendars play a crucial role in tracking employee attendance, identifying patterns, and addressing issues. They help manage leave and absences systematically, ensuring adequate coverage during absences and preventing instructional disruptions. Additionally, work calendars ensure compliance with labor laws and regulations regarding working hours, overtime, and rest periods, protecting both the organization and its employees from legal issues. Maintaining these calendars provides a documented history of work schedules, which is valuable for audits, performance evaluations, and dispute resolution.

Furthermore, work calendars enhance communication and transparency within the organization by setting clear expectations for employees regarding their work schedules, deadlines, and responsibilities. This transparency reduces misunderstandings and enhances accountability. Calendars also improve communication by providing a shared view of work schedules and availability, facilitating better planning and coordination. Therefore, employee work calendars are vital for operational efficiency, attendance and leave management, legal compliance, employee well-being, and enhanced communication, contributing significantly to the overall success of an organization. In District 41, employee work calendars are developed each year for every employee group. However, it is unclear how and if the calendars are shared with employees.

In District 41, paid time off is consistently provided to all eligible employees as required by the associated collective bargaining agreement or compensation handbook. A human resources team member enters the initial paid time off for each new hire into Frontline, the absence management system. They also enter annual allocations each school year for sick, personal, and vacation time. The Frontline absence management system is the substitute calling system to ensure that substitutes are contacted if an absence warrants one. In the event that someone is using days from a sick bank, human resources adjusts the absence management and payroll systems. Monitoring absence balances is necessary, as there are specific limits on vacation accrual for AFSCME members. Evidence exists that this monitoring occurs by the human resources department.

While management of paid time off is consistently completed, processing paid time off in the payroll system faces challenges. The payroll system requires a manual upload of attendance data from the absence management system by human resources on a daily basis to maintain consistency between the systems. Additionally, once a month, the technology department imports absence balances from Frontline into the payroll system as a check and balance for the process. If these uploads do not occur regularly, the payroll process is interrupted. It was reported that human resources does not complete this required upload process on a daily basis. Although this delay has been communicated numerous times, the issue remains unresolved, regularly interfering with payroll processing.

Of note, the individual from human resources who is completing the daily uploads is a union member. As mentioned earlier, this poses confidentiality concerns. Therefore, two significant issues are raised by the current process: interruption of payroll processing and confidentiality concerns.

Another important area that requires ongoing monitoring is the implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FMLA is governed by federal law and district policy. Individuals can access FMLA leave in District 41 for 12 weeks each 12-month period during any fiscal year. The HR department manages the use of FMLA. FMLA in District 41 does not mandate the use of paid time off. Typically, conversations about FMLA occur with employees and include the use of sick days. However, it seems that limited discussions are held in District 41 with those seeking FMLA. Instead, most communication occurs via email. When human resources learns of a need for FMLA leave, they send a letter notifying individuals of their eligibility for FMLA and requesting medical documentation. This letter also includes a notification requiring a doctor's note to return to work. If and when the medical certification documentation is received, no follow-up or approval letter specifies anticipated leave dates and return dates. This is also true for maternity leaves in District 41, for which dates can be anticipated. Instead, letters regarding FMLA leaves are not sent until a baby is born; this may create miscommunication, as it leaves the calculation of the 12 weeks to the teacher, who may not fully understand FMLA implementation. Notices are sent to inform individuals that they are running out of paid time off. However, communication should be sent from the District for each FMLA leave that designates the amount of leave counted against an employee's entitlement, along with expected return dates based on the submitted medical certification. This communication will standardize the implementation of FMLA and improve leave management for all involved, especially building leaders who are trying to fill the void of those on leave.

A list of those who are on leave or anticipated to take FMLA exists; however, human resources does not track return dates or confirm that all required documentation has been received. Finally, the required annual notification regarding FMLA is not sent to all employees. Overall, the management of FMLA leaves needs improvement in tracking and communication.

Monitoring compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is necessary in all school districts to ensure that non-exempt individuals receive overtime pay if they qualify. This is particularly important in districts where educational support personnel serve in multiple positions or roles. It has been reported that District 41 has some educational support personnel who undertake additional duties. All extra work, even if done for a stipend, must be documented, preferably via a timesheet. When a non-exempt employee completes an additional duty, they should submit a timesheet to record the hours worked. These timesheets facilitate the calculation of potential overtime compensation. While the stipend associated with an extra duty may meet the overtime pay requirement, compliance is not assured. Therefore, it is essential to collect information on the hours worked, pay received, and potential overtime. Currently, timesheets are submitted for some, but not all, extra duties, and it seems that compliance with the FLSA is not being monitored. This raises significant concern as it may lead to inaccurate overtime calculations. A single complaint, even from someone not directly affected, could have serious financial repercussions for the District if it is found to be non-compliant with FLSA regulations.

For compensation and benefits to work most effectively in a school district, there must be continuous, effective communication between human resources and those responsible for completing payroll. In District 41, payroll is informed when a person leaves employment with the district or begins a leave, regardless of whether the leave is FMLA or not. Payroll shared that when a person goes on leave, their final pay is calculated, and they are paid in full. This prevents overpayment should the person not return from their leave.

Annually, districts are required to submit salary data for specified groups of TRS employees. It is reported that salary data is pulled from the payroll system and uploaded by the Technology Department into the Employment Information System (EIS). EIS reports are submitted by District 41 as required.

Finally, there are numerous technology applications used by human resources; however, they do not appear to work in concert with each other and have isolated specific purposes. A review of all technologies used by human resources is warranted to determine if options exist for the systems to communicate with one another to reduce the need for manual entry.

Work-life Integration
Work-life integration involves blending professional and personal lives in a way that allows individuals to manage and balance their commitments effectively. The goal is to recognize the unique needs of educators, administrators, and staff while creating policies and practices that support a more flexible and balanced work approach. By focusing on employee engagement, a school district can cultivate a workforce that is

more productive, satisfied, and motivated, which leads to improved overall organizational performance.

Employee engagement activities can encompass various areas, from wellness initiatives to improving the employee experience. Organizations that communicate clearly about their goals, strategies, and changes tend to foster higher levels of engagement. Regular feedback and performance evaluations also contribute to a more engaged workforce.

An effective way to assess work-life integration is through stay interviews, which collect feedback from current employees about why they remain with the district. Questions might include what they look forward to at work, their challenges, and what might tempt them to leave. These interviews should be thoughtfully designed to gather valuable insights without causing negative effects. Analyzing the results can help identify patterns and guide improvements in employee engagement. Currently, District 41 does not conduct stay interviews.

A supplement to stay interviews is the use of culture and climate or employee satisfaction surveys, which provide insights into employee concerns and potential areas for improvement. District 41 district office employees participated in a satisfaction survey this past fall. Results indicate that employees feel they can share their opinions in the building, are well-informed about the schools and district, and that the administration center demonstrates respectful behavior. Surveys such as this one can be used district-wide or targeted to measure employee engagement or satisfaction.

Beyond satisfaction surveys, the buildings also complete the required 5 Essentials Survey annually. The results of the 2023-24 School Report Card 5 Essentials survey indicate varying perceptions among teachers and students, with most reporting neutral to weak leadership, collaboration, a supportive environment, and limited family involvement. The results indicate neutral to strong perceptions regarding ambitious instruction. The area with the highest perception of weakness is effective leadership, which reflects whether or not leaders and teachers implement a shared vision for success. These results suggest a need for further exploration into employee engagement.

An alternative to these surveys is holding regular meetings between employees and district leadership. These meetings have recently begun to take place more frequently with union leadership, enhancing communication between union leadership and administration. These positive steps have already yielded beneficial results, as the trust between administration and union leadership is growing, and potential grievances have thus far been avoided.

Supporting employees through various means can enhance work-life balance. An employee assistance program is available, and accommodations are provided for those

experiencing medical issues. Accommodations are managed by human resources, which ensures consistent implementation.

Celebrating employee achievements and milestones is often challenging for school districts, yet it is vital for engaging employees. Celebrations and recognitions can be formal and public or informal and personal. Currently, there is a process of giving a 'shout out' to an employee. There is a link on the District 41 website featuring past recognitions given via these 'shout-outs. It was shared that 'shout-outs' were used to determine who would be recognized as employee of the year nominees. Ballots will be sent out for Teacher, Educational Support Personnel, Student Support Personnel, and Administrator nominees, and winners will be announced at the May Employee of the Year Gala. District 41 also reportedly hosts an annual retirement celebration, recognizing retirees. Expanding recognition districtwide would help connect employees to the district as a whole, ensuring equal access to appreciation efforts.

Work-life integration should foster an environment that respects diverse perspectives, needs, and experiences. The aim is to create circumstances where employees feel supported and connected while ensuring equal access to opportunities, resources, and treatment. Overall, efforts seem to be underway to enhance work-life integration.

Career Management

Career management in a school district involves systematic planning, development, and support for the professional growth and advancement of educators and staff members. This process ensures that individuals can effectively navigate their careers, acquire the necessary skills and knowledge, and contribute to the district's overall success.

Systems must be established to manage movement within the district, including transfers, promotions, and employee exits. Succession planning is necessary not only for administrative roles but also to address the effects of retirements and resignations of certified staff. Communication about career advancement opportunities should be clear and accessible to all employees.

An essential aspect of career management is the oversight of reductions in force or non-renewals of teaching staff. In Illinois, school districts are required to annually create and maintain a "Sequence of Dismissal" (SOD) list to manage potential reductions in force (RIF) of teaching staff. Each year, this list must be provided to the union to ensure transparency in the RIF process. The list includes all certified staff, their endorsements, current positions, other eligible positions, race/ethnicity, and evaluation ratings from recent years, ultimately grouping individuals for possible dismissal. The development of an SOD list is required even if a district is not considering a reduction in force. Although this is a required activity, it was reported that District 41 has not developed an SOD list for several years, which is problematic as it violates Illinois School Code. Moreover, since the list was not developed, there is no evidence that certified staff members were informed of their RIF grouping, which is considered best practice for transparency.

To facilitate the management of the SOD list, the district is also required to meet annually with the teachers' union by December 1 to discuss RIF practices. Minutes are available from a meeting held in September 2022, and union leadership reported that a meeting also occurred in July 2024; however, no minutes are available. No RIF meeting has been held during this school year, putting District 41 out of compliance with Illinois School Code.

The potential for reduction in force is not limited to teaching staff; therefore, seniority lists should be maintained regularly for all employee groups, as all staff members are subject to potential RIF actions. Seniority lists were provided for this review; however, several inconsistencies were noted. First, the job titles on the REISPA seniority list differ from those in the recognition section of the collective bargaining agreement. Additionally, the evaluation tools, denoted by job title in the REISPA agreement, differ from the job titles listed on the seniority list. However, the job titles in the Annual Working Days section of the agreement match those on the seniority list. Because different job titles appear in various locations in the REISPA collective bargaining agreement, determining seniority among paraprofessionals could be problematic should a reduction in force become necessary. It is recommended that decisions about seniority groups be established and memorialized with the union. Ideally, this should occur when a reduction is not imminent, thus simplifying the process.

The SOD and seniority lists are developed and maintained to support position control, budgeting, and accountability, while promoting transparency in the RIF process. Decisions regarding reductions in force and non-renewal practices should be made consistently and should balance the district's financial health with consideration for its employees. For example, eliminating positions funded by grants helps the district avoid financial risk if grant funds are reduced or discontinued. It has been reported that District 41 routinely non-renews all grant-funded positions, as well as those hired after the school year begins, to protect the district. While this may result in the loss of staff in hard-to-fill roles, it provides needed flexibility in planning and budgeting.

Tracking tenure status is a critical component of career management for public school employees. Tenure provides additional protections and impacts evaluation processes, making accurate tracking essential. District 41 currently tracks tenure and informs teachers of their status during their first four years of employment. Teachers are also reported to receive formal letters recognizing the attainment of tenure.

Although tenure does not apply to classified staff, tracking their employment remains important. In District 41, the two collective bargaining agreements for classified staff both include a 90-day probationary period. These periods allow for the early removal of unsuccessful hires but require oversight. Monitoring probationary periods is typically a human resources responsibility, which assists in building leaders to manage the timelines. Effective tracking allows building leaders to focus on developing employees who have completed probation. However, no evidence was provided that HR is currently monitoring probationary periods for either of the classified groups.

Career management culminates with an employee's departure from the district. A simple tracking process should be in place to manage separations effectively. District 41 currently uses a Final Payroll checklist that outlines pay-related steps, but additional tasks should be incorporated. These include but are not limited to: updating seniority lists, revising payroll and technology systems, and submitting the resignation to the Board of Education.

A well-defined separation process also supports future HR functions such as employment verification or Employment History Reviews (EHRs) required by Faith's Law. Including a draft completed EHR form in the personnel file of an individual after they leave the district would enable the district to respond confidently to future requests. An analysis of the separation process is recommended to ensure all departments are notified, post-employment communication occurs, and systems are updated. A defined, consistent process for managing separations should be developed.

Understanding why employees choose to leave the district can also be helpful. Although District 41 is reported to attempt to conduct exit interviews, it remains unclear whether staff participate. Further examination is warranted to explore why limited exit data is collected and how the information is used.

Finally, HR should monitor license renewals to ensure compliance with Illinois School Code. An audit of licensure was conducted as part of this review and included a random sample of administrative, certified, instructional, and licensed paraprofessional staff. The audit revealed that some paraprofessionals had expired licenses; approximately 14% of those reviewed held expired licenses. Fortunately, although HR does not appear to track licensure, the teaching staff seems to manage their renewals effectively, as no expired teaching licenses were identified during the sample review.

These licensing issues conflict with District Policy 5:280 (Duties and Qualifications for Educational Support Personnel) as well as Illinois School Code. Most districts use a human resources information system (HRIS) to track licensure and other key personnel processes. Currently, District 41 does not consistently use an HRIS to manage employee data. Inaccuracies exist in the technology systems in place, and no centralized method for data management is used. HR should regularly monitor the validity of employee licenses. Although Frontline Central is used to track licenses, the data is outdated and has not been consistently maintained. Someone with strong knowledge of licensure requirements should conduct a comprehensive license audit, and a reliable tracking system should be implemented to monitor licenses going forward.

In addition to licensure, districts are required to review the child murderer and sex offender databases every five years to confirm that no current employees are listed. There is no evidence that this five-year review occurs in District 41.

Labor-management relationships are reportedly improving. Efforts are underway to enhance communication with union leadership through regular meetings and ongoing dialogue. In the past, principals and district office administrators reportedly made decisions that conflicted with collective bargaining agreements, lacked follow-through,

or failed to honor agreements, leading to low trust and poor communication. At present, all three union leaders appear willing to give the new administration team time to make improvements and adhere to negotiated agreements, even though opportunities for grievances still exist. Continued attention to all labor groups and a focus on transparency and communication will be key to rebuilding trust.

By addressing the career management challenges identified in this review, District 41 has the opportunity to significantly strengthen its human resources practices and improve the overall employee experience. Implementing clearer systems for staff movement, RIF procedures, tenure and probation tracking, and licensure monitoring will not only ensure compliance with state laws and board policies but also promote fairness and transparency throughout the district. Establishing standardized, well-communicated processes for separations and exits can support smoother transitions and preserve institutional knowledge, while comprehensive exit interview procedures may yield insights that inform recruitment and retention strategies.

Moreover, the use of a reliable HRIS will be critical for improving data accuracy, streamlining personnel management, and enabling leadership to make more informed staffing decisions. Consistent monitoring of compliance requirements, such as license validity and mandatory criminal background database checks, protects both students and staff while upholding the district's legal obligations.

Finally, the district's efforts to rebuild relationships with its labor groups through open communication and collaboration are commendable and should be sustained. Proactive engagement with union leadership, honoring collective bargaining agreements, and promoting mutual trust are foundational to a positive working environment. As District 41 continues to rebuild and modernize its HR operations, a comprehensive approach to career management will not only help attract and retain talented employees but also create a culture of accountability, growth, and shared purpose across the organization.

Total Rewards - Strengths

1. The Board of Education pays the employee contribution to TRS for teaching staff and classified staff
2. Salary placements at hire for all staff appear consistent
3. An Administrative Compensation manual exists to guide salary and benefits for administrators
4. The Non-affiliated Employee Compensation Booklet exists to guide all compensation of those who are not union members
5. A flexible spending plan is available
6. A sick bank exists in each collective bargaining agreement
7. Tuition Reimbursement is available for paraprofessionals, security, and nursing staff
8. The process exists for teachers to obtain a lane change
9. Deferred compensation is available using a third-party vendor for management of IRS regulations

10. Workers' compensation is managed by a third-party vendor
11. Employee calendars are developed each year
12. Paid time off balances are managed and monitored by human resources
13. Payroll is informed when a person leaves employment or goes on leave, allowing a payout and preventing overpayment
14. The district conducts satisfaction surveys on a regular basis
15. Employee assistance program offered to staff
16. A system is in place for employees to recognize their peers, which leads to the selection of Employee of the Year recognition
17. The district holds an annual retirement tea
18. A system for tracking tenure exists, and tenure attainment letters are sent
19. A Final payroll checklist exists
20. Exit interviews are sent to those leaving the district
21. Regular meetings are held with each bargaining group and human resources
22. Leadership of local labor groups are giving the new administration time to improve current issues rather than filing grievances

Total Rewards - Areas of Vulnerability

1. Salary notifications were not sent or placed in personnel files
2. The open enrollment process is time-consuming and labor-intensive for all employees and the HR department
3. Sick bank balances are not available
4. Tuition reimbursement for educational support professionals is not monitored
5. It does not appear that any tracking is done for those in the retirement track to avoid excess salaries over 6%, resulting in TRS penalties
6. The teacher's contract does not include language to control excess salaries over 6%
7. Workers' compensation is not run concurrently with FMLA
8. Unemployment claims are fully managed by human resources
9. Substitutes are not issued intent-to-work letters each spring to counteract unemployment claims over the summer
10. It is unclear how employee calendars are shared with employees
11. Daily attendance uploads do not occur, impacting the processing of payroll
12. FMLA tracking lacks all the preferred information
13. FMLA approval letters are not sent, nor does any communication occur that designates the amount of leave that will be used against an employee's annual entitlement
14. The annual notification regarding FMLA is not sent
15. No one is monitoring compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act
16. The technology used does not work in concert and requires much manual entry
17. The district does not complete stay interviews
18. The Sequence of Dismissal list has not been completed in several years
19. RIF grouping assignments are not communicated annually to certificated staff

20. The RIF Committee has not met this year as required by the Illinois School Code
21. Seniority lists are not maintained throughout the school year and shared with unions as required per collective bargaining agreements
22. No one is monitoring probationary periods for classified staff
23. A termination checklist does exist
24. Accurate, detailed processes are not well documented or in place for numerous career events, i.e., transfers, tenure attainment, and separations, including how these events are communicated with impacted stakeholders
25. The district does not have regular participation in exit interviews
26. Paraprofessionals were identified with expired licensure
27. Tracking of licensure renewal is inconsistent
28. No evidence of a 5-year review of child murderer and sex offender databases

Total Rewards - Recommendations

1. Establish a 5-year process of market analysis for non-affiliate positions
2. Establish a process to issue salary notifications to all employee groups
3. Review the open enrollment process, explore ways to simplify the process for both employees and the human resources department
4. Work on obtaining sick bank balances from the prior HR administrator
5. Establish a process to monitor tuition reimbursement for educational support professionals
6. Establish a process to track year-over-year pay increases for TRS members who are retirement-eligible
7. Revise the workers' compensation process to run commensurate with the FMLA
8. Consider the use of a third-party administrator to handle unemployment claims
9. Establish a process to issue intent to work letters to all substitutes
10. Establish a process to share calendars with all employee groups
11. Ensure that daily attendance uploads occur as required for the processing of payroll
12. Establish a process to manage FMLA, including the issuance of the annual required notification, issuing FMLA letters that designate an employee's use of FMLA leave against their annual entitlement
13. Develop an organized system for tracking all leaves, including FMLA
14. Establish a process to effectively manage the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for non-exempt employees working extra duties, including the submission of timesheets for all extra duties
15. Evaluate all technologies used by the human resources department to address the need for manual entry by HR team members
16. Consider the use of stay interviews
17. Establish a process to annually complete the Sequence of Dismissal (SOD) list
18. Hold RIF joint Committee meetings each year
19. Issue RIF grouping notifications to each certified staff member annually
20. Maintain, regularly update, and share seniority lists for all employee groups

21. Establish a process to monitor probationary periods for all classified employees
22. Develop a detailed process to manage and track employee transfers, including an associated communication plan with all stakeholders
23. Develop a detailed process to manage and track separations, including an associated communication plan with other departments, buildings, and the Board of Education
24. Add the completion of a Draft Employment History Review (EHR) form to the separation process
25. Review the process for exit interviews
26. Review the licensure of all certified staff and educational support personnel to ensure their licenses are valid and appropriate for their assignment
27. Create a process for ongoing monitoring of licensure renewal for all employees
28. Implement consistent use of a human resources information system to track all career management events
29. Establish and implement a written process to complete a review of the child murderer and sex offender databases as required by Illinois School Code

POLICY REVIEW

The district currently utilizes the policy management service provided by the Illinois Association of School Boards through PRESS Plus. As a result, policies related to Personnel are in good standing. The following policy needs review by district personnel to determine if it complies with the recommended language and reflects desired practice:

5:10 Equal Employment Non-Discrimination complaint managers do not represent multiple genders

CONCLUSIONS

A human resources review helps evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of human resources processes and procedures. This includes planning, recruitment, hiring, onboarding, training, performance management, and other human resources functions. Identifying areas for improvement can enhance communication, encourage teamwork, and lead to increased employee engagement and better employee satisfaction, thus higher retention rates.

Rock Island-Milan School District 41 contracted with the Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators to complete a human resources review. There are concerns with the functioning of the human resources department and the lack of existing, consistent structures and processes.

During this human resources review, numerous documents, as noted, were reviewed and analyzed to identify processes and verify their implementation. In addition, interviews

were held with anyone recognized by the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources as participating in any human resources function. In total, seventeen individuals listed earlier in this report were interviewed.

Using the Human Capital Leaders in Education standards and domains of Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, and Total Rewards as identified by the American Association of School Personnel Administrators, the documents and interviews were used to identify strengths and areas of vulnerability that exist in District 41 related to human resources functions and tasks. In addition, recommendations are made in each domain area, which aim to assist District 41 in enhancing human resources functions' overall efficiency and effectiveness.

The individuals in the human resources department who were interviewed are dedicated to District 41 and its employees and complete their work with positive intent. However, without having documented processes that specify the human resources functions, details of these functions are often omitted or not addressed.

In addition to those in the human resources department, the others interviewed voiced a strong desire to improve working conditions across the district, starting with how human resources functions. Conversations regularly mentioned confusion about processes and who in the central office or human resources department is responsible for what activities.

In conclusion, this review notes several concerns, each with its own consequences. Overall, the human resources department has many identified strengths; however, vulnerabilities also exist, exposing the district to potential liability.

Given the large number of identified issues, the district should begin addressing the concerns by focusing on the most potentially impactful improvements: reorganizing the HR department, addressing the pervasive lack of written, documented, and communicated human resources processes, addressing licensure issues, and enhancing endorsement tracking. These critical steps are needed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the HR department in District 41. They will help restore trust, ensure compliance, and enhance the department's overall function, ultimately benefiting the entire school district.

Priority Recommendations

Priority Recommendation #1
Reorganize the Human Resources Department, including the reassignment of duties and responsibilities

Currently, two union members are working in the Human Resources department. While union membership is an important right and a valuable form of employee representation, employing a union member within a Human Resources office can

present significant conflicts of interest. HR professionals are tasked with implementing and enforcing management policies, conducting internal investigations, and advising on disciplinary actions, many of which directly involve union-represented employees. A union member may find themselves in a position where their loyalty to the union and its members conflicts with their professional responsibility to maintain confidentiality, impartiality, and management's trust. This dual allegiance could compromise their ability to objectively perform HR functions and raise concerns about whether sensitive information is being handled appropriately.

Additionally, HR must often be neutral during grievance processes, negotiations, or investigations. A union member working in this capacity may inadvertently, or even appear to, favor the interests of the union, undermining both the credibility of the HR function and the trust of non-union employees or management. Even the perception of bias can damage employee relations and organizational effectiveness. To preserve the integrity and independence of HR operations, it is generally advisable to avoid placing individuals in roles where their obligations to outside entities could conflict with their duties to the organization. Therefore, the union members must be removed from the HR department.

Finally, there appears to be a misalignment of duties within the HR department, likely due to the presence of union members. Once this conflict is removed, a reassignment of duties is warranted to balance the duties and responsibilities within the department.

Related to the functioning of the HR department, it appears that the transition between the current Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and the former individual has been problematic. Many documents were not provided to the current leader, impacting their ability to fully and effectively manage the department's operations.

While many documents may exist within the district, they have not been shared with the new leadership. However, the documents are likely on district devices or systems, so the technology department should be able to retrieve them and provide access as needed.

Both of these issues make it difficult for the current Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources to manage the department's operations effectively. Solving these issues is essential for the department's success and improvement.

Priority Recommendation #2
Create, Document, Implement, and Communicate Detailed Processes and Procedures for all Major Human Resources Functions

For several reasons, Rock Island-Milan District 41 would benefit greatly from creating, documenting, implementing, and communicating detailed processes and procedures for all major human resources (HR) functions.

Firstly, documented processes ensure consistency and fairness in HR functions such as hiring, evaluations, employee discipline, and benefits administration. This consistency helps avoid biases or unequal treatment, guaranteeing that all employees are treated fairly according to the same guidelines. It fosters a sense of trust and fairness within the district, which is crucial for improving employee morale and retention.

Secondly, clear documentation of HR processes is essential for legal compliance. It helps a district stay aligned with federal, state, and local labor laws and regulations, which is critical in preventing legal disputes related to employment practices such as discrimination claims, wage and hour issues, or wrongful termination. Having well-documented procedures provides a protective framework that minimizes potential legal liabilities and ensures the district meets its obligations under laws like the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Documenting HR processes ensures transparency and accountability in addition to legal protection. Employees are informed of what to expect regarding performance evaluations, promotions, disciplinary actions, and other HR matters. This transparency fosters trust and provides clarity while holding the HR department accountable for adhering to established procedures, making it easier to identify and correct deviations.

Detailed processes also improve operational efficiency. Streamlining HR operations reduces confusion, errors, and delays, which is particularly beneficial in districts with high hiring volumes, benefits management, and employee issues. When clear procedures are in place, tasks are completed more efficiently, reducing misunderstandings or redundant efforts.

Moreover, clear communication of HR policies and procedures increases employee engagement and retention. Employees feel more supported when they understand the expectations, available opportunities, and where to seek help. This transparency fosters a sense of security and value, leading to greater employee satisfaction, engagement, and a higher likelihood of retention.

Documented HR functions provide essential support for school administrators and leadership in decision-making. HR's detailed guidelines offer a roadmap for making informed and legally compliant decisions on hiring, staffing levels, and employee performance management. This level of support enables district leaders to act confidently, knowing they are following the proper procedures.

Additionally, detailed procedures are invaluable for training and onboarding new HR staff. They ensure that new employees, or those taking on new responsibilities, can quickly learn and perform their duties effectively, staying in line with district policies from day one.

Another critical reason for creating detailed HR processes is risk mitigation. HR functions like hiring, evaluations, and terminations carry significant legal and reputational risks. Establishing and adhering to thorough procedures reduces the

chances of errors and increases accountability, resulting in grievances, lawsuits, or harm to the district's reputation.

In addition to creating documented HR processes, it is recommended that the department develop a monthly to-do list. The list should outline each task and assign its responsibility to an HR team member. It should be contained in a shared document so that the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources can monitor task completion on a regular basis and reallocate resources if needed.

In conclusion, creating, documenting, implementing, and communicating detailed HR processes enables a school district to operate more smoothly, maintain legal compliance, and create a more positive work environment for all staff members. This approach supports fairness, efficiency, and accountability while fostering engagement and mitigating potential risks.

Priority Recommendation #3
Complete a Full Audit of All Employee Credentials

It is recommended that District 41 immediately undertake a comprehensive audit of all employee credentials. The recent licensure audit revealed multiple individuals who do not possess the proper licensure for their position held or courses taught. This limited scope of review strongly suggests that additional employees also lack the required credentials. The potential extent of this issue is significant, indicating that a thorough and immediate audit is essential.

This situation poses a substantial risk to District 41 for several reasons. First, the liability associated with employing individuals in positions that mandate licensure when they do not hold the appropriate credentials could lead to severe financial and legal repercussions for the District. Employment laws and professional regulations necessitate that individuals in specific roles hold valid licensure, and failure to comply with these requirements could result in fines, legal action, and the invalidation of work performed by these unlicensed employees.

Moreover, the lack of proper licensure undermines the quality and credibility of the educational services provided. Licensed professionals must typically meet specific standards and undergo ongoing professional development to ensure they are equipped to perform their roles effectively. Employing unlicensed individuals could compromise the quality of education and support services, potentially affecting student outcomes and overall district performance.

Given the gravity of these risks, District 41 must take immediate action. Without delay, a full audit of all employee credentials should be completed. This audit should verify that every employee in a position requiring licensure holds the appropriate and current credentials. It should also include a review of the processes and oversight mechanisms currently in place to ensure that such discrepancies do not occur in the future.

By addressing these issues promptly, District 41 can mitigate non-compliance risks, safeguard its financial and legal standing, and ensure that all employees are adequately qualified to perform their duties. This will also help restore and maintain trust within the community, among staff, and with stakeholders, reinforcing the District's commitment to providing high-quality education and support services.

DOMAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Talent Acquisition - Recommendations

1. Create a collaborative process for the development of a strategic staffing plan using all available historical information
2. Develop a process for position control that clearly defines how positions are created and managed
3. Create and establish written processes for all human resources functions
4. Remove union members from the human resources department
5. Reallocate duties and responsibilities in the human resources department
6. Create a substitute handbook and an orientation program
7. Identify a process to monitor the potential tenure status of building substitutes
8. Review the use of substitutes within the district, ensuring compliance with the collective bargaining agreements
9. Establish a review cycle of the job descriptions
10. Update the job application to include references to Faith's Law and social media inquiries, and remove inquiries about highly qualified status
11. Review the job application for redundancy and confirm all aspects are actually used in decision-making
12. Develop a strategic recruitment plan to increase the candidate pool, using a variety of methods, including social media and job fairs
13. Engage building leaders in the recruitment process
14. Review job postings, develop a consistent process for posting openings to avoid duplication of postings
15. Enhance the employee value proposition by highlighting the unique employment benefits offered in all branding materials
16. Require full completion of the Recommendation to Hire form and analyze the demographic data of those interviewed and hired to inform future recruitment strategy and identify potential bias
17. Integrate performance-based activities into the hiring process for teachers
18. Analyze the success of recruitment strategies for their return on investment
19. Make connections with the existing grow your own programs in the high school and elementary buildings
20. Train interview teams on legal hiring practices and mitigating bias
21. Ensure consistent use of the identified hiring process
22. Implement the use of employment contracts for all new teacher hires
23. Transition all hiring paperwork to an electronic format using Frontline Central

24. Develop an easily accessible Google document or electronic tracking system for hiring activities, including assigning who will be doing what, which will allow monitoring the status of the hiring process and increase accountability
25. Review practices and the process for the management of personnel files
26. Conduct stay interviews to determine the employee value proposition from the perspective of current employees, from which you can begin to create the district's brand
27. Enhance and expand relationships with local universities and colleges for the placement of student teachers
28. Begin offering positions via phone calls instead of email
29. Revise personnel recommendations taken to the Board of Education to include start dates and termination dates
30. Cease taking new substitutes to the Board of Education for approval
31. Expand the use of Frontline Central or implement another process as a human resource information system that includes tracking the hiring process, as well as other career management events

Talent Development - Recommendations

1. Evaluate the new teacher orientation and mid-year orientation program to determine if it meets the needs of participants and to improve its effectiveness
2. Integrate an orientation to the Educator Evaluation Plan into the new teacher orientation
3. Develop a district-led mentoring program that exists not only to support new teaching staff but also to integrate them into the culture of District 41
4. Review the Welcome Team concept for consistent implementation and effectiveness
5. Develop and implement a process to maintain licensure and endorsements held by all teaching staff
6. Clarify the process of tenure attainment within the Educator Evaluation Plan and with PERA committee members
7. Schedule PERA Joint Committee meeting
8. Establish a process of communication between HR and all evaluators regarding the retention of non-tenured certified staff
9. Revise the summative ratings used in the Principal Evaluation Plan to comply with Illinois School Code
10. Initiate inter-rater reliability activities for those completing evaluations
11. Identify a process to track that all evaluations occur as required by School Code, collective bargaining agreements, and Board policy
12. Ensure that all required evaluation data is reported to the Employment Information System
13. Create and implement a process to ensure the placement of all evaluations in personnel files
14. Disaggregate the evaluation data for use in professional development planning

15. Develop comprehensive handbooks for certified staff, classified staff, and substitutes, including references to Board policy and all terms and conditions of employment that do not attempt to expand upon previously negotiated topics
16. Verify that all administrators use UpSlope when addressing disciplinary issues
17. Review the required mandated training for each job group
18. Establish a process to monitor the completion of assigned mandated training
19. Integrate DCFS Mandated Reporter training into New Teacher Orientation

Total Rewards - Recommendations

1. Establish a 5-year process of market analysis for non-affiliate positions
2. Establish a process to issue salary notifications to all employee groups
3. Review the open enrollment process, explore ways to simplify the process for both employees and the human resources department
4. Work on obtaining sick bank balances from the prior HR administrator
5. Establish a process to monitor tuition reimbursement for educational support professionals
6. Establish a process to track year-over-year pay increases for TRS members who are retirement-eligible
7. Revise the workers' compensation process to run commensurate with the FMLA
8. Consider the use of a third-party administrator to handle unemployment claims
9. Establish a process to issue intent to work letters to all substitutes
10. Establish a process to share calendars with all employee groups
11. Ensure that daily attendance uploads occur as required for the processing of payroll
12. Establish a process to manage FMLA, including the issuance of the annual required notification, issuing FMLA letters that designate an employee's use of FMLA leave against their annual entitlement
13. Develop an organized system for tracking all leaves, including FMLA
14. Establish a process to effectively manage the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for non-exempt employees working extra duties, including the submission of timesheets for all extra duties
15. Evaluate all technologies used by the human resources department to address the need for manual entry by HR team members
16. Consider the use of stay interviews
17. Establish a process to annually complete the Sequence of Dismissal (SOD) list
18. Hold RIF joint Committee meetings each year
19. Issue RIF grouping notifications to each certified staff member annually
20. Maintain, regularly update, and share seniority lists for all employee groups
21. Establish a process to monitor probationary periods for all classified employees
22. Develop a detailed process to manage and track employee transfers, including an associated communication plan with all stakeholders

23. Develop a detailed process to manage and track separations, including an associated communication plan with other departments, buildings, and the Board of Education
24. Add the completion of a Draft EHR form to the separation process
25. Review the process for exit interviews
26. Review the licensure of all certified staff and educational support personnel to ensure their licenses are valid and appropriate for their assignment
27. Create a process for ongoing monitoring of licensure renewal for all employees
28. Implement consistent use of a human resources information system to track all career management events
29. Establish and implement a written process to complete a review of the child murderer and sex offender databases as required by Illinois School Code

SUMMARY

It was a pleasure meeting each of the individuals interviewed. I greatly appreciated their candor and willingness to answer my initial and follow-up questions. In addition, the interviewees' cooperation in providing documents as requested was essential to the completion of the review.

If you have any questions or need clarification, please reach out for further assistance.