

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

May 7, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMISSIONER KEPPEL

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL ACTION TO MEET IMMEDIATE RECRUITING PROBLEMS

The Task Force agrees with your concern that one of the most critical management problems now confronting the Office of Education is the urgent need to mount an effective recruiting and job classification effort. We regard the present system as totally inadequate for present agency needs.

Attached is a draft of a proposal for attacking this problem, including the use of ad hoc machinery until the institutional recruiting effort develops a greater capability.

The actions recommended in the attached plan are designed to respond to several substantive problems which we believe are hampering the capacity of the Office to respond effectively to meet its needs. We believe the most crucial problems to be the following:

1. Negative Approach: The Personnel Management Branch, in the Office of Administration, has an image throughout much of the Office of being negative and control-minded. It has not been oriented to provide knowledgeable advice and assistance, but seems to have become preoccupied with telling operating people what they cannot do. This has been compounded by the fact that currently the Personnel Management Branch maintains a virtual veto on selection decisions by Bureau Directors at GS-11 and above, as well as a monopoly on authority to make job offers. This system ensures conflict between the personnel office and the operating groups and makes effective recruiting almost impossible.
2. Classification Delays: Operating people throughout the Office report inordinate delays in getting jobs classified. However, a large proportion of the vacancies have not been classified because the operating bureaus have not submitted them for classification action. The bureaus have been waiting until they have selected a person before asking that the jobs be set up. Fast action is needed to identify and classify jobs before recruiting has taken place, rather than after.

3. Complex Procedures: The current procedures for considering employees within the Office in connection with new vacancies are extremely complex and could lead to an intolerable burden. It is important that these procedures be simplified so that they will be of positive assistance in screening and considering employees on the rolls against the newly identified vacancies. This may require a major revision of the GE merit promotion plan. Under current procedures, frequently the consideration of people in the shop appears to be only a pro forma affair after an outsider has already been tentatively selected.
4. Coordination: Although operating units are carrying on much of their own recruiting activity, there is little coordination of over-all agency effort. We are concerned that people needed in one part of the organization may be turned away by another unit having no knowledge of the requirements elsewhere in the agency. The present system tends to limit the field from which effective recruiting can draw. In any given instance, it is also difficult to ascertain the adequacy of the recruiting effort until the operating bureau has reached a conclusion, at which point it then becomes difficult to persuade the unit to look objectively at additional candidates.
5. Background Inquiries: There should be more intensive inquiry made concerning the background of candidates for key positions which are needed to strengthen the vigor and leadership within the Office, and which will have much to do in changing the future image of the Office. In this way, the Civil Service Commission is able to provide you with information concerning the capacity of an individual which is not otherwise available.
6. Supergrade Recruitment: The selection of executive level people, particularly at the supergrade levels, will require the involvement of you and the Deputy Commissioner. In most cases, it will not be feasible to make effective progress until this Task Force has forwarded its recommendations and the organization and staffing pattern of the Office has been determined. However, the special group proposed in the attachment, with the assistance which the Civil Service Commission is willing to provide, can begin now to identify potential candidates for the types and levels of positions which are anticipated. As the organization and staffing becomes crystallized, job commitments can be made.

In the attached proposal, we have suggested a high level committee within the Office to spearhead this activity and to make policy decisions on recruiting until the personnel staff can take over this function. The Director of the Personnel Management Branch would serve as Executive Secretary and the group would operate under the direct supervision of the Deputy Commissioner. We would propose that the authority and the method of

operation of the Personnel Management Branch be revised so as to ensure a policy of positive assistance to the operating units. We would hope that this Branch could develop sufficiently so that the special group could be disbanded in about ninety days. However, the review of higher level positions, possibly GS-14 and above, should continue to be done by you or the Deputy Commissioner and should not be delegated to a staff office. We also recommend the assignment to your immediate office of a Special Assistant to perform as an Executive Staffing Specialist. This person, either carefully selected from within the organization or brought in from the outside, would represent you and the Deputy Commissioner, personally, in the staffing of supergrade positions and other positions of high interest to you.

In addition, to meet the problem of classifying the large numbers of positions necessary to immediately undertake recruitment operations, we are recommending and can immediately arrange for assigning six highly competent position classifiers to augment the present staff for two or possibly three months. These people will be drawn from various DHEW organizations and the Civil Service Commission.

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Dwight A. Ink, Chairman
White House Task Force on Education

Attachment:

**Draft Proposal for Attacking
Recruiting Problems**

cc: Mr. Rufus Miles
Mr. Ink
Mr. Oganovic
Mr. Schulkind (2)
Mr. Jasper

GASchulkind/Ink/tvf

ACTION PLAN FOR RECRUITING

To provide increased emphasis on the vital staffing needs of the Office of Education, it is recommended that the Commissioner of Education take the following actions:

A. Coordination and Direction of the Recruiting Effort

Add to the responsibility of the presently organized Executive Group, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner of Education, Mr. Henry Loomis, the responsibility for the direction and coordination of the Office of Education nation-wide recruiting effort. It is recommended that the Director, Personnel Management Branch, serve in the capacity of Executive Secretary to the Executive Group when sitting as a personnel board.

As an alternate suggestion, a special inter-bureau committee could be organized for the same purpose, and could report to the Executive Group mentioned above. If this alternative is selected, the group should be composed of bureau personnel at the Deputy Director level or higher, under the chairmanship of Mr. Loomis or his designated alternate. The Director, Personnel Management Branch, would serve in the capacity of Executive Secretary.

In either case, the Group should be assigned the following responsibility:

1. Direct cognizance and coordination of the Office of Education's nation-wide recruiting effort.
2. Organize a task group to immediately identify and classify all current and projected vacancies at grades GS-5 and above in the Office of Education. In this regard the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare will provide technical assistance to classify these vacancies; the Civil Service Commission will also provide assistance as required.
3. Identify those key vacancies at Grades GS-14 and above that are most urgently needed, and take aggressive action to identify eligible candidates. This action should include telephone, mail, and personal contacts with these individuals to determine their availability and make selections.
4. Organize a task group to conduct a critical review of all eligibles on the Program Specialist and Advisor Examination registers to determine which eligibles should be considered for current and projected vacancies. This should include field contacts with eligibles, referrals to operating officials, and positive follow up to assure expeditious selection activity.

5. Field recruiting teams should be established to interview eligibles who are not within a reasonable commuting distance of the activity where the vacancy exists. Wherever possible, these teams should be given the authority to make firm commitments through Grade GS-12 for nonsupervisory positions where the eligibility of the candidate has been previously determined in accordance with Civil Service rules and regulations.
6. Take maximum advantage of other open Civil Service examinations that can serve as a source for eligibles. Care should be exercised to avoid too narrow a classification of vacant positions (i.e.; the 1720 series) so that the many skills needed by the Office of Education can be obtained from the many examination sources available. The Civil Service Commission will provide advice in this respect.
7. Set deadlines and priorities for accomplishing the various elements of the recruiting effort, and direct the necessary follow up to assure accomplishment.
8. Direct the accomplishment of such other tasks as may be considered in the interests of the nationwide recruiting effort.

It is suggested that such a group effort will be required for approximately 90 days. At the end of this period, it should be the objective to assign the responsibility for the coordination of the recruiting effort to the Personnel Management Branch. This, of course, does not relieve the Bureaus and Offices from their responsibility to recruit and select qualified personnel.

B. Executive Recruiting

An Executive Staffing Specialist should be assigned to the Office of the Commissioner of Education to personally represent the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner in those staffing matters of the highest interest to him. This individual would assist the Commissioner and the Executive Group mentioned above in the identification, personal contact, and expeditious processing of those individuals considered significantly qualified to fill supergrade and other key vacancies in the Office of Education. Responsibility will include making personal visits to and interviewing identified candidates, the preparation of appropriate correspondence to individuals and recruiting sources, the coordination with the Personnel Management Branch of resources, processing procedures incident to the appointment of selected individuals, and such other duties as are necessary to expedite the filling of these key vacancies.

C. Clerical Recruiting

Increased emphasis and aggressive action should be taken by the Personnel Management Branch to fill the approximately forty clerical vacancies now existing. In this respect, a continuing aggressive recruiting

effort should be maintained until all current and future clerical vacancies have been reduced to an acceptable level.

D. Recruiting Literature

In support of an aggressive recruiting effort, a high quality recruiting brochure should be developed that will effectively tell the story of the Office of Education and the career (and other) opportunities available. It may be advisable to seek professional advice in the development of such a brochure.

In support of the nationwide recruiting effort, the Civil Service Commission is prepared to assist you in the following ways:

1. Provide continuing advice and support to the Executive Group and the Personnel Management Branch in the development and administration of the over-all recruiting effort.
2. Make available the regional recruiting resources of the Civil Service Commission in contacts with colleges, universities, and other recruiting sources, and referral of qualified applicants to the Office of Education for consideration. The regional resource personnel will also be available to assist OE field recruiting teams should such assistance be desired.
3. Assist in the expeditious processing of actions requiring Commission approval, or which fall within the Commission's area of responsibility. This would include contacts with other Boards of Examiners, agencies, and similar activities.

The members of the Task Force stand ready to provide whatever support is desired in implementing the above recommendations.

Attached is information developed by Task Force members that has influenced the above recommendations.

Addendum to the Action Plan for Recruiting

Discussions have been held with the directors of the offices and bureaus, the executive staff, the Personnel Management staff, and the staff of the Board of Civil Service Examiners. The following information has been developed.

- o Positive recruiting for professional vacancies is being done by the employing bureaus and offices, but authority to make offers is reserved by the Personnel Management Branch for positions at GS-11 and above.
- o The Personnel Management Branch performs the recruiting function for clerical positions (about 40 current vacancies) and for the filling of 50 vacancies from the Federal Service Entrance Examination. (These 50 vacancies will be from the total vacancies identified for professional personnel.)
- o There are approximately 250 current vacancies for positions GS-5 and above, the largest number being above GS-12. There are in excess of 300 additional vacancies authorized as a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10) which will go into effect on 1 July 1965. The majority of these vacancies are in the GS-1720-0 Series (Educational Research and Consultation Series).
- o Of the current vacancies reported by the offices and bureaus as of March 15, 1965, 40% had not been classified. Approximately 75% of the jobs not classified are in the Bureaus of Educational Research and Development, and Educational Assistance Programs.
- o The major examining source for these vacancies is the Program Specialist and Advisor Examination (324-B) administered by the Office of Education Board of U. S. Civil Service Examiners. There are in excess of two thousand five hundred (2500) eligibles on this register at all grade levels, GS-9 through 15. There is some duplication since some eligibles are qualified at more than one grade.
- o The Board of Examiners has on hand requests for certificates to fill 14 vacancies, and has issued 25 current certificates to fill 29 vacancies.

After discussing the staffing needs, reviewing the vacancies identified by the using elements of OE, considering the methods presently used to recruit, and a review of the sources for these needs, the Task Force has reached the following conclusions.

1. There is no over-all coordination of the recruiting efforts for

the Office of Education.

2. The number of eligibles on the Program Specialist and Advisor Examination appears to be adequate to respond to many of the vacancies identified in the GS-1720-0 Series. There are applicants on the registers eligible at grades lower than the graded vacancies in the Office of Education. Some consideration should be given to bringing well-qualified individuals in at lower grades and let them progress to the desired level of work.
3. There are open examinations in the Washington area to cover many of the vacancies not in the GS-1720-0 Series.
4. There is a need to take immediate action to identify all current and future vacancies with an official position description and request for personnel action (SF 52).
5. To accomplish the recruiting task there must be coordination of the effort and aggressive action taken at the highest possible levels.