

I understand the process, but I'm still unsure if there are advantages in it for me?

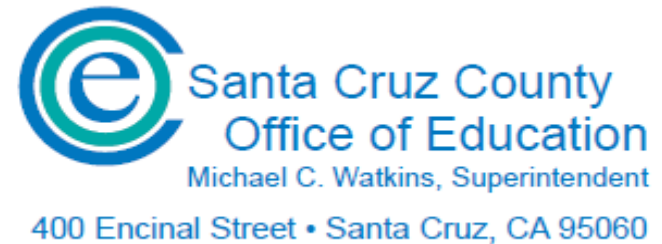
Working with a Personnel Commission can be confusing for both the newcomer and the seasoned administrator. The key to eliminating confusion is to work with the Commission staff and let them help guide you through the various processes. What you gain from the process is a well-defined job that you can fill with employees who have demonstrated the ability to perform the job before entry. You're not left with the guesswork that comes from interpreting a resume which may or may not be true. You don't have to deal with arbitrary salary setting – explaining to employees why someone else is paid more or less for the same job they perform. You don't have to screen and interview an endless number of applicants before making a hiring decision. Up-front work performed by Commission staff pays off for you in the final product –qualified staff.

The important thing to remember is that school districts and county offices of education are a public trust, and as such, are subject to greater public accountability than the private sector. Civil Service agencies came to life because of a need for fair and equitable treatment to all in the public service. As a manager you work with many pieces of the employment puzzle: collective bargaining contracts, state and federal laws, etc. The preliminary hiring processes are left to the professional personnel experts. Personnel Commission and staff processes are open to all and subject to review, as they should be. With today's litigious environment, serving the public trust in an open and fair manner has never been more important.

References

Many components go into what you see as the Personnel Commission product. For those interested in details of what goes into determining the processes of Merit/Civil Service, we suggest the following reading materials

California Education Code, Sections 45100 – 45460
Federal Uniform Guidelines for Employment Selection Procedures
State of California Department of Fair Employment & Housing laws
“Staffing the Public Sector, A Guide to Principles, Methods & Resources”
by Albert P. Maslow, Ph.D.



PERSONNEL COMMISSION

A MANAGER'S GUIDE TO HIRING STAFF IN A MERIT SYSTEM

What is a Personnel Commission and why do we have one?

Personnel Commissions and Civil Service Commissions were formed at the State and Federal levels as a response to “patronage” systems where government employees were hired as a result of election paybacks for political support. This “spoils system” allowed for arbitrary hiring and firing of employees and failed to hold employees accountable to the public trust, though paid through citizens’ taxes.

What is the responsibility of the Personnel Commission in a County Office of Education?

The California Education Code is very specific about the employment processes and practices for classified employment. The Personnel Commission is tasked with fulfilling the mandates of the Education Code. In addition to the mandated functions of the Code, Santa Cruz County Office of Education has delegated some authority in other areas, which the Personnel Commission carries out on behalf of the County Office. These responsibilities are spelled out in the SCCOE Merit Rules.

In practical terms, what is the Santa Cruz County Office of Education Personnel Commission responsible for?

In a nutshell, the Personnel Commission is responsible for the classification of new and existing jobs, recruitment and testing of candidates for employment, and the certification processing of candidates for hiring.

How do I hire the person I want at the salary I want to pay?

Whether or not you can do this will depend on the results of the following activities. The merit system works with you to identify the needs of your department – that’s the classification portion. A staff member trained in classification and compensation practices works with you to define your job needs, the duties and responsibilities of the job, skills, knowledge and abilities needed to do the job, and the typical training and experience required to successfully meet the needs of the job. If a job classification already exists that matches your job needs, it, and its current salary range are used. Otherwise the Point Factoring Committee “points factors” the job description to determine a fair compensation package for a newly created classification.

After you’ve defined the job, a Personnel Commission staff member in the Human Resources office will work with you to identify the critical job factors required for success. You and the HR Director or other PC staff work together to determine appropriate assessments. Tests can be practical assessments such as performance simulations and in-basket tests, they can be traditional pencil and paper multiple choice or fill in the blanks. Oral exams on technical and general qualifications may also be used. It is imperative that the hiring authority, the subject matter expert, work closely with staff to assure that the results of the exam process yield only truly qualified job candidates.

The final step in the process to certify job candidates is spelled out very clearly in California Education Code. Personnel Commission staff send candidates who place in the top three ranks on an eligibility list to interview with the department or hiring supervisor. This process is prescribed by law. Until or unless the Education Code changes, there is little flexibility in this practice. The certification system also assures that offers of employment follow legal requirements, and that new employees meet federal, state and county office compliance laws and guidelines to work in the County Office. Ultimately, if the person you want to hire places within the top three ranks or is already employed by the County Office you may be able appoint him or her. Staff will work with you to determine the appropriate salary step and will make the ultimate offer of employment.