

## **HIRING AND SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS WHO FOCUS ON STUDENTS' LEARNING**

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Hiring the best teacher for a school is a high stakes venture, fraught with danger that the choice may not be productive in terms of optimizing student learning. Those charged with the task of hiring teachers may not share a common view of how to assess applicants to identify the right “fit” for the position. A Professional Shift Theory (*pst*) model was developed to conceptualize characteristics of teachers’ shift toward focusing on students’ learning. School administrators identify the evidence they look for in interviews to highlight *pst* characteristics in potential hires, and support these characteristics after hiring. This study was undertaken to help school administrators identify those characteristics that they determine to be most desirable in new teachers who are potential new hires for a board. The study found many related trends in the responses of participants, including their heavy reliance on the use of conceptual language among interviewees as evidence that these teacher applicants can deliver the named skill when they teach. It is evident in this study that administrators who hire new teachers would benefit from professional development that helps them understand ways to mentor, model, and coach new teachers, and need further professional development that would help them understand how these types of support differ.

### **Introduction**

This paper supports the developing body of literature about teacher hiring practices.

This study diverges from many previous studies of this topic in that it starts with a research-based theory, which we call professional shift theory (*pst*) (Maynes and Hatt, 2011, 2012) about what characteristics are most valued in teachers. These characteristics were gathered through

focus group investigation that resulted in a schematic representing key characteristics of teachers who focus their professional efforts on improving students' learning (see Appendix). These key characteristics were then used to develop an online survey designed to measure local administrators' beliefs and professional practices related to hiring new teachers and supporting their on-the-job growth.

### **Literature Review**

The quality of classroom teachers is regarded as a key factor in the success of students (OECD, 2004, 2005; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). While factors such as the school climate may relate to the student's success with academic progress, the impact of the teacher is a higher influential factor in determining who succeeds and who may not (Dinham, Ingvarson, & Kleinhenz, 2008). These acknowledgements highlight the crucial nature of effective hiring practices to ensure the most effective teachers are hired (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). Increasingly, those who hire teachers look to ensure effective hiring strategies to increase the chances of improving student success (OECD, 2004, 2005). Efforts to improve hiring practices are based on the recognition that individual teachers matter when student success is the goal.

Through hiring practices within various school boards, those charged with hiring can reasonably be assumed to be trying to ensure that they hire the most effective teachers and that interviews and adjunctive filtering strategies for hiring have some criteria that support this selection process. These criteria may be stated in policy documents in the jurisdiction and may identify selection criteria and retention supports (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007). In school systems, ensuring that decision makers can hire strong teachers and then support their continuous growth once they are in the profession are seen as crucial ways to leverage student success

(Darling-Hammond, 2001, 2003; Harris, 2004). However, the authors are aware from personal administrative experience that hiring may happen in rushed circumstances and may not include opportunities for hiring teams to develop consensus about the characteristics they want to identify among the teacher candidates they choose to interview.

It may be that those who are responsible for hiring effective teachers for school jurisdictions or for individual schools may face a problematic situation. They may lack local or jurisdictional policies to guide their selection process and may therefore be guided by personal perceptions, idiosyncratic assessments, and relatively unacknowledged value judgments (Cranston, 2012). It may also be that hiring teams fail to devote time to ensuring that they have developed commonly understood criteria and standards for the hiring process and therefore fail to operate from common goals. Additionally, hiring individuals or hiring teams may have competing conceptions of teacher effectiveness (Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009). Since, defining an effective teacher is a subjective and interpretive act (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010; Rabinowicz & Travers, 1953) and there may be little consensus on the usefulness of a narrow definition of teacher effectiveness (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2003), those charged with hiring effective teachers may disagree about what effectiveness is in their context. Previous research (Maynes & Hatt, 2011, 2012) has uncovered characteristics that are identified by teacher evaluators as desirable in teachers who have shifted their focus towards improving students' learning. The present study adds to the conversation about teacher hiring by helping those who are responsible for this task to identify the characteristics that may make a difference in students' learning.

Also, there is no known method of consistently predicting the effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom once they are hired (Cashin, 1994). However, there is general agreement among

many researchers that a teacher's actual classroom performance may have some predictive value relative to their future successes in the classroom (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010; Gladwell, 2008; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Jacob & Lefgren, 2006). Since many jurisdictions rely solely on an interview to identify the most promising teachers, many jurisdictions train their hiring personnel to use performance based interviewing techniques to structure questions that bridge the gap between past practice and future practices. By improving the screening and selection of teachers, jurisdictions attempt to improve the cadre of employees who show most promise that they will leverage student achievement by being effective in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; OECD, 2004, 2005; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1997). This is essentially an effort to match the organizational needs with the available talents of applicants and the demands of an effective teacher's role (Herriot, 1989; Montgomery, 1996; Plumbly, 1985; Zhu & Dowling, 2002). Finding this match often boils down to the search for strategies that help organizations identify the most promising teacher qualities (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010), which is problematic if jurisdictions fail to use a systematic, research-based approach to the hiring practices they rely heavily upon as they make such high stakes decisions (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007; Walsh & Tracy, 2004). This dichotomy is laid out in further detail in a seminal paper by Jerome Cranston (2012) called, "Exploring School Principal's Hiring Decisions: Fitting In and Getting Hired."

Current hiring practices may further be highly problematic in two key ways. First, those seeking to be hired may be unaware of how to prepare for hiring and how to anticipate the needs of various jurisdictions, leaving them unaware of how to improve their prospects of obtaining their first teaching position (Cranston, 2012; Ontario College of Teachers, 2011). Second, evidence that school jurisdictions make effective decisions about whom they hire in the

selection of teachers is largely unavailable (Boyd et al, 2007). This gap in the research is the focus of the current paper.

The tension between the use of objective criteria for hiring (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2007) and the subjective practice of hiring based on interviews and references may confuse the issue of trying to ensure that the most effective teachers ultimately get to teach. When subjective approaches are used exclusively, the high stakes task of hiring the most effective teachers may rely on a faulty assumption: that those responsible for hiring can successfully identify the candidates' characteristics by the means available in their jurisdiction (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Additionally, some research shows that school-based hiring may provide those charged with the task of hiring teachers with better teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997; DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010). School-based hiring allows principals to select teachers whose characteristics they perceive to fit the school and its needs and thereby support the desired school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Firestone & Louis, 1999). But, in many jurisdictions, administrators hire for system positions and may have little say in who is assigned to their school. In other jurisdictions, principals are required by policy in their school jurisdiction to include teachers from the school in school-based hiring decisions. These policies complicate the goal of developing a unified vision of the best teacher to fit the needs of the hiring organization.

Fullan (2011) suggests that hiring jurisdictions need to use approaches that are both systemic and consistent for the task of hiring teachers. Some jurisdictions are addressing this approach by developing multi-staged selection processes for teachers that attempt to find the best fit among teacher candidates (Pappano, 2011). This trend is being referred to as *predictive hiring*. Predictive hiring addresses the conversation about educational improvement by

attempting to predict the best teachers by hiring smarter, thereby flagging problematic fits during a multi-staged selection process. Predictive hiring attempts to buttress the traditional resume, application letter, and interview triad for selection with the addition of further filters that may provide better or broader data on which to make a teacher hiring decision. Predictive hiring approaches can include: an initial phone interview; the observation of a model lesson taught by the teacher applicant; a face-to-face interview; a problem-solving e-mail exercise (e.g., responding to an angry parent); and a professional task simulation (e.g., a student achievement data analysis). Predictive hiring practices may seek to provide a best teacher fit that includes a fit between the applicant and the work environment, the job requirements, the organization/school and its culture, and the group with whom they will work (Anderson, Lievens, van Dam, & Ryan, 2004; Antonioni & Park, 2001; Ehrhart & Makransky, 2007; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Sekiguchi, 2004), with some indication that assessments of fit between the applicant and the organizational culture seem to predominate in hiring decisions (Karren & Graves, 1994). While these measures of fit may be varied and may provide some diverse data in the hiring process, it seems unlikely that interviewers are simultaneously and systematically assessing fit as the compatibility between the interviewee and the professional demands of teaching, competence for the job, organizational fit, and group fit concomitantly in the absence of a conceptual framework to structure these diverse and sometimes competing goals. That is, the people who are determining the best fit for various demands of the role of teacher may not share a common vision of what those demands may be, nor of what teacher characteristics may be needed to be successful in meeting those demands.

While the need for highly effective teachers is a given, identifying what makes the teacher effective is not. Similarly, how highly effective teachers are chosen in the selection

process can be problematic. Theories about optimizing human capital (Schultz, 1961) to get the best fit of candidate to needs may be more subjective than is productive, and predictive approaches to hiring, while showing some promise of positive yields, are yet to be proven and are labour intensive to implement. However, if jurisdictions could engage in the intense process of identifying the key characteristics they want to see in their teachers to ensure their effectiveness in supporting students' learning, we hypothesize that hiring practices and their high stakes outcomes will be strengthened. By addressing the question, "What are the characteristics of a teacher who focuses on students' learning?" we believe we can start this critical dialogue.

A crucial part of maximizing the impact of the supports available to teachers throughout their careers needs to be focused on a shift in teachers' thinking. This shift encompasses a move from focusing on their teaching toward focusing on their students' learning. Teachers need to learn to make each instructional decision on the basis of its impact on students' learning (Abbot, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Increasingly, teachers have been called upon to demonstrate public accountability by showing the impact of their instructional decisions in terms of student performance data (Amos, 2012; Stratham & Ware, 2001). However, public accountability requirements also have resulted in practices that reflect the accumulation of hard data that can be reported in absolute numbers to address public confidence in the educational system (Amos, 2012).

Accountability focused assessments direct attention toward the teacher and the teachers' pedagogy. This contradiction makes the professional maturation of a teacher more difficult than it should be and delays or derails the critical shift in teachers' growth required to ensure that teachers' instructional decisions are filtered through their ability to impact students' learning (Amos, 2012; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011). Consequently, teachers are receiving

confusing messages about their professional role and this confusion may be amplified in new teachers.

When we examine teacher effectiveness by gauging student learning, findings show that student learning plateaus after the teacher's first three years in the profession (Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011). This trend indicates that we should focus considerable attention on optimizing practices focused on student learning in the pre-service preparation of teachers, in the hiring of new teachers, and in the early years of their professional work. Early career administrative supports should help novice teachers make a strong shift toward student learning. If this is done, the effects of plateauing could have minimal effect on students' learning because the teacher would already be focused on ensuring learning as a filter for their professional practice. Additionally, early career teachers who had the advantage of this type of professional focus during teacher preparation, hiring, and early career years in the profession, might be anticipated to plateau at a much higher spot on the spectrum of student learning outcomes than teachers who were not focused to produce these outcomes. Given this critical need to ensure effective hiring, we have begun initial investigations into how this is undertaken in local school jurisdictions.

Our focus of investigation in Stage 1 of our research was *What are the elements that characterize a teacher's shift in focus from their teaching to students' learning?* In re-conceptualizing our vision of teacher preparation as a continuum of supports that focus all efforts on the professional goal of improving students' learning, we needed to ask ourselves what existing, or new, theory supports this re-conceptualization. Theory provides the capacity to conceptualize phenomena in sophisticated ways (Trier, 2009) and drawing from disparate sources strengthened our efforts, as researchers, to identify a theory that would support



professional growth designed to increase student learning. In understanding the elements that create or contribute to the shift in teachers' focus from individual teaching to students' learning, we, as pre-service teacher educators and researchers can support teachers' professional growth more effectively (Chen & Rossi, 1983; Coulter, 2010; Donaldson, 2007; Rogers, Hacsı, Petrosino & Huebner, 2000). By identifying the elements that characterize the shift in teachers' focus and that contribute to their professional maturity, we align the various stages of their professional growth to attain high levels of student learning. The schematic that characterizes the shift in teachers' focus from their professional practice towards students' learning is known as *Professional Shift Theory (pst)* (Appendix).

Teachers are more likely to recognize and address substantive changes in their own professional performance if they have access to the professional practices of other teachers (Coulter, 2010). If everyone is looking for the same teacher characteristics as they hire new teachers, then the desired outcomes are more likely to be achieved. The vision shared by stakeholders who have responsibility for the hiring of a teacher applicant, provides direction and that direction becomes the filter for applicant selection. The hiring practices of a school jurisdiction could prepare stakeholders to manage the challenging task of selecting teachers who will focus on ensuring student learning.

### **Methodology**

To examine the research question we have adopted a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2012). Our assumptions here are that this is the best approach because it would allow us to use open-ended survey questions that explored a wide range of understandings and beliefs about teacher hiring among the participating administrators. The following sample, data

collection, and data analysis used in this study were selected because it was our assumptions and beliefs, like those of Creswell (2012) and other scholars (or methodologists), that the lived experience of professionals can provide a wealth of data about professional beliefs, practices, intentions, and understandings. We recognize that in selecting a mixed methods approach there are some limitations, which we will discuss on the conclusion of this paper as we talk about implications of our findings, and raise recommendations for future research.

### *Participants*

Twenty-three school administrators from two northern school districts responded to an online survey. All administrators in both jurisdictions were invited to participate in the survey. One group of respondents (15) was employed by a Catholic district school board, while the other participants (8) were administrators in a public district school board. One of the 23 respondents was a vice-principal while the remaining 22 were school principals. All participants had experience in their roles as administrators in hiring teachers at both the system level and the school level, consistent with hiring practices in each jurisdiction. Typical hiring practices in each jurisdiction vary depending on the time of year and local needs. Hiring may be accomplished by teams of principals, usually for a system position such as a supply teachers' list, or by a single principal and a team of school-based teachers, which is used in most instances of school-based hiring. Late season hiring (e.g., late August; during late December, etc.) may be done by a team of principals even though it is likely to be hiring for a specific school, since teachers would be on holiday during that time. Hiring by an individual principal is avoided to ensure openness and consistency in the hiring process. While the structure of a hiring team may vary, typically at least three board employees, including a minimum of one principal, are involved.

Among the respondents there were 18 elementary school administrators and 5 secondary school administrators. Thirteen of the participants were female; 10 were male. The participants had an average of 21 years of teaching experience, and a range of 1 to 16 years of administrative experience.

Participants from these two boards of education were invited to participate for a number of reasons. First, the main office of each board was within reasonable driving distance for the researchers. This facilitated meetings with directors of each board prior to the launch of the survey to ensure that the resulting data could be useful in their system improvement process. Second, the boards both hire teachers who are certified through our faculty of education so this connection added continuity and context to our findings. Finally, the researchers had previous experience working with personnel from each board, so the priorities and interests of board personnel were considered before invitations to participate were extended.

### *Methods*

Data was collected in this study via an online survey of school administrators in two northern Ontario school districts. The survey yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. A questionnaire format was decided upon because the questionnaire had been developed to reflect outcomes of previous research (Maynes & Hatt, 2011,2012) and to add credibility to the theoretical conceptions proposed later in this paper. A Likert scale format also provided a way to measure participants' strength of commitment to each prompt in the survey.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part provided demographic data about the participants and involved 10 questions. The second part of the survey involved 41 questions in three sets. Within each set of questions there were three foci: 1) to determine the

respondents' perception of the value they placed on a teacher characteristic evident in the *pst* model; 2) to identify evidence respondents could gather from interview situations that provided assurance that the teacher candidate had the characteristic; and 3) ideas about strategies each participant would use to support growth in the characteristic after they had hired the teacher. The first part of each set of questions was collected on a 5-point Likert scale. The second and third parts of each question set were collected using qualitative responses to a prompt (e.g., "If a pre-service teacher is developing the ability to use caring classroom management techniques, what professional characteristics will be evident to you during an interview for hiring?" and "What do you do in your role as an administrator to support novice teachers in developing their ability to use caring classroom management techniques?").

### **Data**

The 51 question online survey was distributed to school administrators through online sites accessed through the director of each school board. Directors explained the research to administrators through an internal system letter, which explained how to access the survey. The survey required completion of a letter of informed consent and took approximately 60 to 80 minutes to complete. Participants could exit and reenter the survey to complete it in more than one time frame.

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collated from the survey data into the sets of three related responses. In each data set, the first question yielded quantitative data while the remaining two parts of each set provided qualitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed by percentages while the qualitative data were analyzed for recurring themes (Creswell, 2012).

Organizing the data into sets yielded 17 sets. These sets of triadic data were then resorted into three categories of “fit” using the framework developed by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005). Kristof-Brown’s meta-analysis investigated the relationships between person–job, person–organization, person–group, and person–supervisor fit with pre-entry to employment. As well, the study examined other related relationships including applicant attraction, job acceptance, intent to hire, job offer, and individual post-entry criteria, including attitudes, performance, withdrawal behaviors, strain, and tenure. The study examined ways in which fit was conceptualized and summarized studies of these relationships. Interrelationships among the various types of fit were also meta-analyzed. Broad themes emerging from the results allowed for the generation of implications for future research on fit and categories of fit that could be essential to employment relationships. From the Kristof-Brown (2005) study came the general categories of employment fit that have been used to examine the data for this study.

As the Kristof- Brown (2005) category of person-vocation fit was determined by the teacher candidates’ decision to apply for a particular job and was therefore out of the control of the hiring teams/administrators as was the category of person-supervisor fit, which was yet to be determined by the applicant’s career path, only the remaining three categories of the model were used in our data analysis. These included: person-job fit, person-organization fit, and person-group fit. Resorting the data into these categories provided three larger sets of related data. These data are reported in Tables 1, 2, and 3. These tables also include further delineation of the three categories used in the model of fit as sub-headings within each table.

*Person-Organization Fit*

To examine the administrators' perceptions of person-organization fit, 8 triads of responses were examined. These included administrators' perceptions of the teacher candidates' passion and enthusiasm for the teaching role, their ability to read the body language of learners, their skills with the use of caring classroom management techniques, their projection of professional presence, their professional confidence, their management and communication skills, their focus on the learner during instruction, and their commitment to social justice and equity.

Table 1  
*Person-Organization Fit*

Person-Organization Fit			
Person-Organization fit involves finding a new teacher who shares the basic assumptions of the organizational culture (the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems) of the school board.			
Set of Person-Organization Fit Prompts	Response Percentages in the <i>Important to Very Important</i> Range	Evidence that Administrators Would Look for in an Interview	Ways that an Administrator Would Support Development of this Attribute in a New Teacher
Passion and enthusiasm	95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use words such as “curriculum”, “mission”, “teaching practices”</li> <li>• have high energy during interview; show enthusiasm and passion</li> <li>• seem open to new learning</li> <li>• have deep understanding of curriculum concepts and content</li> <li>• speak about the importance of student engagement; differentiation; using various resources; using technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentors</li> <li>• commitment to personal development</li> <li>• give administrative support (coaching, pairing, observing, choices, encouraging, assist with resource acquisition, model by example, be visible)</li> </ul>
Ability to monitor the body language of the learner	81%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about relating to and engaging the learner</li> <li>• project the sense that they will have presence in the classroom</li> <li>• won't talk about whole class instruction</li> <li>• differentiation</li> <li>• talk about use of proactive classroom management techniques; connect management to individualized classroom instruction</li> <li>• show that they care about individual student's stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• modeling</li> <li>• coaching</li> <li>• expect teachers to understand each child; discuss this expectation with them</li> <li>• encourage teachers to connect with students outside of the classroom (e.g., coaching, etc.)</li> </ul>

Use caring classroom management	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about inclusion</li> <li>• seem well-organized</li> <li>• have proactive management</li> <li>• have an improvement focused perspective in the examples of management they give</li> <li>• create a safe and respectful learning environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide related PD</li> <li>• make this topic a school-wide improvement focus (e.g., create a school-wide behavior plan)</li> <li>• be present in classrooms</li> <li>• provide focused resources</li> <li>• model</li> </ul>
Recognizing the importance of having a sense of professional presence	95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appearance in interview</li> <li>• sense that the person is sensible and trustworthy</li> <li>• see classroom management as proactive and holistic, not as a set of steps</li> <li>• has a history of interest and involvement with young people</li> <li>• looking for ways to “connect” with students beyond the classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make expectations clear</li> <li>• provide feedback</li> <li>• model and mentor: give support</li> <li>• use positive, respectful language</li> </ul>
Is developing professional confidence	86%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• articulate</li> <li>• speaks with a sense of vision and purpose</li> <li>• sense of being willing to learn</li> <li>• sense of balance (that separates confidence from arrogance)</li> <li>• close examination of responses to difficult questions</li> <li>• understands the heavy workload commitment of a new job</li> <li>• clear, concise, passionate answers</li> <li>• good eye contact</li> <li>• openness to learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage/give feedback</li> <li>• support/mentor</li> <li>• make them see the connection between competence and confidence</li> </ul>



<p>Has management and communication skills</p>	<p>95%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• problem-solver; has knowledge of assessment and evaluation practices and reporting</li> <li>• recognizes importance of regular communication with the home</li> <li>• good communicator in the interview (i.e.: answer questions clearly and with appropriate eye contact)</li> <li>• discuss how they effectively communicate with others using a variety of communication tools</li> <li>• develop and maintain partnership between school, home, community, principal, colleagues</li> <li>• recognize that teaching a child is a community construct</li> <li>• recognize integral role of parents in education of a child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• role modeling</li> <li>• effective communication through a variety of media</li> <li>• practice before parent interview</li> <li>• problem-solve together</li> <li>• PD re: Report Cards</li> <li>• discussion and/or conversation re: practice</li> <li>• mentoring and connection to colleagues</li> </ul>
<p>Ability to make instructional efforts learner-focused</p>	<p>100%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meta-language is student-focused not subject-focused</li> <li>• inclusivity of all learners; focused on individual learner needs</li> <li>• focus on each child's success, engagement in learning</li> <li>• differentiated instruction</li> <li>• speak about relationship between teacher and student as core in student success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional development activities</li> <li>• mentoring &amp; curriculum consultant support</li> <li>• role modeling (guidance and appropriate resources (human, material) to succeed)</li> <li>• connection to colleagues with demonstrated success in this area</li> </ul>
<p>Act professionally and personally in accordance with the principles of social justice and equity</p>	<p>95%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meta-language reflects awareness of and experience with social justice and equity</li> <li>• examples and or personal references that demonstrate commitment to social justice and equity</li> <li>• cite lesson plans that focus on inclusivity (the neediest of the needy) and education for all</li> <li>• modeling values that reflect commitment and involvement in community</li> <li>• articulation of social issues, equity and inclusive education policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modeling; leading by example</li> <li>• promote school-wide activities based on social justice or equity</li> <li>• promote awareness of various community agencies; encourage volunteerism</li> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• PD Activities</li> <li>• conversation with experienced colleagues</li> </ul>

In Table 1, administrators' responses are reported for both their identification of evidence of person-organization fit indicators as discerned from interviews of teacher candidates. Additionally, the table displays a selection of comments as samples of common themes that administrators reported as being indicative of their projected supports for new teachers.

Person-organization fit indicators showed strongest agreement among administrators receiving a rating between 81–100% in important or very important responses. The ability to provide concrete examples of how to teach effectively is highly regarded by administrators as a valid indicator of the potential of a new teacher. Administrators view the new teacher's openness to growth and improvement as the starting point for person-organization fit. They are optimistic that with enough support new teachers will adjust their professional practice to be more productive as measured by students' learning. They expect new teachers to be self-reliant, to need the support of their school administrator(s), and to rely very heavily upon experienced and effective teachers as colleagues and peers to assist in their professional growth and in their ability to increase student learning.

The data in this category suggests that administrators are prepared to try different strategies to support new teacher growth. However, their selection of strategies is often limited to mentoring, modeling, and professional development. While the recommended strategies are consistent with supports for new teachers as listed in the Ontario Ministry of Education *New Teacher Induction Program* (NTIP), they do not include two supports suggested by Joyce and Showers (2002); namely, theory (educational research that can be applied to practice) and feedback (information given to

the teacher on the effectiveness of the implementation of new strategies). The Joyce and Showers (2002) model for professional growth support provides five inter-rated and cyclical steps: theory, demonstration/modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching. Evidence that administrators embraced the five steps toward full coaching in their school-based or system-based venues for professional development was not found in our data. Rather, the terms modeling and coaching seemed to be isolated as supportive actions and may have been used as synonymous terms conceptually.

### *Person-Job Fit*

To examine the administrators' perceptions of person-job fit, 5 triads of responses were examined. These included administrators' perceptions of the teacher candidates' pedagogical content knowledge, the richness of their instructional strategy repertoire, their ability to speak about different uses of assessment *for, as, and of* learning, their ability to plan, implement and assess learning, and their ability to support their students' awareness of global issues and contexts.

Table 2  
Person-Job Fit

Person-Job Fit			
Person-Job fit means finding the individuals with the skills and abilities necessary to do the job.			
Set of Person-Job Fit Prompts	Response Percentages in the <i>Important to Very Important</i> Range	Evidence that Administrators Would Look for in an Interview	Ways that an Administrator Would Support Development of this Attribute in a New Teacher
Having pedagogical content knowledge	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about differentiation</li> <li>• talk about effective methodology and high yield practices</li> <li>• has current knowledge of policies related to practice</li> <li>• speaks about student-focused instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentor</li> <li>• make it safe to seek help; be part of a community of learnership</li> <li>• be clear about expectations</li> <li>• be a facilitator (through NTIP, mentoring pairs, PLCs, etc.)</li> </ul>
Having a rich instructional repertoire of strategies	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about differentiation</li> <li>• give details about how they teach; move from theoretical to concrete</li> <li>• talk about extending “found” materials to personalize and enrich them for their students/classroom</li> <li>• talk about creativity of approaches to learning</li> <li>• talk about student engagement</li> <li>• show general comfort with the concepts/ meta-language of teaching</li> <li>• talk about learning styles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• modeling</li> <li>• recognize the tension between needing time to experiment with strategies and needing to be ready to go when they're hired</li> <li>• give opportunities and resources for learning</li> </ul>

<p>Uses assessment <i>for, as, and of learning</i></p>	<p>95%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding/managing the differences in assessment terms</li> <li>• can give concrete examples</li> <li>• differentiation</li> <li>• provides examples of alternative assessment strategies; talks about differentiated assessment (DA)</li> <li>• understands the differences between forms of assessment and uses of assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engage teachers in moderated marking practice</li> <li>• keep conversations about assessment in the forefront of P.D. at the school level</li> <li>• bridge awareness levels to help people actualize use</li> </ul>
<p>Ability to plan, implement, and assess learning</p>	<p>100%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teaching with purpose</li> <li>• sophisticated and connected</li> <li>• knowledge of curriculum concepts</li> <li>• clear portfolio</li> <li>• give examples, especially related to assessment</li> <li>• understand the connection between good planning and effective classroom management</li> <li>• focus of all answers is on student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentor</li> <li>• feedback</li> <li>• coaching</li> <li>• make this a school-wide focus; school improvement planning</li> <li>• provide resources</li> </ul>
<p>Developing instruction that will support students' awareness of global issues and contexts</p>	<p>72%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of global trends (educational, political, financial, religious) and the potential impact on local communities</li> <li>• a global approach to lesson planning</li> <li>• involvement in the school, community building awareness of global issues and contexts</li> <li>• an articulated statement of awareness and involvement in community as part of the global village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussion</li> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• conversations/ dialogues with veteran teachers</li> <li>• modeling importance of global awareness and social justice initiatives</li> <li>• PD activities</li> <li>• none – this is a personal choice not an expectation of employment</li> </ul>

Table 2 reports on administrators' perceptions of person-job fit indicators, as gleaned through the interview process. As well, themes extracted from administrators' reports of the variety of supports they offer to new teachers are identified.

In the person-job fit category, administrators overwhelmingly expect new teachers to have a proficient command and competency in the use and application of conceptual terminology associated with understanding curriculum; student engagement; differentiated instruction; assessment *for, as, and of* learning; and, the use of various resources, including technology in the classroom. Administrators expect new teachers to be empathetic, kind, and respectful of students and believe the best way to achieve this is through an administrator-led school-wide model (i.e., if I do this, so will my teachers).

Administrators hold in high regard the ability of new teachers to differentiate and individualize instruction in a respectful, learner-centered environment and view this characteristic as a strong indicator of the teacher's potential to influence students' learning. They also think it is important for them to provide resources to support teachers' success.

### *Person-Group Fit*

To examine the administrators' perceptions of person-group fit, 4 triads of responses were examined. These included administrators' perceptions of the teacher candidates' professional growth orientation, their willingness to extend their own professional learning along with professional peers, their ability to articulate professional practice, and their alignment with values espoused in current curriculum guidelines.

Table 3  
Person-Group Fit

Person-Group Fit			
Person-Group fit is viewed as a sub-set of person-organization fit but means, in a school context, finding the teacher whose values match the values held by the group with whom they will work most closely.			
Set of Person-Group Fit Prompts	Response Percentages in the <i>Important to Very Important</i> Range	Evidence that Administrators Would Look for in an Interview	Ways that an Administrator Would Support Development of this Attribute in a New Teacher
Has a professional growth orientation	82%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking courses or planning to</li> <li>• engage in PD</li> <li>• reading professional literature; current</li> <li>• speaks about using current resources</li> <li>• speaks about how data informs practice</li> <li>• is self-aware; speaks about strengths and areas for growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• teamwork</li> <li>• make teachers aware of PD opportunities</li> <li>• new teacher orientation programs and annual learning plan feedback</li> <li>• facilitate growth the teacher identifies as a need</li> </ul>
Engagement with peers to extend professional learning	85%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about past engagement in PD</li> <li>• talk about future plans for PD</li> <li>• knowledgeable</li> <li>• evidence that they are applying knowledge learned through PD</li> <li>• experience attending PD as a practice teacher</li> <li>• asking about mentoring and PD opportunities</li> <li>• knows about PLCs</li> <li>• references to being part of a team of learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide information about PD opportunities</li> <li>• ask/show interest in teacher's PD plans</li> <li>• facilitate PLC time and meetings</li> <li>• create timetable to allow common time with a mentor</li> <li>• add PD component to staff meetings</li> </ul>

<p>Reflectively articulate their professional practice</p>	<p>69%  (26% neutral)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discern personal strengths, identify areas of growth</li> <li>• growth seen as a learning experience</li> <li>• discuss professional activities they have been engaged in</li> <li>• open to receiving suggestions and offer suggestions for their practice moving forward</li> <li>• portfolio – reference specific examples of changes in practice based on an event (unit plan)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• connection to colleagues</li> <li>• dialoguing/discussing</li> <li>• role modeling</li> </ul>
<p>Personal values reflect curricular goals</p>	<p>89%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• articulation of faith and its guidance personally and professionally</li> <li>• faith focus in all curriculum &amp; gospel values (i.e.: Catholic)</li> <li>• love of teaching, love of life</li> <li>• willingness to promote social justice and equity within school and broader community</li> <li>• passion as evidenced in past practice (i.e.: volunteering in community, church, global interests/pursuit)</li> <li>• awareness of local guidelines and sensitivity to matters of equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional development activities</li> <li>• provide awareness of equity and inclusion documents and related policies</li> <li>• encourage school team building and sharing in community social justice activities</li> <li>• informal questioning, dialoguing, conversation</li> <li>• role modeling school goals and values-lead by example</li> <li>• mentoring – connecting with colleagues</li> </ul>



Within the Table 3, person-group fit indicators are reported. Both evidence and support indicators in this fit category are projections made by administrators to anticipate group needs and the teacher applicant's ability to match and to enrich the existing group. This fit is anticipatory, relying on the administrators' hope and faith that they can assess a candidates' match to a group. This makes this fit a hopeful, but somewhat unpredictable enterprise. In this table, predicted supports to facilitate person-group fit have also been extracted from themes in administrative responses.

Person-job indicators and person-group indicators were closely aligned in range: respectively, 72–100% very important or important and 69–100% very important or important. In both sets of indicators, those administrators who attributed less support to specific indicators often reflected personal values such as commitment to global education or a belief that the indicator was not applicable to new teachers. In the person-group fit, administrators tended to rely more heavily on school-based improvement initiatives rather than on system-wide professional development or on individual teacher-initiated growth plans to support improvement in new teacher effectiveness in focusing on improving student learning. In this vein, and somewhat surprisingly, the least supported indicator of new teacher focus on student learning was the new teacher's ability to reflectively articulate professional practice (69% respondents viewed this as very important or important while 26% were neutral). Clearly, this raises an interesting question: How can new teachers improve their professional growth and development if they cannot reflectively articulate their own professional practice?

## **Discussion**

A considerable body of both qualitative and quantitative data from this study has given us initial support for a number of conclusions. First, active administrators in the two school systems, which participated in the study, showed overwhelming endorsement for the key characteristics and professional attributes identified in the *pst* model (Appendix). The quantitative data provided a number of notable themes. When asked to identify evidence that can be found in interview responses to indicate a teacher-candidates' strengths in any category of fit, administrators rely heavily on the candidates' use of conceptual language to give evidence of their professional knowledge and skills. Among the most highly regarded conceptual indicators are those that relate to differentiated instruction, inclusion, classroom management, positive classroom environments, communication skills, problem solving skills, and commitment to professional growth.

Secondly, it was evident in the thematic analysis of administrators' comments about supporting new teachers, that mentoring, modeling, and coaching seem to be interchangeable terms when used by administrators to describe the same strategy. Administrators might benefit from training in the literature and research on professional coaching models. Correlatively, they might wish to explore the training that NTIP (New Teacher Induction Program, Ontario Ministry of Education) partner teachers (or comparable support programs from other jurisdictions) receive. It would seem imperative that those who hire and support new teachers must have a strident understanding of the proven effective elements of change at a professional level. This will help administrators to decide whether they want their most competent and capable teachers to be modeling

for new teachers or engaging them in a cyclical and intense interaction that results in coaching. The implications of the later choice must be addressed through new types of in-service for both the coaching teachers and the administrative facilitators and would need to be supported by legislation and resource provision to allow a fully functioning coaching arrangement in each school. If new teachers were engaged in a sequence of theory-demonstration/modeling-practice-feedback-coaching (Joyce & Showers, 2002), we would expect to see concomitant improvements in professional practice in their careers.

Thirdly, it was evident from our study that administrators see themselves as facilitators of change in their schools. In order to facilitate teacher growth, administrators provide a range of resources for new teachers. They see each of these resources as supports for new teacher growth. Such resources may include concrete materials, time, chats to encourage or redirect, and people who can assist the teacher's growth. It is unclear from this data if administrators are equally familiar with some management techniques to determine which of these resources would be most appropriate. For example, a common way of determining which resources are needed is through management by walking about (Hindle, 2008) commonly known as MBWA or, as Peters & Austin (1985) affectionately referred to it, "technology of the obvious." As its name implies, this is a style of management whereby administrators consistently reserve time to walk about their school, visiting classrooms while in session, engaging in impromptu dialogues with students or teachers and thereby determining needs, wants, wishes, or potential problems before they arise. Such management has the advantage of immediacy

in terms of awareness and the effective application or redeployment of resources. Future research needs to examine the nature of these supports in more detail.

Finally, the administrators in this study see themselves as facilitators of professional learning communities. They see that part of their role in supporting new teachers includes arranging mentoring, modeling or arranging for modeling, arranging learning through moderated marking, providing both opportunities and resources, directing professional development opportunities, providing feedback, and making initiatives a school-wide focus through school improvement planning. However, administrators see that such facilitation is not without challenges. The struggle to find enough time for effective professional development for staff, particularly support for new teachers, is evident in the strategies that administrators identified. This may partially explain the heavy reliance on the belief that conversations or dialogues with new teachers will yield changes in practice that will improve student learning. Clearly, administrators believe that the hiring of new teachers is a hopeful enterprise and that their face-to-face interactions with new teachers will see net gains in new teacher professional practice, increased focus on students' learning, and greater student success.

These four key conclusions may provide organizational support for administrators who have the task of hiring new teachers. Good practice involves intentionally attending to the needs of each learner. Ensuring that newly hired teachers “fit,” in the sense that they display key characteristics that may support students' learning, will help administrators avoid hiring teachers who may create teacher-student environments in which student potential for learning is not maximized.

This study provides significant data about hiring practices and early career supports for new teachers. However, a broader sample size, both quantitatively and geographically may provide additional information in support of these conclusions or may provide new direction for investigation. The participants in this set provided strong indicators of themes that support the *pst* concept but further support would be valuable from a broader set of participants both in terms of geography and the participants' experience in the administrative hiring role. While additional data from both the elementary and secondary panels is desirable, it is essential to acquire further participation from secondary school administrators to delve into the possible differences in hiring confidence across administrator groups that were revealed in this study. Finally, a future study needs to explore the administrators' use of conceptual terminology regarding the use of modeling, mentoring, and coaching as supports for new teachers. This will help us to determine the differences, if any, that administrators see among these three types of support for teachers post-entry.

### **Conclusions**

New teacher hiring is a complex, high-stakes, and far-reaching commitment. Whether teachers are being hired for the district or for a specific school position, hiring teams need to be clear and consistent in the criteria they use for hiring to help them select the teachers most likely to focus on optimizing students' learning. However, hiring teams may lack the supports and training, as well as the time, to establish a commonly held understanding of the implicit and explicit criteria they may use to select from among the eligible teacher candidates.

Hiring teams may also lack confidence that the traditional teaching interview is providing enough information for them to make valid decisions about the significant differences among candidates. This study shows a sense of separation may exist from the results of the decisions being made about hiring when administrators are hiring for system positions and therefore have no information about the success of their decision to hire a teacher after they enter the system. Opportunities to track new hire progress during the early years of a new teacher's career may establish ways for system hiring teams to get a stronger sense of the efficacy of their decisions and provide support for future hiring decisions.

Finally, we believe that a conceptual model that identifies key characteristics that are believed to characterize teachers who have the dispositions to focus their professional efforts on improving students' learning would provide critical common understandings for hiring teams. This study has shown that all participants agree that the characteristics identified in *Professional Shift Theory (pst)* are highly valued as desirable teacher characteristics. We think that hiring teams should be trained in the conceptions of this theory, be aware of the research behind it, be familiar with the conceptual diagram that supports the theory (Appendix), and use the theory to design teaching interview questions.

It may also be of value for jurisdictions that are hiring new teachers to consider more efficacious ways to optimize the results of hiring practices. Predictive hiring holds some promise for new strategies that will help schools staff themselves with the strongest teachers. While the many screening layers that characterize predictive hiring are time

consuming and labour intensive, this would certainly be offset by the long-term need to coach, supervise, and retrain weaker teachers after they have been hired.

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**Appendix:**

**Professional Shift Theory (*pst*) Model**

