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talk2learn highlights

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

Issue 8b

In case you missed it...

Recent highlights from NCSL in Dialogue, talk2learn's
online community for national education debate

Also available as a podcast

Heading for the top!

You've made it to the shortlist but how do you impress the panel?

Successful heads and would-be candidates shared their interviewing experiences in a recent talk2learn discussion, led by Peter Addison-Child, a specialist in leadership recruitment in education, skills and children's services.

Is it better to keep your options as broad as possible and apply to several schools at once or to target only ones you feel enthusiastic about? The latter was the general consensus, to avoid wasting time and emotional energy.

"From a more tactical point of view,

even unsuccessful applications are seen by a whole range of people,

including local authority reps who might be involved in other recruitment processes in the future," Peter added. "Putting in hasty applications can damage your reputation."

Anne Munro, a headteacher-turned-LA adviser from Middlesbrough, recommended finding "a good friend or colleague to practise Q&A with so that on the day you can override any nerves you may have."

A recently appointed head from Colchester advised "letting your passion for particular areas of school improvement show," and

"answer truthfully as everything you propose will have been noted by somebody."

Some contributors felt the recruitment process was too weighted in favour of existing heads. Higher salary levels would be one indication, said Peter, but the best way to identify such signals is to have an informal chat in advance with someone like the chair of governors, if possible.



David Shakeshaft, a deputy head in Solihull, wondered if there was a set length of experience required before governors would take any application for headship seriously:

"I have taught for 11 years, been an AST for three and a deputy for nearly two. Is this enough?"

Colleagues had also intimated that he might be too young, he added.

Quality rather than age should be the determining factor, said Peter: "If you think you might be coming from left field on this one, then I think you need to have a really clear proposition for the governors. What is it that you will bring to this job that differentiates you from others and how will you articulate it?"

For more information on applying for headship see
www.ncsl.org.uk/beahead

If you are not yet a member of talk2learn and would like to join, more information is available
at www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities