



A Guide to Effectively Implementing a Priority Hiring Pool

Prepared in partnership with:



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Overview

This guide provides school district administrators and school district Human Resource departments with strategies, practices and a tool for tracking displaced teachers to assist in the successful implementation and management of a priority hiring pool. The strategies and practices outlined here will help districts provide displaced teachers with the intended benefits under S.B. 10-191, while avoiding the creation of unintended hiring barriers for schools, such as complicated and rigid requirements for interviewing displaced teachers. This guide provides Human Resource departments with steps and answers to frequently asked questions to assist in the successful implementation and management of a priority hiring pool.

Under full mutual consent hiring, displaced teachers become active job seekers; principals learn to make rigorous hiring decisions; and Human Resource staff support both groups in making good matches. Because the displaced teachers in the priority hiring pool represent a group of qualified and effective teachers who will be available to serve the needs of the students within the district for at least one more school year, effective implementation and management of a priority hiring pool is critical.

Related resources available through CLF's website:

- ✓ [*Interview Tools and Resources: A Handbook on Consistently Implementing a Hiring Process to Attract and Select Outstanding Teachers*](#)
- ✓ [*Cultivating High-quality Candidates: A Handbook on Effective Communication Practices*](#)
- ✓ [*Implementing S.B. 10-191 Provisions on Effective Hiring Practices: Building Strong Instructional Teams Through Mutual Consent Staffing*](#)
- ✓ [*Implementing S.B. 10-191 Provisions on Effective Hiring Practices: Creating and Communicating a Shared Vision of Effective Teaching*](#)

Background

The Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF) is providing support to Colorado school districts in implementing Colorado Senate Bill 10-191 which made sweeping changes to how school districts evaluate educators for effectiveness and use data on educator effectiveness to make key human capital management decisions. CLF has engaged The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to provide resources supporting the implementation of S.B. 10-191 provisions pertaining to teacher hiring and placement, including this guide. This work was made possible by the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Implementing and Managing a Priority Hiring Pool

Until recently, most districts in Colorado had policies or collective bargaining agreements that forced district and school administrators to consider seniority before all other factors when



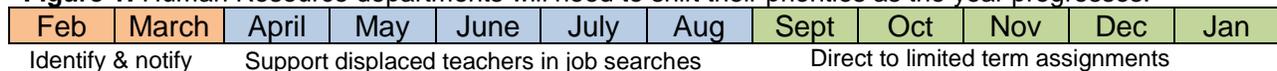
deciding which positions to reduce in times of program changes, decreased enrollment or budget cuts. The result was that the contracts of probationary teachers were not renewed, leaving them to find employment elsewhere. These decisions were based solely on date of hire and do not consider success in the classroom. S.B. 10-191 requires districts to end the use of “last in, first out” (LIFO) policies by considering effectiveness prior to seniority or other factors when implementing a Reduction In Force (RIF). In addition, it allows for the displacement of non-probationary teachers when deciding a RIF is not necessary or appropriate. The displacement of non-probationary teachers is new to Colorado school districts. Reasons for displacement, as defined in S.B. 10-191, include:

- Drop in enrollment;
- Turnaround;
- Phase-out;
- Reduction in program; or
- Reduction in building, including closure, consolidation, or reconstitution.

This means that all districts are likely to experience the displacement of non-probationary teachers in the future. Displacing any teacher is a difficult decision, yet the goal of all educators should be to ensure that every student has an excellent teacher. Since the new law enables districts to consider effectiveness based on the quality standards when declaring a RIF, it is essential that teacher evaluations accurately reflect student learning. Equally, it is critical that school districts are transparent in identifying, diligent in supporting and fair in directing any teachers who becomes displaced. These actions will help districts move beyond compliance and toward a focused effort to put a high-quality teacher in every classroom.

Each of the steps that follow outline specific actions that Human Resource departments can take to successfully manage displaced teachers. The timeline in figure 1 provides an example of when Human Resource departments can expect to be performing each of the three steps.

Figure 1: Human Resource departments will need to shift their priorities as the year progresses.



Human Resource staff members will need to be flexible as overlap is likely, especially during the last two phases, as displaced teachers continue to search for positions through school-based hiring.

Step 1: Identifying and Notifying Displaced Teachers

School district staff will need to work collaboratively to develop a system for identifying and notifying displaced teachers. Experience working with districts suggests that the following three actions are critical to success:

1. Clearly define and communicate the criteria and possible causes for displacement;
2. Apply criteria to identify which teachers will be displaced; and
3. Notify teachers of displacement in a respectful and supportive manner.



S.B. 10-191 lists specific causes for a teacher’s displacement from a school that would qualify him/her for entry into the priority hiring pool:¹

- Drop in enrollment
- Turnaround
- Phase-out
- Reduction in program
- Reduction in building, including closure, consolidation, or reconstitution

The criteria to be used for identifying displaced teachers will need to be decided by the district and its teachers, while using effectiveness is not required it is a good practice to consider effectiveness prior to any other criteria. Both causes and criteria for displacement must be clearly recorded in the district’s collective bargaining agreement, if applicable. In the event of displacements, Human Resource staff and principals should work collaboratively to make the displacement criteria clear to all stakeholders, including district employees, parents and community members. Effective communication of the criteria will help eliminate confusion and alleviate concerns.

Human Resource staff and principals should work collaboratively to make the displacement criteria available to all stakeholders.

Prior to displacing teachers, Human Resource departments should provide principals with information regarding the number of full time employees (FTE) who will work in their schools during the coming school year. Ideally, Human Resource staff will share this information as early as possible in the spring semester so that schools can begin planning for the next school year. As Human Resources staff and principals begin planning, it may become apparent that some schools will have to displace teachers on non-probationary contracts who have an effective or satisfactory rating on their evaluations. At this point, a plan for communicating with the teachers who will be displaced should be created with specific assignments and expectations discussed with principals or other supervisors. The communication plan should detail how and when the teacher will be notified of his or her displacement and what information he or she will receive upon notification. Information to the teacher should include:

- Access to a list of current vacancies in his or her licensure area and within critical shortage areas;²
- Details regarding the process for applying for vacancies;
- An explanation of the rights and responsibilities received as part of the priority hiring pool;
- A clear statement about how long can he or she remain in the priority hiring pool before being put on unpaid leave;
- A description of possible temporary assignments if a new position is not secured; and
- Contact information for the Human Resource staff member who will be providing support.

¹ None of these causes assumes that the district is declaring a fiscal exigency, as this would involve the cancelling of teaching contracts.

² S.B. 10-191 requires that the teacher be given this list upon their notification of displacement.



Depending on the number of teachers who are displaced, there could be a significant amount of work for Human Resource departments to accomplish. To effectively manage this work, Human Resource directors will need to consider staff workload, task assignment and a plan for evaluating success. It may be most efficient to identify one staff member who will be responsible for coordinating all of the Human Resource functions associated with displaced teachers in the priority hiring pool. Possible functions include:

- Working with principals to identify displaced teachers who will be eligible for the priority hiring pool;
- Tracking displaced teachers in the pool;
- Communicating with displaced teachers in the pool; and
- Communicating with principals to ensure that teachers in the hiring pool are receiving opportunities to interview.

Information about displaced teachers should be tracked using Excel, Access or a similar database tool. TNTP created an Excel tool for tracking displaced teachers. Districts are encouraged to use the tool.



Displaced Teacher Tracker.xlsx

Step 2: Supporting Displaced Teachers

Once teachers have been notified of their displacement and those who are eligible for the priority hiring pool have been identified, Human Resource staff members will need to focus on providing support to those in the pool.

Supporting teachers in the priority hiring pool will involve:

1. Offering job search assistance
2. Providing ongoing access to vacancy information
3. Tracking teachers' progress in finding a new position and Human Resource staff success in supporting them

Because displaced teachers represent a group of qualified and effective teachers who will be available to serve the needs of the students within the district for at least one more school year, effective implementation and management of a priority hiring pool is critical.

Upon notification of displacement, Human Resource staff should encourage teachers to complete the district's application for employment. If possible, have staff available to support displaced teachers with the process of submitting an online application and to explain the process for applying to specific openings. While teachers are expected to take a proactive approach in securing a new position, Human Resource staff can support this process by communicating regularly with displaced teachers. Topics for communication include:

- Job fairs and other networking opportunities.
- Requests for information confirming past interview dates.



- Tips for improving applications, interviewing skills and sample lessons.
- Professional development opportunities offered by the district that could assist the teacher in securing a position.
- Information on applying for licensure in additional areas.

Cultivating a relationship with teachers in the priority hiring pool will allow Human Resource staff to provide meaningful support during the job search including:

- Encourage displaced teachers to be reflective about their job search.
- Suggest that teachers request feedback from principals following interviews.
- Help teachers work to correct any issues that principals may identify.
- Verify that the information in their application is correct and that it highlights skills valued by principals in the district.

Since most districts can post vacancy information on their websites, it may be easy to regularly provide vacancy information to teachers in the pool. If the district does not have a system in place for easily tracking vacancies, then the Displaced Teacher Tracker ([link](#)) can be used. Depending on Human Resource staff capacity, it would be helpful to send the teachers in the pool an email link to the vacancies each week along with highlighted position for which they are qualified.³ In working with displaced teachers in New York City, TNTP found that

personally communicating vacancy information to teachers increased the likelihood that they would apply for positions.

Since the timely reporting of vacancies is an essential component in the implementation of a priority hiring pool, Human Resource staff and principals must work collaboratively.

Since the timely reporting of vacancies is an essential component in the implementation of a priority hiring pool, Human Resource staff and principals must work collaboratively. It will be extremely important to educate principals regarding the changes created by S.B. 10-191. Principals may currently withhold vacancy information to avoid the forced placement of a displaced teacher on their campus. Implementing effective staffing practices related to

S.B. 10-191 means an end to force placements leaving no reason for principals to hide vacancies from Human Resource staff.

During the support phase, Human Resource staff will need to continue tracking the progress of displaced teachers in their quests to find new positions. This is important because S.B. 10-191 gives teachers in the hiring pool the right to interview for positions for which they are qualified. Most districts will find that they can use their online application system, such as AppliTrack or Winocular, to track specific information about displaced teachers. A flag, such as a box that displaced teachers check when completing their application would make it easy to track the teachers once they submit their application. Within the same system, a report could be created that includes the teacher's name, licensure area(s), years of experience, and Insight or other

³ Be sure to request the preferred e-mail addresses from the teachers in the hiring pool as many teachers do not use their school district e-mail address during the summer months.



screening score. This report could be sent to all principals weekly with instructions to interview qualified individuals from the list as appropriate.

Human Resource directors will want to set clear performance goals for the staff members who support displaced teachers in the priority hiring pool. As effective employees who will remain on the school district's budget for at least one year, it is important to ensure that displaced teachers receive timely communication and support from the Human Resource department. Directors should consider setting goals around the number of support messages displaced teachers receive and the level satisfaction with the process as reported by the displaced teacher. Setting clear expectations in the beginning of the process will result in a greater likelihood of success for the Human Resource staff member and the displaced teacher.

Step 3: Directing Displaced Teachers

Once the school year begins, it will be necessary for Human Resource departments to begin directing displaced teachers who remain in the priority hiring pool. This phase will include:

1. Outlining the general parameters for limited-term assignments;
2. Working with principals to identify specific limited-term assignments on their campuses; and
3. Establishing policies for placing teachers on unpaid leave, if necessary.

S.B. 10-191 gives school districts the flexibility to place a non-probationary teacher who has not secured a position in a twelve-month or other limited-term assignment, including a teaching assignment, substitute assignment or instructional support role while the teacher is attempting to secure a mutual consent placement. Human Resource departments should outline the parameters for these limited-term placements.

- Identify conditions, including timing, under which temporary assignments will be made, and identify the person(s) responsible for making those assignments and the factors to be considered in doing so.
- To the extent possible, delay the use of temporary assignments as long as feasible to ensure that schools have maximum opportunity to select a teacher to fill a vacancy through mutual consent.
- To the extent possible, structure temporary assignments so that the teachers filling them have a good likelihood of being effective and satisfied in their new positions. Do not utilize these assignments to be punitive to teachers or to induce them to resign.
- Track the use of temporary assignments and set district-wide goals to reduce the use of such assignments.
- Teachers in temporary assignments should continue to have opportunities to secure a position through mutual consent throughout the school year. Accommodations should be made to ensure that they are available to interview when vacancies arise.

HR staff should assist principals in setting clear expectations about the nature of limited-term assignments.



Human Resource staff should work with principals to identify temporary assignments on their campuses and to determine the budget stream from which the teacher will be paid. If principals are reluctant to accept teachers on limited term assignments, districts may want to consider funding limited-term assignment positions in a way that does not impact school budgets. This may cause principals to begin requesting limited term assignment positions. Human Resource staff should assist principals in setting clear expectations about the length of the assignment, reporting requirements, and evaluation criteria. Setting clear expectations for performance are essential as they give the teacher who receives the assignment the ability to understand the process for evaluating his or her success. Since the assignment may be different from any previous experience, the teacher and the principal would likely benefit from a written job description. Keeping principals and displaced teachers informed during this process will keep questions and concerns to a minimum.

Finally, school districts must establish clear policy for putting non-probationary teachers who do not secure new positions within 12 months or two hiring cycles on unpaid leave. Human Resource directors must consider elements such as:

- When and how non-probationary teachers will be notified that they are being placed on unpaid leave.
- Procedures for teachers to question their leave if they believe it was in error.
- Procedures for teachers to return to paid status with the district upon future attainment of a permanent position through mutual consent.

Since the law allows displaced teachers to return to the same level of salary and benefits as if they had never been displaced, it will be necessary to maintain accurate employment records. Human Resource directors should review their current district policies regarding these records to ensure that they satisfy this requirement.

Frequently Asked Questions

In September 2011, TNTP convened a working group to begin discussing policies and practices relating to the hiring provisions of S.B. 10-191. The group consisted of Human Resource directors, district administrators, teachers and union representatives from five school districts in Colorado. To facilitate the process, a former federal mediator joined the group. The questions and answers found in this section are products of that working group. For more information, please see [The Practitioners Guide to Implementing Staffing Practices \(link\)](#). The information here is presented for your consideration. As in the implementation of any law, you should consult with your own legal counsel prior to enactment.

What constitutes a displaced teacher?

A non-probationary teacher who has earned a satisfactory or effective evaluation may be considered displaced if he or she loses his or her position as a result of drop in enrollment; turnaround; phase-out; reduction in program; or reduction in building, including closure, consolidation, or reconstitution.



What are the rights and responsibilities of teachers in the priority hiring pool?

Teachers in the priority hiring pool have the right to interview for a reasonable number of positions for which they are qualified. Since the number of vacancies in a district can vary drastically, it is up to individual districts to create policy regarding what is reasonable based on past vacancy data.

It is the displaced teacher's responsibility to apply for vacancies of interest to him or her and to establish his/her qualifications for the vacancy through the application process.

When are HR departments required to notify displaced teachers about vacancies?

Districts are only required to notify displaced teachers about vacancies upon their initial displacement. Specifically the law reads, "Upon notice to the nonprobationary teacher, the school district shall immediately provide the nonprobationary teacher with a list of all vacant positions for which he or she is qualified, as well as a list of vacancies in any area identified by the school district to be an area of critical need." **However, the law sets a minimum standard and it is best practice for Human Resource staff to communicate frequently with displaced teachers regarding available vacancies.**

How many interviews are displaced teachers required to receive?

There is no specific number of interviews set forth in S.B. 10-191. The law gives teachers in the priority hiring pool the right to interview for a reasonable number of positions for which they are qualified. Since the number of vacancies in a district can vary drastically, it is up to individual districts to create clear policies around what is reasonable based on past vacancy data.

How long can a displaced teacher remain in the priority hiring pool?

Paragraph IV of Section 11. 22-63-202 of S.B. 10-191 states, "If a nonprobationary teacher is unable to secure a mutual consent assignment at a school of the school district after twelve months or two hiring cycles, whichever period is longer, the school district shall place the teacher on unpaid leave until such time as the teacher is able to secure an assignment."

What is a hiring cycle?

S.B. 10-191 does not define a hiring cycle. In considering how to define their hiring cycles, school districts may want to consider the following questions.

- When during the year does our district hire external candidates? Are external candidates hired to fill vacancies that occur mid-year?
- When during the year does our district conduct excessing or displacement of teachers due to reduced enrollment, funding, or changes in program? Does teacher displacement occur only in the spring, or does teacher displacement occur in the fall too?
- When during the year does our district fill vacancies on a permanent basis? Are vacancies that may be filled during the school year considered permanent or temporary placements?



- When during the school year do schools conduct an active selection process for new hires?

TNTP believes that most districts will have a spring/summer hiring cycle for vacancies for the start of an academic year and a mid-year hiring cycle for vacancies that occur during the academic year resulting in two hiring cycles each year. For specific examples of hiring cycle timelines see [Implementing Colorado Senate Bill 10-191: School District Guidance on Mutual Consent Hiring for Teachers.](#)

What type of limited term assignment can displaced teachers be given?

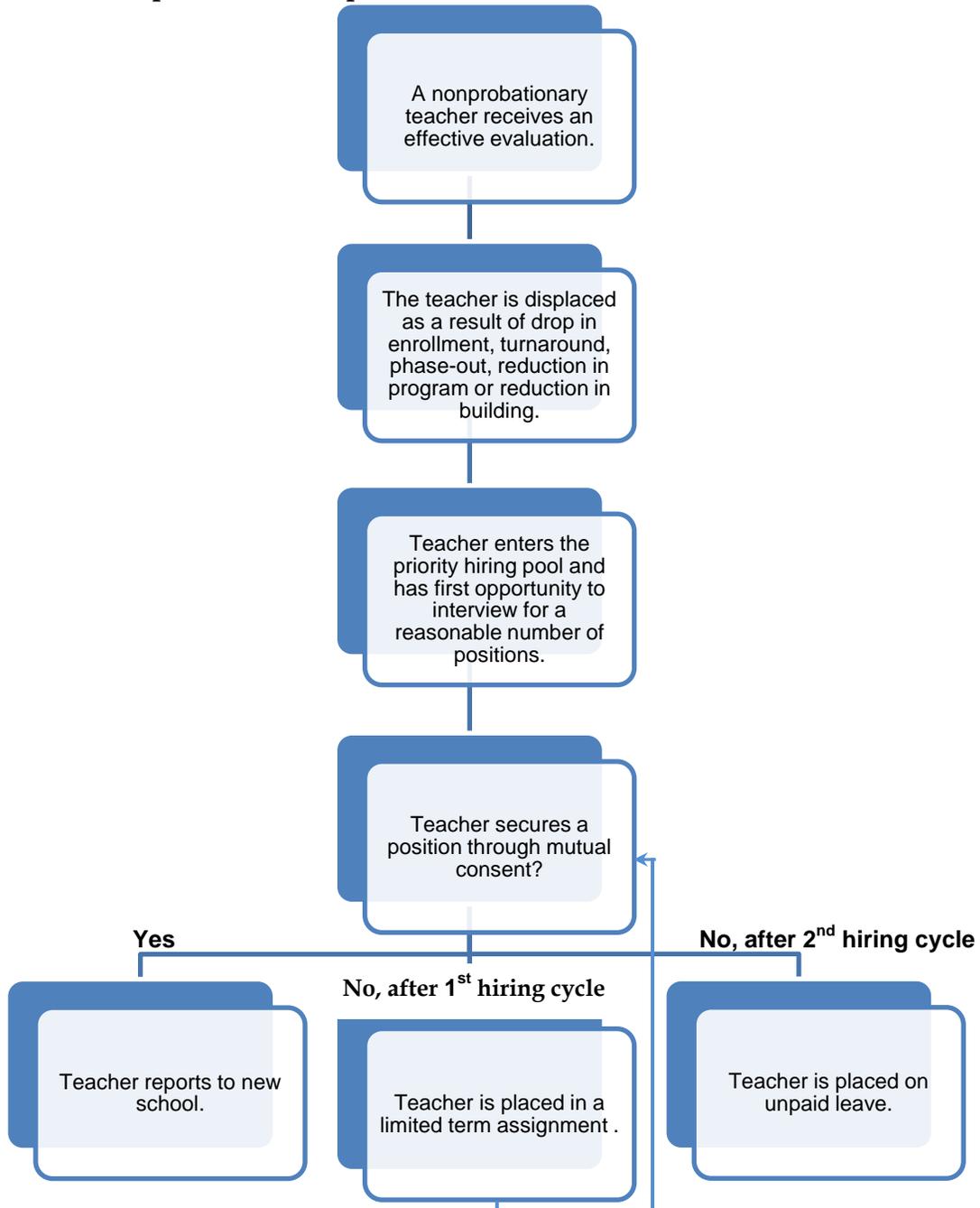
Limited term assignments may include, but are not limited to, a teaching assignment, a substitute assignment, or instructional support role. Human Resource staff should strive to place displaced teachers in roles that will best serve the students of the district.

How long can a displaced teacher remain on unpaid leave?

Displaced teachers can remain on unpaid leave indefinitely. Since teachers may only be under contract with one district at a time, securing a position with another school district would terminate the displaced teacher's employment with the first district and end their leave status.



What is the entire process for a displaced teacher? ⁴



⁴ Created with the assistance of Nancy Karas, superintendent of East Grand School District.