INSIDE:

2016-17 Executive Board Nominees

Presidents Corner

78th Annual Conference

- Registration
- Why Celebrate Success
- Schedule-at-a-Glance
- Keynote Spotlight
- Welcome Reception
- Pre-Conference Sessions

October 11-14, 2016
Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress
Orlando, Florida
The Status of HR Certification as a Driver of Equity in Pre-K–12 Education

By Emily Douglas-McNab and Naima Khandaker, Battelle for Kids, Columbus, OH; Kelly Coash-Johnson, AASPA, Overland Park, KS

INTRODUCTION

Despite the immense benefits effective educators have on students’ academic performance and life outcomes (e.g., Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011; Sanders & Rivers, 1996), numerous studies show that children from low-income backgrounds are less likely than their more affluent peers to attend high-performing schools or be taught by experienced and highly effective teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2013; TNTP, 2012). A recent report by Education First (2015) suggests that this inequity results from six root causes: (1) ineffective leadership, (2) poor working conditions, (3) few career advancement opportunities for teachers, (4) inadequate compensation, (5) human capital management systems (HCMSs) that fail to retain schools’ most effective teachers at higher rates than their least effective teachers and (6) the tendency of productive teachers to move out of schools with less-productive colleagues. Central to these causes and their respective solutions are schools’ and districts’ ability, or lack thereof, to employ strategic human resources practices to assess, anticipate and quickly address educators’ needs.

One remedy for this identified gap is to offer human capital leaders (e.g., principal, assistant principal, building leader) (e.g., district leaders, school principals, central-office-based HR professionals) opportunities to develop expertise around the implementation of effective HR practices in education. However, no such opportunities exist at the level of depth and specificity these leaders need to attract, retain and ensure equitable access to excellent educators. Current professional development offerings include general HR certifications that are not tailored to education settings, and high-level workshops or conferences that focus on HR in education but do not necessarily take into account participants’ prior knowledge or professional goals.

This exploratory paper examines the process of developing the new certification program specifically for human capital leaders in education (HCLes). Survey data from HCLes 28 states offered insight into their perceptions, preferences and perceived challenges around certification and professional development in their field. Key findings are discussed, and recommendations for meeting HCLE’s unique needs were identified.

METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

Battelle for Kids (BFK) developed a survey to collect feedback from HCLes regarding their current certifications, professional development opportunities and thoughts around the types of certification or credentialing they would most prefer. The 21-item survey was developed in partnership with the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) and the Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators (TASPA), who offered input and survey data from 2006, 2011 and 2014 to inform the development of the current survey. BFK released the survey to AASPA members in spring 2015, and received responses from 470 HCLes in 28 states. Respondents included primarily district-level executives; building leaders and directors; and specialist- or generalist-level staff members; including as HR professionals. Seventy-five percent work in districts serving 25,000 or fewer students, 21.7 percent represent districts of 25,000 to 100,000 students and 5.1 percent come from districts of 100,000-plus students.

FINDINGS

The survey revealed five key findings regarding the current state of, and future possibilities for, HR certification in education:

1. Few respondents currently hold HR-focused credentials or certifications. Of those surveyed, 81.7 percent reported that they do not have any HR-focused credentialing or certification. This finding is not surprising in light of the fact that the most-reported previous roles (i.e., roles held before entering an HR role) included teacher and building leader (e.g., principal, assistant principal, dean)—professions in which typically little training is provided around HR and human capital management. This suggests that many HCLes have had limited opportunities to develop necessary knowledge in these areas. Nearly 15 percent of respondents hold general HR certification from organizations like the Human Resource Certification Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management, or school business or school finance credentials.

2. Many respondents have not sought a professional development path because their desired options do not exist. Nearly 15 percent of respondents held general HR certifications, 81.9 percent of respondents replied yes. Specifically, they indicated that the type of certification most desirable to them would (in order of number of responses)*:
   - Validate their mastery of knowledge and skill (290)
   - Increase personal marketability and credibility (217)
   - Allowing them to increase their job performance (176)
   - Indicate their dedication to professional growth (168)
   - Demonstrate their commitment to the profession (154)
   - Increase professional confidence (150)
   - Increase pay (71)

3. There is support for education-focused HR certification.

When asked whether they would be interested in pursuing an education-focused HR certification, 81.9 percent of respondents replied yes. Specifically, they indicated that the decision to not seek credentialing opportunities was based on a lack of education-focused HR certification programs. An additional 25.8 percent cited cost as the main barrier to their professional development. Additional reasons for not pursuing certifications included a lack of time to prepare, concern that such certifications would not be valued, or the belief that credentialing would not be useful.

4. HCLes value affordability and program reputation.

Overall cost (70.8 percent), the reputation of the credentialing body (51.2 percent) were the most frequently selected factors. According to respondents, this would guide them in selecting a certification or credentialing program. Other factors include the quality and alignment of the standards and curriculum (43.4 percent), the validity of the test (43.4 percent), the ability of the test to assess for not pursuing certifications included a lack of time to prepare, concern that such certifications would not be valued, or the belief that credentialing would not be useful.

5. Blended and self-paced learning opportunities are preferred.

Blended learning (i.e., combination of online and in-person learning opportunities) and self-paced online courses were indicated as the most preferred certification-preparation methods, followed by webinars, instructor-led online courses, in-person training and book studies. The popularity of blended learning is somewhat surprising in light of AASPA survey data from 2006 and TASPA data from 2014 showing that 17 percent and 69 percent of respondents, respectively, preferred online learning, indicating possible increases in openness toward online learning.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, these survey findings suggest that HCLes need and desire formal professional development opportunities that will help them acquire the knowledge and skills to strategically manage key human capital decisions. Battelle for Kids, in collaboration with AASPA, is pleased to announce the development of professional standards and professional learning program pilots to guide the HCLE Certification for human capital leaders in Pre-K–12 education. Stay tuned for more information to be released soon. For more on the HCLE Program visit www.aaspa.org/human-capital-standards-education/.

Emily Douglas-McNab and Naima Khandaker are part of the Human Capital team at Battelle for Kids, a nonprofit organization that provides strategic council and services to states and school districts and across the country to improve educator effectiveness and accelerate student growth. Naima can be reached at nkhandaker@battleforkids.org and Emily can be reached at edouglas@battleforkids.org or on Twitter at @EmilyDouglasHC. Kelly Coash-Johnson is the Executive Director of AASPA. She can be reached at kelly@aaspa.org.