

Everybody wins when hiring practices are fair and transparent



“Thank goodness for the fair hiring policy! There is a common misconception among administration that if you have been an OT for a while, it must be because you are not a good teacher. In my case, I had already been a seasoned, full time teacher with my board for 10 years, prior to giving up my full time position. Upon my return to education and quest to regain full time status, I was an OT for seven years. I had many AQs, and was qualified to teach in all divisions. I had a Master’s degree and more than one specialist. Just last June, I submitted 23 applications for LTO positions, and did not even receive a response, let alone an interview. In the last seven years, I was never once given the opportunity to interview for either an LTO or a permanent position. With this new policy in place, I was finally granted an interview and was hired immediately. This policy is a blessing for everyone, even new teachers, as everyone now has an equal opportunity to move fairly up the seniority list.”

OEFTA member

Why a fair hiring policy is needed

It’s not uncommon to hear stories about nepotism and ‘who you know’ trumping ‘what you know’ in the hiring processes of school boards. Evidence is the recent *Toronto Star* article, “Peel Board Targets Discrimination in Hiring Practices.” A report commissioned by the board after the fair hiring regulation was established found principals have the ability to hire “just about anybody they choose.” The report also found that, “principals often conduct interviews solo without having to show how they arrived at their shortlist of three candidates from 500 applicants, or to document what questions they asked in the interview, or to explain why they made their final choice.” Tana Turner of Turner Consulting and author of the report noted, “If I’m hiring and I don’t need to keep any paperwork or be accountable, that allows me to hire my friends and favourites and do what I want.” Turner also noted that this issue is not unique to the Peel District School Board. With the release of the report, the Peel DSB has indicated it will ‘overhaul’ its hiring practices, from how job are posted to how many people are involved in an interview.

Top 5 benefits of a fair hiring policy

It's not who you know...

The 99 per cent of teachers who don't have connections or relatives in a school board now have an equal chance at employment opportunities, based on their qualifications and experience. In fact, the policy requires school boards to post all long-term assignments and permanent positions on their websites so everyone is aware of the available opportunities. The new policy ensures hiring is based on qualifications and experience, not who you know!

Everyone knows and plays by the same rules

Ever try playing a game where everyone plays by their own set of rules? Of course that doesn't work! The new policy ensures that the same procedures are employed by all boards and will remain consistent for everyone. Teachers will know where they stand on teacher rosters and the same evaluation criteria will be applied.

Feedback now required

Candidates who have been unsuccessful in a job interview value constructive feedback that will help them improve in their next interview. The new policy specifically includes a process where unsuccessful candidates can receive feedback on their performance following the interview, their professional qualifications, and other ways to improve their chances of being hired in the future.

More accountability for hiring

School boards hire teachers and they need to be accountable for those hiring decisions. Under the new policy, school boards are required to evaluate the performance of long-term occasional teachers (LTOs) and provide growth-oriented feedback. They are also required to provide feedback on interviews to unsuccessful candidates. To increase transparency, school boards are now expected to post all available jobs – so all teachers are aware of the opportunities available and all eligible teachers have the ability to apply.

Recognition for experience gained

Given the over supply of teachers in Ontario, most new teachers will spend years in OT assignments before being hired permanently. OT assignments provide teachers with valuable classroom experience, which should be a factor when hiring for permanent positions – and now it is.

Key facts on hiring from the Ontario College of Teachers

- Between 2008-2011 an average of 4,000 teachers retired and 12,000 new teachers graduated in Ontario.
- Over the next 10 years, demand for teaching positions is expected to exceed availability by over 7,000 spaces.
- 71 per cent of faculty of education graduates in 2011 were underemployed, with 37 per cent of them unemployed – without even daily occasional assignments.

Ontario College of Teachers, *Transition to Teaching Survey 2012*

New policy benefits all teachers

The new policy creates a clear hiring process and brings transparency to hiring practices by boards – this is advantageous to everyone. Without such processes, there is no clarity around what jobs are available, who is eligible to apply, what criteria are used to fill positions, and why a candidate was successful or unsuccessful.

New teachers in particular will benefit from starting their careers on an equal footing with other new teachers. The reality in Ontario today is that most new teachers already spend the first few years of their teaching careers as OTs. New teachers will no longer be disadvantaged by not having the right connections within school boards to help them get hired permanently. All teachers will be subject to the same evaluation criteria regarding qualifications and experience and they will know what positions they are eligible to apply for and when there are openings.

“My board has a history of nepotism when it comes to hiring. I was passed over twice for positions I was well qualified for – only to find out that the jobs went to less qualified teachers who had family connections in the board. With the implementation of the fair hiring policy I was able to secure a permanent job – no more getting passed over!” OECTA member