

## Teacher Hiring: Making an Offer

by Rabbi Maccabee Avishur

You've created a job description, posted your opening, screened resumes, interviewed candidates, conducted school visits, observed model lessons, reviewed and compared your notes with your leadership team, and have identified your top candidate. Now it is time to make an offer.

Here is a review of research-based best practices for making and negotiating an offer to a teacher candidate and what to expect from candidates during the offer stage.

### ASSEMBLE THE OFFER

- Decide on the final job title and responsibilities.
- Refer to your previously-decided salary range for this opening. (For more on this, see our article, "Writing a Job Description.")
- Agree on an initial salary offer (including benefits) with your leadership team and CFO/Executive Director. Identify any room for negotiation you might have (extra salary or benefits).
- Put the offer in writing.

### MAKE THE OFFER

- Call the candidate to make the offer.
- Say, "We are pleased to offer you the position of [job title]. Your primary responsibilities would be [responsibilities]. Based on your qualifications, we're prepared to offer you [salary] as well as [benefits]."
- Never ask the candidate, at any point in the interview or offer process, "What would you like to earn for this job?" You and the school are responsible for the initial offer based on your school's budget. It is also considered bad form to ask a candidate about his salary history. Avoid doing this. Although asking the candidate to share his salary requirements is common in the business world, research in the fields of organizational and applied psychology shows that candidates who are asked to share their salary requirements or salary history are more likely to aggressively negotiate



"Just so we're clear, the job comes with no benefits, no sick days and an embarrassingly low salary. Still interested?"

your offer and more likely to harbor ill feelings towards you and your school if your initial offer does not match their stated requirements or exceed their current salary.<sup>1</sup>

- Tell the candidate when you'd like to hear back about the offer (a few days to a week is normal). If the candidate asks for more time, and you are eager to please the candidate, you may want to be flexible with this window.
- Send the offer in writing via email at the end of the conversation. Include job title, responsibilities, and compensation (salary and benefits). Maintain a personal, friendly tone. You could write:

We are very excited about the prospect of having you join our team and are pleased to offer you the position of [job title] at [school name]. If you accept this position, your basic responsibilities would include [responsibilities]. Your base salary will be [base salary]. [Include the following only if applicable] You would be eligible to participate in the school's benefits plan which includes [benefits]. This position reports directly to [direct report]. Your first day of employment would be [start date] or another mutually-agreed-upon date.

If you accept our offer, we'll send you all the required new-hire paperwork and conduct a background check to move the process forward.

Please give us your response by [response date]. We look forward to welcoming you to [school]. If you have any questions, please be in touch.

- DO NOT send a contract in lieu of an offer letter. This strong recommendation is based on our work with candidates and the prevailing research in the field of human resources. While an offer letter preserves the friendly and positive tone that you've relied on during the interview process, a contract is largely "legalese," and is generally not written in a friendly tone. In fact, research on offer letters versus contracts (believe or not, such research exists!) shows that clauses like "at-will disclaimers" and other statements about termination which are commonly found in contracts significantly reduce perceptions of organizational attractiveness to candidates.<sup>2</sup> Remember, the candidate you want to hire might have other offers. Set your school up to be the most attractive by carefully crafting an offer letter that continues to build trust and markets your school as a great place to work.

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<sup>1</sup> see O'Shea, P. G., & Bush, D. F. (2002). Negotiation for starting salary: Antecedents and outcomes among recent college graduates. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 16, 365–382; and Gerhart, B., & Rynes, S. (1991). Determinants and consequents of salary negotiations by male and female MBA graduates. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 256–262.

<sup>2</sup> McKinney, J., Whitaker, B., & Hindman, H. (2012). Discharge Policy Information in the Job Offer Letter: Its Impact on Recruit Perceptions of Psychological Contract Formation and Organizational Attraction. *Employee Responsibilities & Rights Journal*, 24(1), 55-75.

### THE CANDIDATE'S REACTION

- The candidate should thank you for the offer, ask any questions about the position and offer, and ask you when you need to hear back.
- The candidate may negotiate job responsibilities, salary, and benefits at this point. In fact, most sophisticated candidates will negotiate with you, and they'll do so in writing. You should take time to consider and discuss the candidate's request. Let the candidate know when you'll be back in touch.
- If a candidate counters your initial offer with specific requests, you can and should expect that the candidate will accept your job offer if you meet these requests. If you counter offer, you should expect the candidate to take some time to review your counter offer.
- We counsel candidates to take some time to think before accepting a job offer, especially if there has been a negotiation. You should expect a sophisticated candidate to request at least one day to think over your offer.
- If the candidate is considering multiple offers, she may ask for an extension of the time you've allowed. You may choose to honor or reject this request, but don't be offended by it. The most sought-after candidates will likely receive multiple offers, and they are trained to take time to consider all their options.
- Remain gracious, kind, and upbeat throughout this process. Expressing frustration during this process (especially with a candidate who is negotiating or asking for more time) can push the candidate away.

### ACCEPTING THE OFFER

- The candidate should call you to accept the offer and follow up with an official letter of acceptance (email is common and acceptable).
- The candidate should return a signed copy of your offer or generate an original letter that conforms to the details of your offer.
- Once accepted, you should confirm with the candidate when the first day of work will be and any other responsibilities the candidate has prior to beginning employment at your school (background check, paperwork, etc.).
- Remind the candidate to communicate with other schools she has applied to about being "off the market."
- Invite the candidate to visit the school again to sit in on classes and get a better sense of school culture.
- If the candidate accepts your offer, she has given her word that she will fulfill her end of the contract. If you find out that she has turned around and accepted a different offer, you have an ethical right and a fiduciary duty to contact the other employer to let him know that the candidate

had previously accepted a position with you and then reneged on the agreement. In such situations, it is common (and often appropriate) for the second school to withdraw its offer.

#### CONTINUE TO INTERVIEW OTHER CANDIDATES

- Because the process of making, negotiating, and closing an offer can take between two to four weeks, it is important not to place all your eggs in one basket. Continue to interview candidates for the opening until you receive an acceptance letter.

#### COMMUNICATING WITH ALL CANDIDATES

There is little in the placement process that builds more resentment or bad PR for your school than infrequent and poor communication with candidates, especially those you've actually interviewed. It goes without saying that you should have directly notified candidates who were not being considered that they were out of the running very soon after that decision was made. To them you could write:

Thank you for submitting your resume for our consideration. At this time, we have decided not to pursue your candidacy. We wish you the best of luck in your job search.

Once a candidate has accepted your offer, it is imperative that you communicate with all other candidates for this position who were still being considered. To those who were in the running and who might be a good fit for other jobs at the school in the future, you could write:

Thank you for expressing interest in the [position title] opening at our school. We enjoyed meeting you and getting to know you. We have offered the position to another candidate, but encourage you to apply to future positions at our school that may be a good fit for you. We wish you every success in your job search.

#### DEALING WITH REJECTION

It is possible your top candidate will reject your offer; this is usually done in writing. Whatever reason the candidate has for turning down the job, the actual rejection can be awkward. All through the interview process the candidate has been giving the impression that he'd love to work for your school, and then, when the offer is made, he "sings a different tune." It is incredibly important to handle this in a tactful, professional way. After all, you never know when you might want to recruit that candidate again or when you might encounter the candidate at a different school or in another professional setting.

- Graciously accept the rejection: "Thank you for interviewing with our school. We wish you the best of luck in the future and hope that there will be opportunities for us to work together in the future."
- Although it is rarely a good idea, you may choose to ask for specifics about why a candidate has chosen not to accept your offer, especially if you suspect the reasons are technical or logistical and if your school can revise its practices to become more competitive when recruiting candidates. For example, if the candidate received another offer with better salary or benefits, this data can help

you revise your practice, if possible. However, stay away from asking about the amount of the other offer or the name of the other school.

- Be careful in this process. Don't ask too many questions, especially ones that might make the candidate uncomfortable.

#### FINAL WORDS

- Making an offer is one of the first steps in inducting the candidate as a professional in your school. Keep this in mind at every stage.
- The hiring process, from start to finish, is tightly connected to your school's PR. Everything you do in this process is a marketing opportunity, from the job posting, to the emails you send to people who submit resumes, to the offer process. Candidates will talk with their friends and family about their experience with your school, so focus on making every interaction a positive one that will reflect favorably on your school. What we have learned from our work with hundreds of candidates is that the more professional their experience is during the placement process, the more likely they are to consider working for your school. This is especially true for the top candidates who usually receive multiple offers and have to decide between them.
- If you have any questions or would like to talk to a neutral party about the offer process, please reach out to our team at YUSP.