



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Balancing the Equation:

HOW TALENT DATA CAN LEAD TO
BETTER DECISION-MAKING
FOR K-12 LEADERS

In 2018,



a white paper titled “Balancing the Equation” proposed a vision for strategic human capital management (HCM) characterized by a holistic approach to building and maintaining a high-performing employee culture. It went on to say as part of this culture, leaders would make data-driven decisions aligned to their school system’s strategic objectives. Their teams would collaboratively set goals, measure results using data and benchmarks, and determine key opportunities for continual improvement in employee engagement, efficiency and effectiveness—all in support of improved student learnings. Finally, the white paper stated that with a commitment to leveraging data to support a carefully crafted vision for the future, all education systems can achieve this vision.

The Frontline Research & Learning Institute is revisiting to see if these visions for strategic human capital management hold true for districts, schools and states today. Here’s what we’ve learned.

Human Capital Management in the Real World

Caledonia Community Schools is a high-performing suburban/rural district not far from Grand Rapids, MI. A strong sense of pride and purpose encourages collaboration as all departments work toward a common goal: creating a positive learning environment and the optimum academic experience for all students.

After a period of slow, steady growth, Caledonia had recently started to experience growing pains as more city dwellers moved out to the suburbs. Caledonia kept their focus on their mission statement, empowering and equipping all persons to achieve their best by ensuring the highest quality system for learning. To promote this and to continue to attract and recruit employees for their high-performing district, Caledonia knew it was time to update their practices. That meant streamlining recruiting and hiring, onboarding, and training of new employees while meeting the professional growth needs of a diverse workforce at the same time.

The first step was to improve the hiring and on-boarding processes for HR. As part of a consortium of 23 districts using online recruiting and hiring solutions, Caledonia had access to a broader pool of candidates than standalone recruiting systems. With more applicants, they needed to find a way to sort and track their top choices.

“As soon as a candidate is selected, their application is uploaded to their HR portal. References are completed separately and also saved to the HR portal once the onboarding process is complete.”

— **Laurie King**, HR Assistant,
Caledonia Community Schools

Having a talent management system designed for K-12 organizations, including the highest level of security, has been a major asset for every department, especially during COVID. Back when they were doing a lot of work manually, binders or folders kept in offices would not have been accessible to staff forced to work at home. But with a new talent management system, it is easy to access data remotely. Payroll still gets processed on time, subs are hired when needed, and professional growth is available to teachers and easy to track.

Their connected talent management system now manages all employee records, allowing them to synchronize their hiring, professional growth, and absences. They’re no longer using different systems in each department and have revolutionized and streamlined their processes with workflow enhancements. Their new talent management system puts data within easy reach of all users from district administrators to employees themselves, when and where they need it.

Following Caledonia’s strategic plan for growth involved shifting schedules and changing grade-level configurations. The pandemic added another twist when teachers unexpectedly retired or went on leave and substitutes were hard to find. Fortunately, with the absence management component of their new talent management system already in place, the HR department is able to help manage the astronomical number of staff changes.

“Everyone’s schedules are set. When there’s a holiday, it’s already preset in the talent management system.”

— **Sara DeVries**, Director of Finance and
Business Services, Caledonia Community Schools

Grayson County Public Schools in Independence, VA is another district that is transforming HCM processes through the use of a connected talent management system. Prior to implementing their system, human resources and payroll had to generate many complex reports and spend a lot of time going through individual employee files to make updates. Grayson County implemented a new talent management system and gained more efficiencies by maximizing their resources and expediting their processes.

“We now have a comprehensive view of all employees and staff with proactive notifications to keep our records current as well as comparative data and historical information to support our budget and planning needs.”

— **Amy Vaughan**, Human Resources Clerk
and **Marlee Bertram**, Deputy Payroll
Clerk, Grayson County School District

Additional Learnings from School Leaders

“Balancing the Equation” poses a number of questions about human capital management systems. Do these systems indeed help to drive real-world results in school systems? **Additional discussions with leaders across districts, schools and states shed some light on these questions:**

- 1** *Do the parts of the current system work together?* Investments in talent management systems are allowing districts, schools and states to provide HR and other departments access to connected and secure systems when they need it and from where they need it. With such systems, it becomes much easier to work collaboratively and strategically across departments while continuing to process payroll on time, hire subs when needed, and offer and track professional growth opportunities.
- 2** *Does everyone have access to information from across the entire talent pipeline?* New talent management systems streamline employee lifecycle management, giving district leaders and employees secure access to a centralized hub where they can maintain and track current employee information.
- 3** *Do leaders have the mandate and time to connect the dots?* With a connected talent management system, HR and cross-departmental leaders now have the ability to be proactive versus reactive as they manage their district. With access to their data they can monitor their progress against their strategic plans and make adjustments along the way. For example, they are better able to manage staffing changes for teachers retiring or going on leave.
- 4** *Have the barriers to collaboration and feedback among talent leaders been eliminated?* With one system used and accessed across all departments, leaders are collaborating and sharing feedback, bringing efficiencies to processes like hiring and onboarding. They are now able to spend time on meaningful, actionable conversations rather than acting on assumptions.
- 5** *Is talent data driving decision-making across school or district systems?* Talent data-informed decision-making is indeed occurring. Leaders are able to support individualized professional growth and access absence and demographic data to make better-informed decisions.

Based on these stories and conversations with many other district, school and state leaders, the Frontline Research & Learning Institute has found that the vision for strategic human capital management — and integrated talent management systems — is gaining ground.

Conclusion

To provide students with the best education, it's critical to support teachers and staff. But providing that meaningful support can be challenging when so much time is spent on tedious, manual work — especially when working with disconnected systems, resulting in duplicate data entry and human error.

K-12 leaders leveraging these new talent management systems are able to compile data in one central location. Their teams collaboratively set goals, measure results using their data and benchmarks, and determine the key opportunities for continually improving employee engagement, efficiency and effectiveness — all in support of improved student learnings. These talent management systems are supporting educators' HCM strategies from “hire to retire.”

Continued investments in innovation in talent management systems will further strengthen and address critical K-12 needs. Our vision is that schools, districts and states will continue to implement these new talent management systems, and through them experience the streamlining of their human capital management processes, returning time and resources to their school staff and helping place qualified teachers in every classroom to support their students' growth and improve learning and outcomes.

The Frontline Research & Learning Institute recognizes that continued challenges in K-12, including teacher shortages and COVID-19, have impacted the way schools, districts and states are supporting educators and other key personnel. Even with these challenges, we're seeing great progress.

The organizations referenced within are using solutions that are part of Frontline Education's human capital management suite to gain efficiencies and streamline their HCM processes. To learn more visit www.FrontlineEducation.com

Learn More

For a free copy of the full white paper, or for more insights into K-12 education, visit **FrontlineInstitute.com**

About the Institute

The Frontline Research & Learning Institute generates data-driven research, resources and observations to support and advance the education community. The Institute's research is powered by Frontline Education data and analytics capabilities in partnership with thousands of school districts and educational organizations, representing several million users nationwide. The Institute's research reports and analysis are designed to provide practical insights for teachers and leaders as well as benchmarks to inform strategic decision-making within their organizations.