

# case study

## Hiring for a High-Profile Position: Decision Analysis Facilitates Clarity, Collaboration, and Commitment



### Recap/Key Points

- Used Decision Analysis for key hire of high-profile position
- Structured interview process allowed meaningful involvement of multiple stakeholders
- Visible, collaborative process increased buy-in, trust and confidence

### District Information

Newton-Conover City Schools is located in North Carolina. The district has eight schools that serve more than 3,100 K-12 students.



### Problem/Challenge

The district was faced with replacing an extremely popular, successful high school principal. Next to the Superintendent, this position was likely the most visible position in the community. Given the visibility of this position and the affection that the community had for the outgoing principal, Superintendent David Steagall knew it was very important to include stakeholders in the process and ensure that the right person was hired for this critical role.

### Solution

The District's leadership team, trained in TregoED strategies, elected to use Decision Analysis (DA) to select a new high school principal. Leaders asked faculty and other stakeholders to consider what skills, characteristics, and experience a new principal would ideally possess. A solid set of prioritized criteria were formulated from these discussions. These criteria were then used to narrow the pool of candidates from 52 to 9. Next, three interview teams were established, each with a different area of focus: Curriculum, Operations, and Extra-Curriculars. Teams were comprised of varied stakeholders (e.g., parents, school and district staff, community members, and students). Each interview team was equipped with a unique set of questions based on the same original criteria. Each candidate met



with each interview team. After all interviews were complete, each team used DA to evaluate the candidates against the established set of criteria. Analyses were then compared, and two finalists were selected. Risks were identified and weighed using the interview data. Final interviews were conducted, and ultimately a job was offered to the chosen candidate.

## Results

The District reports the following results:

- Clearer, more balanced picture of candidates' strengths and weaknesses—some candidates performed well in some interview groups but not in others. Structure of interview process and evaluation allowed team to see who was strong across the board.
- Increased buy-in and commitment—process helped avoid conflict and speculation about the interview and selection process. Each stakeholder group expressed relief and a sense of comfort in the final choice. The District was able to share how the voices of school, district, and community played a significant role in the selection of the new principal.
- Clarity of direction and confidence in difficult times—Soon after the new high school principal was welcomed, the outgoing principal suddenly passed away. The community, school, and district grieved together, but there were no concerns about the direction in which the high school was going. The work done in the decision process provided welcome stability during a dark time.
- Because of the success of this hiring process, procedural changes in hiring for high-profile positions were subsequently made throughout the district.
- Use of TregoED strategies has provided a deeper sense of trust and understanding and helped improve public relations. When facing major decisions, anxiety or concern does not ensue. Because clear procedures are now in place, everyone understands how decisions will be made. Speculation, concerns, possible biases and fears about who is making the decision are thus eliminated.
- Enhanced decision-making capacity—TregoED tools have been used to address many varied issues, including: grading scales, test scores, bus transportation, vendor selection, purchasing, and departmental budgets.



**"TregoED ensured no strong personalities swayed the group and that all voices were heard. No longer does bias play a role in hiring and other decision-making processes. If Board members or other stakeholders have questions, we can provide qualitative and quantitative data to share how crucial decisions were made."**

**Heather Mullins, Chief Academic Officer, Newton-Conover City Schools**

