



This guide includes resources and best practices for virtually recruiting, selecting, and hiring the diverse and effective educators your students need.

As schools move to online learning and remote working to prevent the spread of COVID-19, many school systems are grappling with how to prepare for next year's talent needs in a virtual environment. Job fairs and other events are cancelled, in-person interviews aren't possible, and staffing teams are adjusting to remote working. Yet our research shows that early, springtime hiring is critical: In [Missed Opportunities](#) (2003), we found that urban districts can lose up to 60 percent of their applicants by not extending job offers until mid- to late summer. Fortunately, it is possible to build strong, diverse teams virtually. In this guide, you'll find TNT's best resources and tips for transitioning to virtual talent operations—and ensuring your schools have the great people they need.

## Virtual Recruitment Tips

**Take advantage of social media.** Even without regular opportunities to connect in person, you can still connect with candidates through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn and ask them to do things like schedule a phone interview or share why they are excited to join your district or CMO. Post daily and work with your communications point person to plan and schedule posts in advance ([here's a list of scheduling tools](#)). Social media algorithms tend to favor paid content, so we recommend allocating a budget for boosting posts and running ads. For both normal and boosted posts, you can track engagement and adjust your strategy accordingly. For example, if you find that posts featuring students have the highest engagement, you can feature students in more posts going forward. Lastly, make sure your posts regularly ask candidates to share their contact information through an online form—and add that information to a cultivation tracker [like this one](#)—so you can contact candidates for free via email.

**Use email to keep in frequent touch with candidates.** Consistent email newsletters and updates can help keep candidates engaged and aware of opportunities at your school(s). If you haven't already, email candidates to let them know you're still hiring and to share any changes to timelines or events. Emails should include clear, prominent calls to action, like *Apply* (linking to the application) or *Attend a Virtual Information Session* (linking to a sign-up page), and an unsubscribe option for candidates who are no longer interested. Lastly, [check out these candidate cultivation best practices](#), all of which can be done virtually.

**Host virtual information sessions.** Virtual events are a great way to continue cultivating a strong, diverse candidate pool. We recommend platforms like Zoom, which is [temporarily offering free unlimited use to K-12 schools](#) (be sure to see [their security guidance](#)), and [Google Hangouts](#). To make sure your event is as effective as possible, we recommend the following tips:

- Have attendees sign up in advance so that you can easily monitor attendance and follow up afterwards. Depending on the goals of your session, you may want to cap the number of individuals who can attend.
- Give attendees opportunities to interact throughout the session. You can start with a discussion question or fun icebreaker, have participants engage via polls or games (like [Kahoot](#)), and invite questions. Solicit "live"

interaction but also provide alternative ways to engage, like submitting questions or comments via chat, sharing anonymously via a tool like [Padlet](#), and/or submitting questions in advance on the session sign-up page.

- At the beginning of the session, share an agenda, session objectives, timeline, and norms for engaging.
- To encourage personal connection, have recruitment staff join via video and ask participants to do the same.
- Ensure equitable access to the information sessions. For instance, provide a join-by-phone call option, share the presentation afterwards, and have an extra team member available to help with technical difficulties.
- Give candidates a sense of your school culture and community. You could invite students, family members, teachers, and/or school leaders to join or share photos and videos from schools or community events.
- For more online event tips, check out the [these recommendations from Zoom](#).

**Ensure your recruitment staff have remote access to the systems and resources they'll need to continue work.**

Confirm with your staff that they can access the necessary tools, systems, and platforms remotely. Regular check-ins via conference or video lines can help ensure your team has the time they need together to monitor progress and workshop challenges. We also recommend ensuring all staff can continue referring candidates. For example, set up a Google Form to collect staff referrals and give staff email and social media post templates to use with their networks.

## Virtual Selection Tips

**Use internet tools to conduct selection online.** Like recruitment, selection events can happen online using tools like [Zoom](#), [Google Hangouts](#), or [others](#). Individual interviews often translate easily, but you might need to adapt group interviews or activities to a virtual environment. For example, you can use a video conferencing platform to have candidates do a problem-solving activity together or to do a panel interview with teacher, family, and student participants. Just be sure to give clear instructions (how to sign on, what to do if you experience technical issues, etc.). We also recommend recording video interviews and activities to share with hiring managers who can't join live interviews and to norm selectors (just make sure to notify candidates in advance).

**Make sure your virtual selection process is an equitable one.** In addition to standard norming and anti-bias procedures, take these steps to create equitable virtual opportunities for all candidates:

- *Set and communicate clear expectations for virtual interviews.* Let candidates know what they can expect and how they can prepare, even if it's similar to what they would experience in a school-based interview. Share guidance on professional dress, suitable settings for video interviews (e.g. minimal background noise), and technical requirements, like a webcam and a stable internet connection. Allow candidates to test technology in advance.
- *Let candidates—and interviewers—know that it is okay if unplanned interruptions happen because they are interviewing while children and other family members are home.* Candidates without access to ideal interview environments shouldn't feel discouraged from interviewing.
- *Give candidates a way to indicate if they cannot interview via video conference and offer them an equitable alternative.* For instance, candidates could interview over the phone. For any alternate activity, make sure that the evidence gathered aligns with the evidence gathered and rating rubrics used in video conference interviews.
- *Provide specific anti-bias training for video interviews to selectors.* See below for sample guidance. You might also norm staff on a few sample videos and conduct the initial round of interviews in teams to build consistency.
  - Look out for potential bias triggers in video interviews like non-standard English, a candidate's surroundings (background, lighting), their dress, or background noise. (Keep in mind that positive bias—like recognizing the school a candidate references—can also interfere with your objectivity).
  - Remember that everybody has biases, some explicit, others unconscious. As screeners, it is crucial to ensure those biases do not influence selection decisions, either positively or negatively.

- During video interviews, stay conscious of triggers, take low-inference notes, be objective, and flag if you are not sure you can be completely objective.
- *Be flexible.* The COVID-19 response and its implications are rapidly changing, so provide candidates with additional flexibility for scheduling interviews and completing hiring activities. Continue to provide strong, personalized customer service to track and follow up with candidates as needed.

## Virtual Hiring Tips

**Encourage school leaders to hire quickly.** Remind school leaders and hiring managers that early hiring correlates with stronger hiring and motivate them to make offers to candidates after virtual interviews. Because it's unclear how long school closures will last, it's especially important to work now to ensure that when schools reopen—whether that happens this school year or next—they are fully staffed with strong, diverse teachers and leaders. Just note that Legal and Human Resources leadership should review collective bargaining agreements and/or district/network policies to ensure there's nothing precluding virtual hiring.

**Develop and make offer template resources accessible online.** Continue setting clear, consistent expectations with teachers who receive offers. For consistency, we recommend creating template talking points and other materials that staff can use to make offers and communicate any key messages from the district or network. Use a file-sharing platform like Google Docs to house all templates in one easily accessible place. Make sure staff know they should always make offers using the centrally housed materials as the starting point (instead of saving files to their own computers), so that if you have to adjust the templates, everyone has the latest version. Offer letters should include language that makes positions contingent upon budget and staff openings.

**Confirm hires with e-signed offer letters.** Formalize hires using services like [Adobe E-Sign](#) so candidates can sign offer letters and other paperwork virtually. Implement a clear, organized system for tracking all hiring paperwork, including any forms that must be completed in-person, like the I-9, to ensure those are completed eventually.

## Tips for Facilitating Strong Culture and Communication Virtually

**Establish systems for consistent staff and candidate communication.** In transitioning to remote work, it's important to proactively set up standard systems that will help staff communicate and coordinate. Look at how staff currently communicate, collaborate, and share updates to identify the virtual touchpoints your team needs. You may ask your staff to update shared trackers and workplans by a certain time each weekday or use video conference calls to regularly collaborate and check in ([here are a few tips on holding effective virtual meetings](#)). Communicate these procedures and expectations clearly to all staff and solicit team feedback as you create and improve these systems.

We also recommend paying special attention to candidate communications to make sure they receive clear, consistent updates even when circumstances change. You might want to map out all touchpoints with candidates, including the owner on your team, what triggers the communication, and the content of the message (and procedures for updating as needed).

## Need More Help?

If you have questions about these resources or need help adapting your talent processes to a virtual environment, please contact Alex Podbelski at [alexandra.podbelski@tntp.org](mailto:alexandra.podbelski@tntp.org).

*A national nonprofit founded by teachers, TNTP helps school systems fight educational inequality. We work at every level of the public education system to attract and train talented teachers and school leaders, ensure rigorous and engaging classrooms, and create environments that prioritize great teaching and accelerate student learning. [tntp.org](https://tntp.org)*