

Human Capital in Hartford Public Schools:

Rethinking How to Attract, Develop, and Retain Effective Teachers

About This Study

This study was undertaken on behalf of the 22,000 school children who attend the Hartford Public Schools.

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About NCTQ

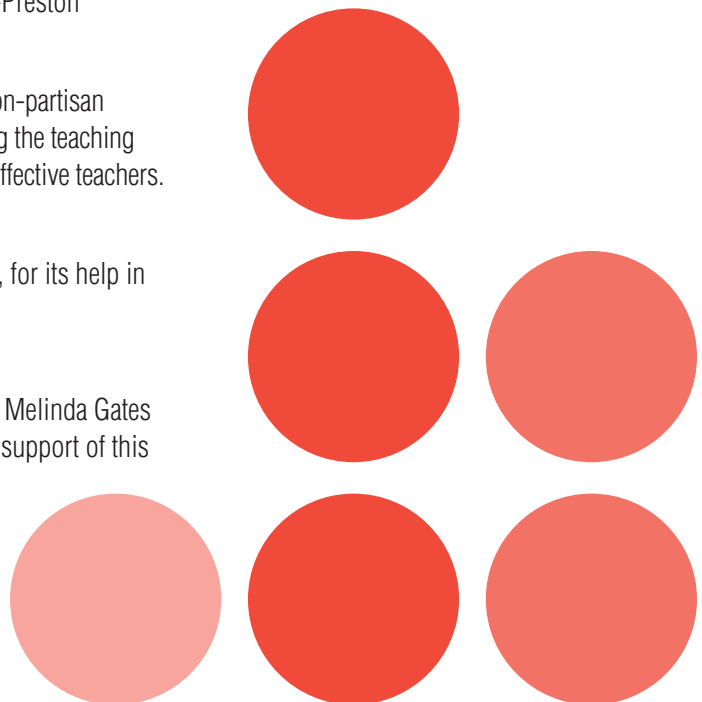
The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a non-partisan research and advocacy group committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by our vision that every child deserves effective teachers.

Partner

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Preface

Staffing each classroom with an effective teacher is the most important function of a school district. Doing so requires strategic personnel policies and smart practices.

This report, which examines the alignment of Hartford's teacher policies with its goals for improving teacher quality, represents the first in a number of similar analyses which NCTQ is undertaking of urban school districts across the country. We were happy to choose Hartford for our inaugural report because this community is working hard to confront one of the largest achievement gaps in the country. We believe that closing this gap will require a set of personnel policies that will enable Hartford to meet its ambitious goal for dramatically raising student achievement.

This analysis reviews the Hartford Public Schools' teacher policies linked most directly to teacher effectiveness. We put forward **ten policy goals** that frame our analysis. Each of these ten goals is supported by a strong rationale that is grounded by the best research, as well as the best practitioner insight available (see online appendix).

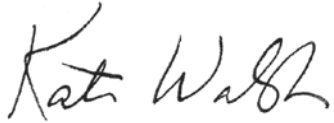
The Hartford school district and the Hartford Federation of Teachers, which represents Hartford's 1,500 teachers, were both given the opportunity to comment on the initial draft of this analysis. The union chose not to participate. Factual corrections from the Hartford Public Schools have been incorporated in this document. The substance of our analysis and any errors herein are our own.

To produce this analysis, we took the following steps:

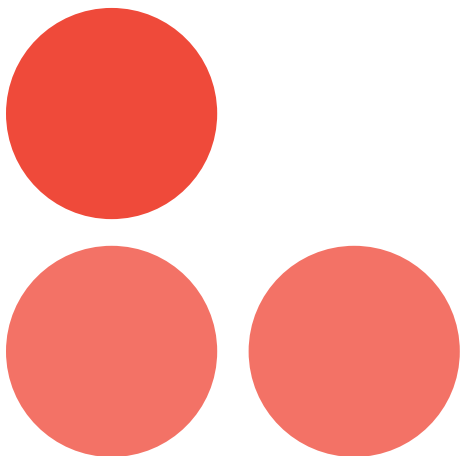
- First, a team of analysts reviewed the district's current collective bargaining agreement with teachers, school board policies, and the district's strategic operating plan. We also looked at any state laws that might impact local policy.
- We compared the laws and policies in Hartford and the state of Connecticut with the 99 other school districts and 49 other states found in our TR³ database (www.nctq.org/tr3). This exercise allowed us to determine where the school district falls along the spectrum of teacher quality policies and to identify practices that Hartford might emulate. In a number of areas, we also collected new data from school districts that surround Hartford, its biggest competitors for teacher talent.
- We spoke with central office staff, principals, and teachers to understand how policies play out in practice. Unfortunately, our access to teachers may have been sharply limited by a union flier suggesting that no teachers cooperate with this study.
- We looked at a range of teacher personnel data, as well as teacher ratings on their performance evaluations, to give us a better understanding of the workings and outcomes of teacher hiring, transfer, and placement.

An astute reader will notice that some important areas of teacher governance are not addressed in this analysis, such as teacher working conditions and teachers' ability to contribute to school decision-making. While these factors are all important for teacher recruitment, job satisfaction, and retention, they are heavily dependent on the culture and day-to-day practices of individual principals and their faculty members. This analysis focuses only on areas of teacher governance that can be more readily affected by a change in policy, regulation or law.

A number of the recommendations in this report require policy changes at the state level. Where action is required by the state legislature or state school board, we note their authority and responsibility. For more information on how state-level policies help or hinder district-level reforms in Connecticut districts, including the Hartford Public Schools, we refer you to Connecticut's *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, both the 2007 and 2008 editions (www.nctq.org/stpy).



Kate Walsh
President, National Council on Teacher Quality
May 2009



Introduction

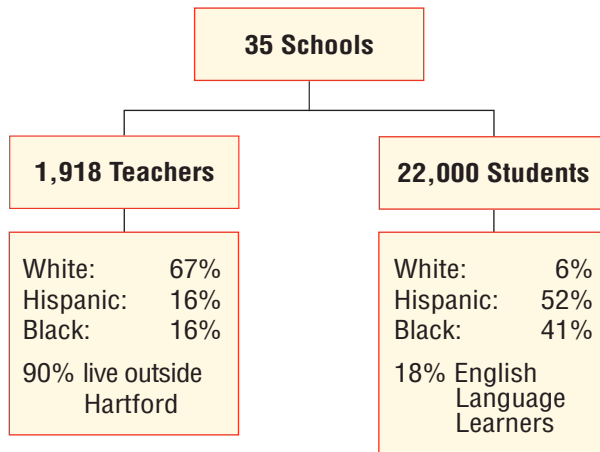
A brief overview of the Hartford Public Schools

Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the country, an unacceptable disparity in achievement of children who are poor and/or minority with children who are middle class and/or white. Hartford, its capital city, is the site of some of the state's most concentrated poverty and racial isolation. All but a small percentage of the district's 22,000 students are Hispanic and African-American.

Over the past two decades, more than 10 superintendents have come and gone as the district has lurched through a series of governance changes, including abortive privatization, a state takeover, and the return of local control.

Responding to a series of court rulings in a long-running anti-segregation lawsuit, *Sheff vs. O'Neill*, the state spurred the creation of magnet schools that draw from Hartford and its suburbs, some run by Hartford and some by a special regional district. The district has now also, as part of its new "all-choice" plan, embraced the creation of a portfolio of schools including the replication of high-performing public charter schools.

Figure 1. Demographics of Hartford Public Schools



Where Hartford is now

Despite significant challenges, the district appears to be making progress, and its constituents have started to regain some of the confidence that evaporated during the decades of losing ground. After the city's mayor assumed control of the Hartford public schools in 2006, the new school board selected Dr. Steven Adamowski as superintendent. He appears to enjoy broad support from both the elected and mayor-appointed members of the school board.

With his school board, the Superintendent oversaw the creation of a three-year strategic plan that is widely viewed as the most thoughtful and concrete the district has had in near memory. The plan is built around the twin ideas of more autonomy for schools in exchange for greater accountability and the "all-choice" system for families. The district has forged new links with the business community and fostered greater parent involvement. In 2008, HPS signed a three-year contract with the Hartford Federation of Teachers that includes new initiatives such as pilot school-wide performance pay programs and changes to the teacher transfer process.

The system appears to be getting results. Hartford's most recent gains in test scores outpaced every other large Connecticut city. Still, school supporters, community leaders, and parents are cautious in their optimism. Communication between school leaders and outside service partners, especially as Hartford tries to decentralize, remains a problem. And, as in the past, power politics among adults threatens to derail the focus on students.

Further progress depends on the district's capacity to stay the course established in its strategic plan and push for ever more focus on accountability in student achievement.

Parents and community advocates are concerned about the mismatch between teachers' backgrounds and those of their students. They want to see more teachers of color hired. At the same time, many believe that a teacher's ability to engage and lead urban students is not determined by background but is an aspect of teacher quality that can be cultivated.

Hartford's reform strategy: Accountability and choice

Accountability

- Higher-performing schools are rewarded with autonomy on matters such as budgeting and staffing.
- Conversely, schools with poor student performance are given less autonomy and more district oversight in the same areas.
- Schools that consistently do not perform are redesigned.
- Theory: schools that are accountable for results need as much autonomy as they show they can handle.

Choice

- Families have a greater opportunity to decide where their children will attend school.
- Theory: The act of making a choice inspires greater commitment from families and students. Choice among schools with different approaches to learning and different subject specialties allows students to play to their different strengths and interests, increasing engagement and motivation.

Summary of Recommendations

Hartford Public Schools

Recommendations for teacher compensation

- 1. Further consolidate the lanes on the salary schedule.** Because advanced degrees do not correlate to teacher effectiveness, Hartford should continue its consolidation of the salary schedule and at least eliminate all intermediate salary lanes, but works towards the elimination of any incentives for advanced degrees not shown to contribute to student achievement.

The intermediate lanes to eliminate include MA +15, MA +30, MA +60, and Ph.D. Teachers who are currently in these lanes can be grandfathered into policy as has been done previously with the BA +15, MA +45, and MA +75 lanes.

- 2. Redistribute savings to attract and retain effective teachers.** Based on estimates that Hartford could “save” \$14 million by eliminating intermediate lanes on the salary schedule, the district could raise salaries to make it more competitive with surrounding districts, as well as provide intensive full-time support for two months to new teachers as is described in Goal 7. Also the district may want to consider funding bonuses to attract highly effective teachers to hard-to-staff schools and reward highly effective staff already at these schools for their longevity.
- 3. Target existing tuition reimbursement for teachers seeking certification in positions of highest need.** Hartford should not use tuition reimbursement funds for any and all coursework, but should target incentives to teachers wishing to teach and needing certification in hard-to-staff subjects.
- 4. Advocate at the state level to eliminate the requirement of an advanced degree, regardless of grade level or subject matter, in order for teachers to renew their license.** Requiring secondary teachers to earn a master's degree in their subject area may make sense. There is no evidence that the state's currently ambiguous requirement that teachers must earn *any* master's degree makes teachers more effective. The requirement is unnecessarily burdensome to teachers and does not contribute to higher student achievement.

Recommendations for transfer and assignment

- 1. Give principals more freedom in choosing whom they interview and hire.** Principals should be able to screen transfer applicants during the Annual Posting for candidates they wish to interview, as they do during the second hiring period, and should not be required to interview all candidates.

Furthermore, principals should not be forced to select teachers from the limited pool of applicants available during the Annual Posting, nor should they be forced to give the reasons why a particular teacher was not hired.

The district would be wise to classify positions filled after the start of the school year as temporary employees rather than making them subject to the Annual Posting.

Principals should be allowed to hire who they want, when they want, rather than settle for the limited options available in March. Removing all aspects of hiring and transfer decisions from being subject to grievances would facilitate this process.

- 2. Give principals the tools they need to make informed staffing decisions.** The district's online application system should be used during all hiring periods, including during the Annual Posting, to allow principals the opportunity to view the current crop of applicants at all times.

Principals should have access to a teacher's past evaluation ratings and any value-added data on student achievement that is available. In addition, principals should have the freedom to require additional elements of a teacher's application, such as a writing sample and demonstration lesson.

To ensure that principals and schools have the capacity to make high-stakes staffing decisions, Hartford should provide training in interviewing techniques, as well as best practices in the area of staffing.

- 3. Give teachers more freedom to apply to vacancies.** Teachers who wish to apply for vacancies during the Annual Posting should have the opportunity to apply to any position for which they are qualified. Switching the Annual Posting to an online system would facilitate the application process for teachers, enabling them to apply directly to schools for specific vacancies. It also would facilitate the screening process for principals, allowing them to narrow the pool of candidates they choose to interview.
- 4. Examine district procedures for excessing teachers to ensure that principals are not using the excessing procedure to exit poor-performing teachers from their schools rather than initiating dismissal.** Although the contract addresses excessing in the most reasonable and fair way possible, if Hartford finds evidence of the so-called "dance of the lemons," the district should ensure that principals have the tools and authority to facilitate rigorous evaluation, intervention, and if necessary termination of teachers. To further ensure that the excessing process is not used disingenuously, Hartford should track excessed teachers. If a teacher is excessed more than once, the district should intervene and conduct a rigorous evaluation of that teacher's job performance.
- 5. If possible, place excessed teachers by mutual consent and institute an exit strategy for those who do not find positions.** Hartford should give excessed teachers no more than one year to secure a new position through mutual consent, with teachers being guaranteed salary and benefits during this time. Excessed teachers who do not secure a position during that year should be terminated.
- 6. If forced placements are necessary, then guarantee a fully transparent process.** If mutual consent is not possible, and Hartford must force-place some excessed teachers, the process should be transparent and have principal involvement. Before accepting a forced transfer, principals must have access to a teacher's full personnel file, including ratings on past evaluations.

Principals should hear from their colleagues about a given teacher's strengths and weaknesses. One way to accomplish this would be to gather principals together so that they may equitably distribute excessed staff among them, as a number of other districts do.
- 7. Enforce the district's June 1 deadline for teachers' resignations.** Hartford should enforce the June 1 deadline for resignations and retirements included in its collective bargaining agreement. At the same time, however, the district should allow the resignation to go into effect June 30 and ensure that teachers will not lose their health benefits over the summer. If principals know about vacancies June 1, they can get a head start on filling them before the end of the school year. To enforce this contract provision, Hartford should consider penalizing teachers who do not give notice by June 1, either by making them "resign with prejudice" or imposing fines. At the same time, it could award early notification—with the same effective date of June 30—with such incentives as a bonus.
- 8. Recruit candidates for hard-to-staff subjects earlier in the year.** Because it is more difficult to staff these positions, human resources should consider recruiting candidates from top quality programs earlier in the year. The district can then offer these candidates (and other high quality applicants) a general contract earlier in the year. These teachers can then secure an exact placement once the general hiring period begins in April.

Recommendations for work life and school climate

- 1. Lengthen the teacher work day.** The teacher on-site work day, as defined by the contract, should move immediately to seven hours with a goal of working toward eight hours. Though teachers can voluntarily stay beyond the teacher work day (and many teachers do), the brief work day does not send a message of professionalism, nor does it help teacher fit in time to meet with students, collaborate with other teachers, and plan lessons.
- 2. Give teachers more planning time throughout the school year.** Redistribute the teacher work days at the conclusion of the school year to before or during the student school year. Teacher work days are most beneficial to teachers and students when they can be used to plan and tailor instruction. For example, shifting teacher work days to the end of each marking period would allow teachers time to examine student performance data and design instruction to meet student needs.
- 3. Reduce the number of sick leave days.** To more closely align the number of sick leave days Hartford teachers receive with the national average (and still comply with state policy), the district should provide 15 days of sick leave, rather than 20. Officials should also press for a change in state law to 10 sick days a year. In many workplaces, each month worked puts about a day into a worker's sick leave. Teachers generally work for 10 months and should thus have 10 days of sick leave.
- 4. Closely monitor teacher attendance.** To determine if and where there are patterns of sick leave abuse, Hartford should implement a district-wide tracking system to facilitate principals' ability to monitor teacher attendance, including leaves of absences and leave without pay. This system should include an analysis based on school performance, helping to identify schools and teachers with above-average absenteeism.

The district should encourage principals to exercise their authority to request doctors' notes for use of leave surrounding nonschool days or patterns of excessive leave. Hartford may want to consider a contract provision that allows principals to request an additional medical opinion paid for by the district for teachers whose habitual use of sick leave is excused by a doctor's note.

- 5. Make teacher attendance a mandatory component of teacher evaluations.** Teacher attendance and tardiness are allowed to factor into teacher evaluations, but Hartford should make this an official part of the evaluation instrument.
- 6. Restrict professional development to nonstudent days.** An excessive amount of time that teachers are away from the classroom in Hartford is due to professional development. While sometimes staff development during school hours is unavoidable, it should occur only as a last resort and for no more than two days a year.

Because the teacher work day in Hartford is so short, school-based professional development could occur before the start of the day, as is done in many schools. Teachers are generally too tired to partake in meaningful professional development after school hours.

Recommendations for developing effective teachers and exiting ineffective teachers

- 1. Assign all new teachers a full-time coach for the first two months in the classroom.** Although there is no exact recipe for a successful new teacher induction program, clearly teachers in Hartford need more support. The current model of mentoring, where mentors may meet with new teachers at best once a week, does not provide enough support.

Because the capacity of individual schools is limited, the district needs to take a greater responsibility in managing teacher induction. Efforts to fix similar mentoring structures in big urban school districts across the nation are generally of limited success.

Hartford might consider a bolder strategy than is in place in most districts and, which would also help in its recruitment efforts. Assign the first-year teacher a temporary, full-time coach—an effective teacher who was perhaps ready to retire the previous June. This coach would both co-teach and mentor the new teacher for the first two months of the school year. (After the first two months, depending upon funding, the coach could continue to support the new teacher in weekly or biweekly visits.) Providing this level of support in the first two months is much preferable to providing support that is spread out too thin over two or three years, as most districts are inclined to do.

This approach need not require additional revenue; Hartford could redistribute funds previously spent on rewarding additional degrees (see recommendation for Goal 1) to compensate the coach.

This intensive support, which would be unique in the nation (but not in many countries), and should be marketed as a recruitment strategy. Many first year teachers may be willing to take a lower salary than may otherwise be offered with the promise of that kind of support.

- 2. Select highly effective and experienced teachers as coaches/mentors.** Hartford should choose coaches or mentors based on their record of 1) advancing student achievement and 2) their ability to work with adults. Insofar as possible, coaches should be matched with teachers by grade and/or subject. Furthermore, new teachers should have the opportunity to provide feedback on coach or mentor performance.

- 3. Require that new teachers observe accomplished teachers.** New teachers often say that the most beneficial aspect of induction is having the opportunity to observe more accomplished teachers. Opportunities for peer observation should be frequent throughout a teacher's first year, provided the individual school or district can implement a program that will add real value.

The problem with observation programs such as these is that strong principals will know who new teachers should observe and weaker principals will not know as well. For a program like this to work well, some district coordination is necessary, particularly in order to intervene in schools with weaker leadership.

As Teach For America and other school districts have done, the district may want to create a video library, filming high performing teachers as additional resource for new teachers. A video library ensures that the teacher is observing genuinely strong performance and allows the district to target a new teacher's greatest needs.

- 4. Factor student performance into teacher evaluations.** Objective evidence of student learning should be the most significant criterion of any evaluation. This evidence can include not only standardized test scores, but also classroom-based artifacts such as tests, quizzes and randomly selected student work. (See Figure 16.)

- 5. Make student learning the preponderant criterion for the evaluation rating.** The evaluation instrument should be structured so as to preclude a teacher from receiving a "competent" or "accomplished" rating if found ineffective in the classroom. An instrument that gives as much weight to factors that do not have any direct correlation with student performance does not hold teachers accountable for their most important function: teaching.

- 6. Evaluators should identify other evidence of a teachers' effectiveness apart from what is supplied by the teacher.** Evaluations in which teachers collaborate in the development of goals and objectives for their professional growth wisely allows teachers to contribute to the process. However, ceding to teachers full control over which evidence will be considered in their evaluations prevents a full and objective review of their performance. Evaluators must be able to identify and review evidence beyond what teachers choose to submit.
- 7. Tenure decisions must be based on cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness, not simply an evaluation rating.** Tenure is a significant milestone in a teacher's career, and should only be awarded after deliberate and thoughtful consideration of a teacher's performance. The district should develop a process, such as a hearing, where the cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness would be considered for each teacher and a determination made of whether to award tenure. Such a process also protects the teacher's rights, as he or she is fully aware of the process and has an opportunity to participate.
- 8. All teachers should be observed frequently, and by more than one person.** Principals, their designees, peer reviewers, and occasionally third party observers working for the central office can and should observe all teachers, both tenured and untenured, frequently. Not all feedback need be formal. Many principals find it helpful to make brief but frequent visits to classrooms, jotting a few quick notes down to discuss with the teacher. Especially at the secondary level, observers may need to follow several linked lessons to see how a teacher is faring. Having subject matter specialists observe teachers for the content of their lessons is particularly important.

Protocols that incorporate multiple observers' reflections permit the district to assess the robustness of individual principal's ratings, measured against other observers. Correlation of findings may reduce concerns over the arbitrary nature of evaluations, as teachers rightfully perceive the single-observer evaluation prone to bias or favoritism.
- 9. Observations should be unannounced.** In order to ensure that evaluators view a typical lesson, observations should not be scheduled. Evaluators need to view what normally occurs in a teacher's classroom, not lessons and activities that have been specially prepared for the observation.
- 10. Struggling teachers should receive immediate support.** Any teacher with identified deficiencies needs to receive support as soon as possible. The frequency of evaluation of nontenured teachers increases the likelihood that struggling teachers will not go unrecognized. However, principals must ensure that tenured teachers receive immediate support; the option to place a tenured teacher in remediation during the three-year cycle should be used more frequently and intervention should begin as soon as instructional deficiencies are noted.
- 11. Teachers who do not improve should be eligible for dismissal.** Nontenured teachers with unsatisfactory performance should not have their contract renewed for the following year. Tenured teachers who receive two unsatisfactory evaluations in five years should be eligible for dismissal. The poorly performing teacher who continues to be rated unsatisfactory after remediation should be considered for dismissal in the same year.
- 12. The district should support principals in dismissing ineffective teachers.** Principals should receive early and significant support from the district with regard to underperforming teachers. Such support should include an outside observation by a district observer. Documentation of this support that includes electronic records is especially critical should dismissal become necessary.

The framework of NCTQ's analysis

NCTQ has identified ten goals to help districts align teacher policies with teacher quality needs. Our analysis, identification of strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations all stem from the district's need to meet these ten goals.

Compensation

Goal 1. Compensation should be strategically targeted to making the profession attractive to new teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff assignments. Salaries should incorporate teacher effectiveness in addition to experience. **page 11**

Transfer and assignment

Goal 2. Teacher transfer policies should support a rigorous process for screening and selecting applicants and are based on the mutual consent of teachers and principals. **17**

Goal 3. District policies should minimize the deleterious impact of teacher excessing. **20**

Goal 4. The timeline for hiring new teachers and assigning transfers should occur early enough in the school year to ensure that the district has access to top talent, as well as to minimize any disruption to schools. **22**

Work life and school climate

Goal 5. The schedule and duties assigned to a teacher support the teacher's ability to be effective. **25**

Goal 6. Policies encourage teacher attendance and minimize the deleterious impact of teacher absences. **29**

Developing effective teachers and exiting ineffective teachers

Goal 7. The district should provide all new teachers with an induction program, with particular consideration given to teachers in high-needs schools. **32**

Goal 8. Instructional effectiveness should be the preponderant criterion of formal teacher evaluation. Evaluation results based primarily on evidence of effectiveness should differentiate between high- and low-performing teachers and form the basis for deciding whether to award tenure. **34**

Goal 9. Teachers' performance is assessed regularly, through multiple observations. **37**

Goal 10. Teachers who demonstrate instructional deficiencies should receive assistance; teachers who do not improve should be dismissed. **40**

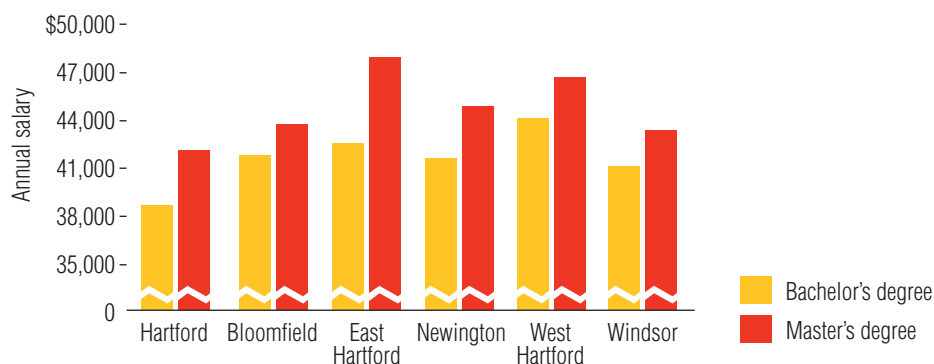
Compensation

Goal 1. Compensation should be strategically targeted to making the profession attractive to new teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff assignments. Salaries should incorporate teacher effectiveness in addition to experience.

Hartford's competitiveness with surrounding districts

Typically, districts compete for teachers with other nearby districts. Candidates often make decisions about where to apply based on a comparison of salaries among several districts in the same area. Analysis of a district's salary scale is most meaningful when measured against local rather than national labor market prices.

Figure 2. How do starting salaries in Hartford compare with neighboring districts?



Source: Salary schedules from Hartford, Bloomfield, East Hartford, Newington, West Hartford, and Windsor.

Starting Salaries. As Figure 2 shows, starting salaries in Hartford are lower than nearly all of the neighboring districts (literally those districts that share a border with Hartford) for both teachers who only have a bachelor's degree and also for teachers who have earned a master's degree. This discrepancy is a distinct disadvantage for Hartford, as it competes for teachers with districts that have less demanding student populations and, one might expect, easier working conditions.¹

Hartford has wisely worked towards increasing starting salaries. Three times in the past six years Hartford has renumbered the steps on the salary schedule so as to replace the lowest starting salary with the salary of the next step. What was once Step 3 on the salary schedule is now Step 1.

Though Hartford's starting salaries are still lower than those of neighboring districts, the salary schedule is compact, meaning higher lifetime earnings and a quicker accession to a maximum salary. Hartford teachers reach the top of the salary schedule in 12 years—

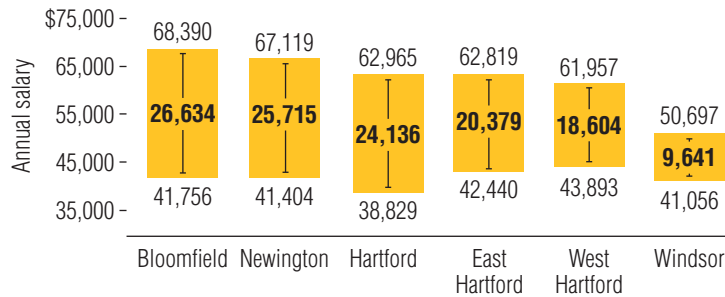
¹ We note however that the discrepancy in starting salaries disappears when calculating the *hours* that teachers are contractually required to work in Hartford with other districts. Accounting for the fact that Hartford teachers work a shorter contractual day than teachers in other districts, Hartford's hourly wage is about the same as surrounding districts. However, effective teachers pay scant attention to the hours they are contractually required to work, so this calculation is of limited value.



far less time than in most U.S. school districts (though comparable to the districts that surround it), where it typically takes teachers between 20 and 25 years to reach their maximum salary. Hartford demonstrates a smart approach, reducing what is normally a protracted period for reaching a maximum salary, emulating the pattern observed in other professions such as law and medicine.

Figure 3. How much do Hartford area teachers earn?

Minimum and maximum salaries for teachers with a **bachelor's** degree, in ranking order

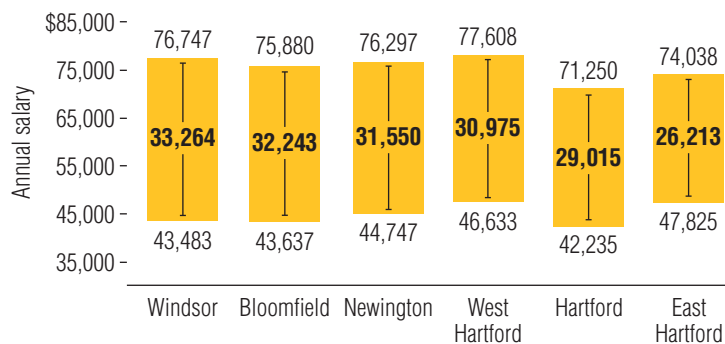


Source: Salary schedules from Hartford, Bloomfield, East Hartford, Newington, West Hartford, and Windsor.

Earnings potential with a bachelor's. As shown in Figure 3, Hartford compares favorably with surrounding districts in terms of earning potential for teachers who have a bachelor's degree. Teachers earn raises of \$24,136 (in constant dollars) from their starting salary, with Bloomfield and Newington districts offering slightly more generous raises. In this respect Hartford salaries compare quite favorably to Windsor school district where teachers with bachelor's degrees receive only \$9,641 in pay raises over their entire career.

Figure 4. How much do Hartford area teachers earn?

Minimum and maximum salaries for teachers with a **master's** degree, in ranking order



Source: Salary schedules from Hartford, Bloomfield, East Hartford, Newington, West Hartford, and Windsor.

Earnings potential with a master's. As shown in Figure 4, Hartford does not compare quite as favorably with other districts in terms of earning potential for teachers who have a master's degree. Teachers can earn raises of \$29,015 (in constant dollars) from their starting salary, but three of the five competitor districts offer higher earnings potential.

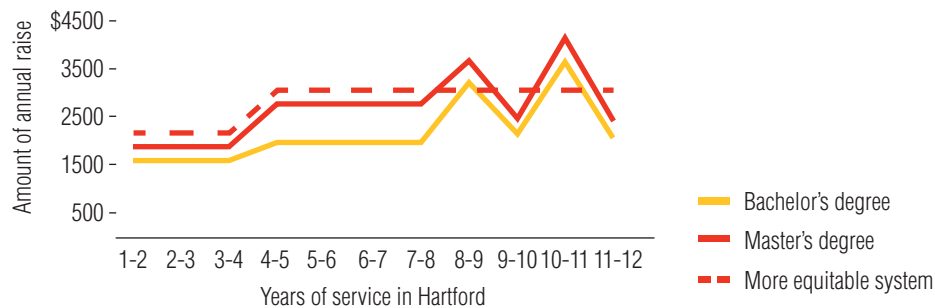
Figures 3 and 4 both compare the percentage increases in salary from starting pay to maximum pay available to teachers depending upon their degree status. Looking at earnings potential over a career, a Hartford teacher with a bachelor's degree sees her salary increase by 62 percent, while a teacher with a master's degree sees her salary increase by 69 percent. Though any difference in earnings potential between teachers with a bachelor's and master's degree is unwarranted, the 7 percent differential in Hartford is quite minimal compared with many other districts, particularly Windsor which has a 53 percent differential.



The structure of teacher pay in Hartford

Step Increases. As Figure 5 shows, annual raises are not uniform on the Hartford salary schedule; instead, the smallest raises occur at the beginning of a teacher’s career and the largest in a teacher’s later years of employment. This structure is inconsistent with research finding that teacher effectiveness does not continue to increase after the first several years of experience. In other words, there is no evidence showing that 20-year veterans are more effective on average than 4- or 5-year veterans. Newer teachers can get discouraged by the slow pace of wage increases, attenuated by policies which openly reveal a preference for veteran teachers.

Figure 5. What are the annual pay increases for Hartford teachers?
Newer teachers get smaller raises than veteran teachers



Source: Hartford Public Schools’ Teacher Salary Schedule 2008-2009.

Tenure. As defined in Connecticut law, Hartford teachers earn tenure after they have completed their fourth year of teaching. Most other states award tenure in two or three years; Connecticut’s decision to delay tenure so that a more meaningful decision can be made about a teacher is appropriate.

Hartford marks tenure with a large salary increase, something rare among school districts nationwide, signaling the importance the district places on a teacher’s attainment of tenure. This tenure pay bump serves as a retention incentive in the critical years when many teachers leave the profession early. What is not as clear is the rigor and meaningfulness of Hartford’s tenure process; the need for the tenure decision to be considered more carefully is discussed in Goal 8.

Pay differentials for master’s degrees. While one might assume advanced degrees, (generally master’s degrees), result in increased teacher effectiveness, the education research over the last 50 years has *conclusively* found otherwise, particularly for degrees not related to the specific subject matter taught. Because school districts routinely incentivize teachers to earn an advanced degree by providing higher pay and advanced certification, these incentives appear to have had a negative impact on the quality, relevance and rigor of the choice of degrees by teachers. Understandably, busy and cash strapped teachers are more apt to select the easiest, fastest and cheapest route to a master’s degree, often without much less consideration for the relevance of the coursework. Nationally, even at the secondary level, fewer than one in four degrees is in the teachers’ subject area. At the elementary level, only a small fraction of these degrees (7 percent) is in a content area.²

Though Connecticut gives local districts full control over salaries, the state effectively requires teachers to earn a master’s degree to get their license renewed.³ It is no surprise, then, that 80 percent of Hartford’s teachers qualify for a higher annual salary for having an advanced degree or additional credits.

2 National Center for Education Statistics, 2002. *The Condition of Education 2002*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education, Table 32-2.

3 Connecticut’s three-tier continuum for teacher certifications includes the “Initial Educator Certificate,” “Provisional Educator Certificate” and “Professional Educator Certificate.” To advance to the provisional certificate, or Tier Two, teachers are required to complete either 10 months of experience in the state’s public school system or 30 months of experience within 10 years in an approved system. To advance to the professional certificate, or Tier Three, teachers are required to complete 30 months of experience under the provisional certificate and any additional coursework prescribed for the endorsement requested, generally a master’s degree or 30 semester hours of credit beyond the bachelor’s degree.

Hartford's salary schedule does not tell the whole story

In addition to the pay increases teachers receive when they go up to the next step on the salary schedule, teachers receive cost of living adjustments (COLA), often every year. COLA is a fixed percentage across all salaries, though in some districts it can be variable between years on the salary schedule. COLAs vary from year to year as well as among districts.

The following table illustrates the effects of a cost of living adjustment on a teacher's salary. The first column shows the stated salaries for 2008-2009 for a teacher with a master's degree for the first three steps on the salary schedule. The second column shows what a teacher who began on the first step in 2008-2009 would actually earn each of his first three years, after the COLA increase.

Stated salary	Actual salary with COLA adjustment
\$42,235	\$42,235
\$44,051	\$44,943
\$45,867	\$47,720

Hartford appears to be making some progress to undo some of the many layers of incentives given to teachers to take more coursework or additional degrees, absent a policy that does not distinguish relevant coursework from irrelevant coursework. The district recently changed its salary structure to include fewer intermediate lanes for any additional credits beyond both bachelor's and master's degrees. Teachers on these intermediate lanes before the lanes were eliminated have been grandfathered into this policy.

Hartford spends approximately \$18 million per year on salary increases based on advanced degrees (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Annual expenditures by the district to incentivize teachers to take additional courses or earn advanced degrees

Salary Lane: Pay increases for additional coursework/degree	Number of teachers currently on lane	HPS's annual expenditures for pay incentives
Bachelor's	382	—
Bachelor's + 15 credits*	4	\$13,260
Master's	591	\$3,806,243
Master's + 15 credits	157	\$1,523,482
Master's + 30 credits	247	\$3,028,529
Master's + 45 credits*	115	\$1,652,352
Master's + 60 credits	104	\$1,674,107
Master's + 75 credits*	114	\$2,006,853
PhD	204	\$3,994,925
Total	1,918	\$17,699,751

*Hartford recently eliminated three lanes: BA +15, MA +45, and MA +75. Teachers who were already eligible to receive the pay increases associated with these lanes were grandfathered.

Tuition reimbursements. Salary expenditures are not the only cost for the district linked with advanced degrees. Often, districts encourage their teachers to take additional coursework by subsidizing tuition. Some districts have strict specifications for the type of courses that qualify for such reimbursement, often limiting it to work that will lead to certification in an area of high need to the district. Hartford's contract specifies only that coursework must be "directly related to their employment." Approximately 10 percent of Hartford teachers receive tuition reimbursement.

Hartford annually spends approximately \$1.2 million on tuition reimbursement for teachers.



Differential Pay. Over the past 10 years, there has been a growing movement to reward teachers for their contributions to student achievement. Hartford is experimenting with both performance bonuses and bonuses to attract teachers to hard-to-staff subjects.

Beginning this school year (and continuing for the next two years), Hartford is piloting **School Improvement Bonuses** of \$2,500 for all teachers at schools that are at the top performance rankings in the district, OSI 4.0+ (Overall School Index, a measure of performance and accountability), or that show significant student improvement.⁴

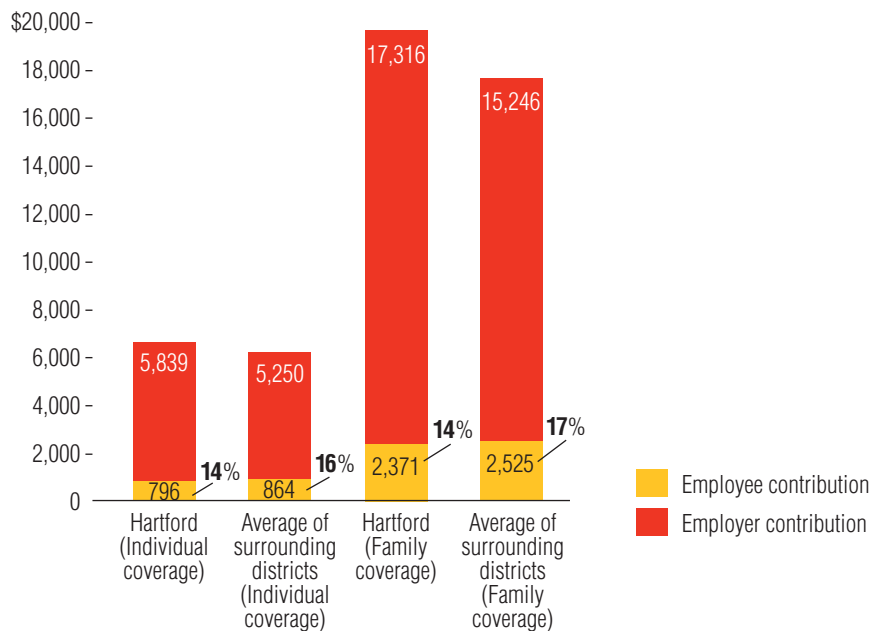
Hartford also offers **signing bonuses** of up to \$5,000 for teachers of subjects deemed “critical needs” and higher initial placement on the salary schedule for teachers of subjects deemed “critical needs.” This school year, 83 new teachers began employment with advanced placement on the salary schedule—47 percent of all new hires working in a hard-to-staff subject.

Hartford offers its **Nationally Board-certified teachers** a one-time bonus of \$5,000. Two teachers received this bonus in the 2007-2008 school year.

Teachers’ health insurance

As Figure 7 shows, Hartford’s health insurance premiums are higher than the average premium for neighboring school districts, while the employee contributions are lower. Hartford teachers contribute 14 percent of the total cost of their health insurance; while on average teachers in the surrounding districts contribute 16 percent of the total cost. Basically, compared with those of surrounding districts, Hartford teachers pay less for a more expensive plan.

Figure 7. How do Hartford’s health insurance costs compare with neighboring districts?



Source: Health insurance benefit plans from Hartford, East Hartford, Newington, West Hartford, and Windsor public schools.

4 In order to be eligible for the bonuses, at least 75 percent of teachers at a school must vote to participate in the program.



Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford's teacher compensation

Strengths

When teachers earn tenure, they receive a big bump in pay.

With the elimination of several intermediate salary lanes, the district is moving away from compensating teachers for advanced coursework, which has no impact on student achievement.

Hartford financially rewards teachers for contributions to student achievement, including a pilot of school-wide performance bonuses and signing bonuses for teachers of critical needs subjects.

Hartford's salary schedule is compact; teachers reach their maximum pay within a relatively short amount of time, increasing lifetime earnings.

Weaknesses

Salary increases are not distributed fairly over time. The largest raises occur at the end of the salary schedule rather than at the beginning when teacher effectiveness shows the most growth.

Despite eliminating some intermediate salary lanes, the district still spends \$18 million annually to compensate teachers for advanced coursework and \$1.2 million annually for tuition reimbursement.

Hartford does not have financial incentives to attract teachers to schools of high need, however defined (e.g., high teacher turnover, low student performance).

Hartford's salaries are in the bottom quartile of those in neighboring districts. This is particularly problematic for an urban district vying with suburban counterparts who have less demanding student populations.

Recommendations for teacher compensation

1. Further consolidate the lanes on the salary schedule. Because advanced degrees do not correlate to teacher effectiveness, Hartford should continue its consolidation of the salary schedule and at least eliminate all intermediate salary lanes, but works towards the elimination of any incentives for advanced degrees not shown to contribute to student achievement.

The intermediate lanes to eliminate include MA +15, MA +30, MA +60, and Ph.D. Teachers who are currently in these lanes can be grandfathered into policy as has been done previously with the BA +15, MA +45, and MA +75 lanes.

2. Redistribute savings to attract and retain effective teachers. Based on estimates that Hartford could “save” \$14 million by eliminating intermediate lanes on the salary schedule, the district could raise salaries to make it more competitive with surrounding districts, as well as provide intensive full-time support for two months to new teachers as is described in Goal 7. Also the district may want to consider funding bonuses to attract highly effective teachers to hard-to-staff schools and reward highly effective staff already at these schools for their longevity.

3. Target existing tuition reimbursement for teachers seeking certification in positions of highest need. Hartford should not use tuition reimbursement funds for any and all coursework, but should target incentives to teachers wishing to teach and needing certification in hard-to-staff subjects.

4. Advocate at the state level to eliminate the requirement of an advanced degree, regardless of grade level or subject matter, in order for teachers to renew their license. Requiring secondary teachers to earn a master's degree in their subject area may make sense. There is no evidence that the state's currently ambiguous requirement that teachers must earn *any* master's degree makes teachers more effective. The requirement is unnecessarily burdensome to teachers and does not contribute to higher student achievement.

Transfer and Assignment

Goal 2. Teacher transfer policies should support a rigorous process for screening and selecting applicants and are based on the mutual consent of teachers and principals.

Hartford has two periods in the year for hiring and transferring teachers: the *Annual Posting*, which begins in March and lasts through May, and a season of *general hiring* that begins in April and lasts through August. The Annual Posting seeks to fill existing vacancies with tenured teachers who wish to transfer. Teachers who accept a position through the Annual Posting may not voluntarily transfer again for two years.

“I try to keep as many vacancies as possible out of the Annual Posting so I can hire who I want.”

—Hartford principal

Over the past three years, approximately 33 teachers on average have secured new placements through the Annual Posting. Some positions see a flood of applicants, forcing the principal to interview a large number of candidates. Other positions receive very few, if any, applicants. The Annual Posting process is comparatively more confusing and complex than the general hiring process. During the general hiring period, principals hire teachers from among voluntary transfers, excessed teachers, and new hires.

Hartford's Strategic Plan calls for shifting more authority for staffing and budgets to individual schools. Ensuring that school administrators have the capacity and tools to make informed hiring decisions is key to the district's improvement efforts.

Procedures specific to the first hiring period, the March “Annual Posting”

- The district advertises known vacancies for 10 days in mid-March. Known vacancies include open positions, positions filled after the school year began, and positions vacated by a retiring or resigning teacher. Teachers wishing to transfer during the Annual Posting file a standard application form that includes such basic information as certification areas and years of service in the district.
- Teachers may apply for only two specific vacancies. Alternatively, teachers may apply to a generalized position at a maximum of two schools, at which they can be considered for any opening that occurs after the Annual Posting period closes.
- Teachers who apply to a specific vacancy are essentially *guaranteed* an interview. These teachers contact the principal to schedule an interview. Principals are not obligated to interview teachers who apply to a generalized position.
- For two weeks in April, principals interview candidates. Teachers are notified about a change in assignment in the middle of May.
- Although not mandated in the teachers' contract, principals in practice are expected to choose the most qualified applicant from this pool. Moreover, they must justify their selection of both candidates to interview and to hire, making it difficult for principals to defer hiring until after the Annual Posting. Because teachers are entitled to the reasons why they were not selected for a position, the Annual Posting is easily subject to time-consuming grievances.

“I interviewed 16 people for the job. It's the right of a tenured teacher in good standing to apply for the job, and it's my obligation to interview them.”

—Hartford principal



Procedures for the second hiring period (April – August)

- Vacancies are posted on Hartford Public Schools’ website. Candidates, both internal and external, apply to vacancies online. Principals screen, interview, and hire applicants. The district then screens and approves principals’ recommendations to ensure that candidate credentials and background checks are in order.

Elements of weak and strong district transfer policies

Weak transfer policies:

- District human resources office is heavily involved in the transfer process.
- Teachers apply for vacancies and secure positions based on seniority.
- Schools may interview some, but not all, candidates.
- Hiring decisions can be grieved.

Strong transfer policies:

- Staffing decisions are made at the school level.
- Teachers apply to vacancies and are selected for interviews by principals.
- Principals select those teachers they wish to hire.
- Hiring decisions cannot be grieved.

Strengths & weaknesses of the current approach to teacher transfer and assignment

Strengths

The hiring process used during the second hiring season works well; teachers apply to vacancies online giving principals an efficient means to select candidates they wish to interview and hire.

During the Annual Posting, principals have the opportunity to interview candidates.

During the Annual Posting, principals are allowed to choose which the teachers they want to hire, unlike in some districts which assign teachers to schools without principal input.

Weaknesses

The facility of this process is not replicated in the Annual Posting.

Because personnel decisions are subject to grievances and principals must be prepared to give reasons for not hiring a teacher who applies to specific vacancies, principals are under pressure to interview every candidate. This process is unnecessarily burdensome and time-consuming for principals. It is a waste of both principals’ and teachers’ time.

Principals do not have enough information on candidates’ professional abilities, such as a teacher’s evaluation ratings, to screen for those they wish to interview.

Any position that was filled after the start of the school year is considered “vacant” and must be advertised in the Annual Posting. This requirement places an unnecessary burden on principals to refill a position that may already be well staffed.



Recommendations for transfer and assignment

1. Give principals more freedom in choosing whom they interview and hire. Principals should be able to screen transfer applicants during the Annual Posting for candidates they wish to interview, as they do during the second hiring period, and should not be required to interview all candidates.

Furthermore, principals should not be forced to select teachers from the limited pool of applicants available during the Annual Posting, nor should they be forced to give the reasons why a particular teacher was not hired.

The district would be wise to classify positions filled after the start of the school year as temporary employees rather than making them subject to the Annual Posting.

Principals should be allowed to hire who they want, when they want, rather than settle for the limited options available in March. Removing all aspects of hiring and transfer decisions from being subject to grievances would facilitate this process.

2. Give principals the tools they need to make informed staffing decisions. The district's online application system should be used during all hiring periods, including during the Annual Posting, to allow principals the opportunity to view the current crop of applicants at all times.

Principals should have access to a teacher's past evaluation ratings and any value-added data on student achievement that is available. In addition, principals should have the freedom to require additional elements of a teacher's application, such as a writing sample and demonstration lesson.

To ensure that principals and schools have the capacity to make high-stakes staffing decisions, Hartford should provide training in interviewing techniques, as well as best practices in the area of staffing.

3. Give teachers more freedom to apply to vacancies. Teachers who wish to apply for vacancies during the Annual Posting should have the opportunity to apply to any position for which they are qualified. Switching the Annual Posting to an online system would facilitate the application process for teachers, enabling them to apply directly to schools for specific vacancies. It also would facilitate the screening process for principals, allowing them to narrow the pool of candidates they choose to interview.

Food for thought: How an online application and transfer system might look

Each teacher already employed by HPS could be given a unique identifier that links basic biographical and performance records such as certification area(s), experience in the system, past evaluation ratings, and any value-added data on student achievement. Teachers apply to vacancies online through this centralized system and principals can more knowledgeably select applicants to interview.



Goal 3. District policies should minimize the deleterious impact of teacher excessing.

When schools are forced to cut positions due, for example, to a change in enrollment or school closings, teachers who are ‘excessed’ are put on Hartford’s “to-be-placed” list. These excessed teachers apply to vacancies during the general hiring period; if they do not secure a position they may be reassigned by the district. Like many districts throughout the country, Hartford identifies teachers for excessing based on their seniority in the school system.

Excessing refers to a loss of a position due to a school closing, program change, or change in student enrollment. A transfer due to excessing may also be called an involuntary transfer or an administrative transfer and excessed teachers are sometimes referred to as “surplus” staff. The process for identifying which teachers to excess is usually done according to reverse order of seniority

Procedures for identifying excessed teachers

- Every school maintains a seniority list, ranking teachers from least to most senior. When a school has an excess of positions due to enrollment or program changes, principals must identify the least senior teachers for the subject or program being cut. These excessed teachers, in addition to those who lose their positions due to a school closing, are placed on Hartford’s “to-be-placed” list.
- Hartford’s collective bargaining agreement states that the superintendent may deviate from seniority for “reasonable cause.”
- Teachers who lose their positions are notified of an impending transfer by June 15.

Procedures for placing excessed teachers

- All teachers on the “to-be placed” list apply to vacancies.
- Teachers continue to receive full salary and benefits while seeking a placement in the district.
- Teachers on the list who do not secure a position by the start of the new school year are placed in schools as “floaters,” filling in as needed at schools. At the start of the 2008 school year, 11 teachers remained on the “to-be-placed” list and were placed as floaters in schools.
- Although some excessed teachers obtain new placements through *mutual consent*, others are assigned by the superintendent. These forced assignments are more likely to occur at low-performing schools because they tend to have more vacancies later in the hiring season.

“It was up to me to pursue the teachers on the to-be-placed list rather than the other way around.”

—Hartford principal



Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford's approach to excessing

Strengths

The collective bargaining agreement requires that excessing decisions be based on a teacher's seniority, the most reasonable and fair way to reduce staff. This precludes principals from excessing as a way to pass off poorly performing teachers. The contract permits the superintendent to deviate from seniority in certain cases.

The district finds temporary assignments for excessed teachers who do not secure a permanent assignment. These teachers serve as long-term substitutes or as floaters, assigned to positions as needed.

In most cases, the district ensures that excessed teachers are hired by the mutual consent of both principal and teacher.

Weaknesses

The collective bargaining agreement does not allow *principals*, only the superintendents to make exceptions in excessing decisions, and district officials noted that the superintendent's waiver provision is rarely exercised.

The district does not place a limit on how much time an excessed teacher can be on the "to-be-placed" list before being terminated from the district. Without such a clause in the contract, teachers can remain on this list receiving full pay and without a permanent assignment indefinitely.

Low-performing schools in Hartford are forced to accept excessed teachers more often than high performing schools, because they tend to have more vacancies late in the hiring season. Consequently, mutual consent hiring does not universally apply to all schools. Forcing principals of already low-performing schools to hire teachers they did not select places a further burden on principals in schools where team building and collaboration are especially important.

Recommendations on excessing

- 1. Examine district procedures for excessing teachers to ensure that principals are not using the excessing procedure to exit poor-performing teachers from their schools rather than initiating dismissal.** Although the contract addresses excessing in the most reasonable and fair way possible, if Hartford finds evidence of the so-called "dance of the lemons," the district should ensure that principals have the tools and authority to facilitate rigorous evaluation, intervention, and if necessary termination of teachers. To further ensure that the excessing process is not used disingenuously, Hartford should track excessed teachers. If a teacher is excessed more than once, the district should intervene and conduct a rigorous evaluation of that teacher's job performance.
- 2. If possible, place excessed teachers by mutual consent and institute an exit strategy for those who do not find positions.** Hartford should give excessed teachers no more than one year to secure a new position through mutual consent, with teachers being guaranteed salary and benefits during this time. Excessed teachers who do not secure a position during that year should be terminated.
- 3. If forced placements are necessary, then guarantee a fully transparent process.** If mutual consent is not possible, and Hartford must force-place some excessed teachers, the process should be transparent and have principal involvement. Before accepting a forced transfer, principals must have access to a teacher's full personnel file, including ratings on past evaluations.

Principals should hear from their colleagues about a given teacher's strengths and weaknesses. One way to accomplish this would be to gather principals together so that they may equitably distribute excessed staff among them, as a number of other districts do.



Goal 4. The timeline for hiring new teachers and assigning transfers should occur early enough in the school year to ensure that the district has access to top talent, as well as to minimize any disruption to schools.

Hartford seeks to place a limited number of voluntary transfers before offering contracts to new hires. The district's Annual Posting is held in the early spring.⁵ After that first round of transfers, the district invites other internal applicants and new hires to apply for vacancies as they become available. This process continues well into August, just before the start of the new school year

Hartford's hiring and transfer timeline

Early March	March 15-30	April 1	April 15-30	May 15	June 1	June 15	June 15-end of August
Principals turn in draft budgets to the district	Vacancies advertised for the Annual Posting	Job fair for new hires	Candidates interview for positions advertised during the Annual Posting	Teachers notified of placements from Annual Posting	Resigning and retiring teachers give notice	Excessed teachers notified about loss of position	Hiring continues for transfers and new hires

5 The district moved its Annual Posting up one month (from April to March) in its 2008-2011 contract.



Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford's hiring and transfer timeline

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Annual Posting process begins in early spring. Internal applicants are given priority for vacant positions and are permitted to transfer voluntarily before the applicant pool is opened to new hires.</p>	<p>Because principals often interview all applicants during the Annual Posting, it takes an exceedingly long time to place transferring teachers. Teachers are not notified whether they are selected until May 15, two months later.</p>
<p>Hartford posts its vacancies online, accessible to all teachers and new hires. New hires and staff may apply online through the district's user-friendly system.</p>	<p>The application for the Annual Posting is not electronic, but a paper application.</p> <p>Some of the district's vacancies are not listed for specific schools or subject areas, while other positions are. The only positions posted for specific schools during the general hiring period appear at the district's newest schools.</p>
<p>A job fair to recruit new hires is held in early April, in theory allowing the district to compete for recent graduates with neighboring school districts.</p>	<p>It is not clear how many early contracts are awarded during this spring season; Hartford only tracks teachers' start dates and not when they were actually hired or offered a position.</p>
<p>Hartford principals develop draft budgets by early March, allowing them to project staffing allocations for the following year.</p>	<p>The district does not enforce the deadline for resigning teachers to give notice to the district nor is there a penalty for failing to do so. Teachers have a disincentive to give notice any earlier than the beginning of July because they stand to lose health benefits within one month of their resignation date.</p>
<p>Retiring and resigning teachers are required to give notice around June 1, which is sooner than many districts require.</p>	<p>Teachers whose positions are to be excessed are not notified until June 15, which prevents them from applying to vacancies earlier in the spring hiring season. As a result, the district must do the bulk of hiring of excessed teachers during the summer months, creating a rougher start to the school year.</p>
<p>Transfers during the school year are rare, though not explicitly banned. Both sending and receiving principals must approve voluntary transfers during the school year, and teachers must give up their right to return.</p>	

Recommendations for hiring timelines

- 1. Enforce the district’s June 1 deadline for teachers’ resignations.** Hartford should enforce the June 1 deadline for resignations and retirements included in its collective bargaining agreement. At the same time, however, the district should allow the resignation to go into effect June 30 and ensure that teachers will not lose their health benefits over the summer. If principals know about vacancies June 1, they can get a head start on filling them before the end of the school year. To enforce this contract provision, Hartford should consider penalizing teachers who do not give notice by June 1, either by making them “resign with prejudice” or imposing fines. At the same time, it could award early notification—with the same effective date of June 30—with such incentives as a bonus.
- 2. Recruit candidates for hard-to-staff subjects earlier in the year.** Because it is more difficult to staff these positions, human resources should consider recruiting candidates from top quality programs earlier in the year. The district can then offer these candidates (and other high quality applicants) a general contract earlier in the year. These teachers can then secure an exact placement once the general hiring period begins in April.

A better timeline for the spring transfer and hiring season might look like the following

March 1	March 15	March 30	April 1-onward	April 15-May 15	May 15-onward	June 1	June 30
Principals receive their school budgets	Early notification period for resignation/retirement (effective June 30), incentive payment offered to encourage early notification	Teachers notified of any excessing that the district has to do	New hires offered general contract	Transfer season: Voluntary transfers and excessed teachers apply for vacancies and secure their positions	Remaining vacancies open up to new hires	Notification deadline for resignation/retirement; effective June 30	80-90 percent of hiring completed; remaining positions filled over the summer

Work Life

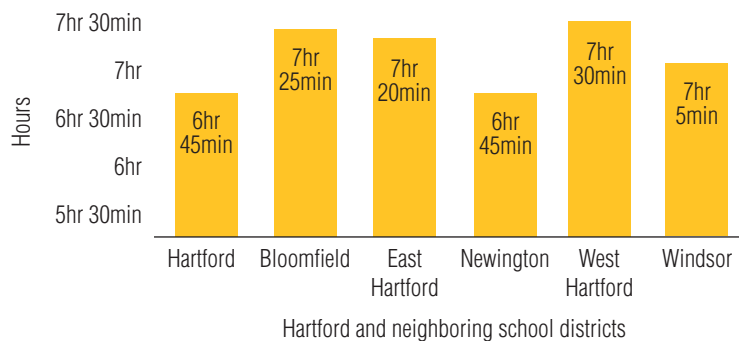
Goal 5. The schedule and duties assigned to a teacher support the teacher's ability to be effective.

Though an eight-hour work day is standard in most professions, the hours teachers are expected to be on site vary greatly from school district to school district. Many districts operate with an assumption that teachers can do much of their planning and grading work at home. Teachers have always valued such flexibility. On the other hand, districts seeking to have their teachers engage in joint planning, faculty meetings, after-school support, and other school-wide activities can be frustrated by rigid expectations placed in many teacher contracts which sharply limit teacher time in the school building.

Of the 100 large districts in the NCTQ TR³ database, the minimum that teachers are required to be on-site is 6 hours and 15 minutes. The maximum among these districts is 8 hours. Hartford, at 6 hours and 45 minutes, falls closer to the spectrum of districts requiring less amount of time. Only 10 percent of the districts in the TR³ database require teachers to be on site less than 7 hours a day.

Comparing Hartford just to neighboring districts, it is again at the low end of the spectrum.

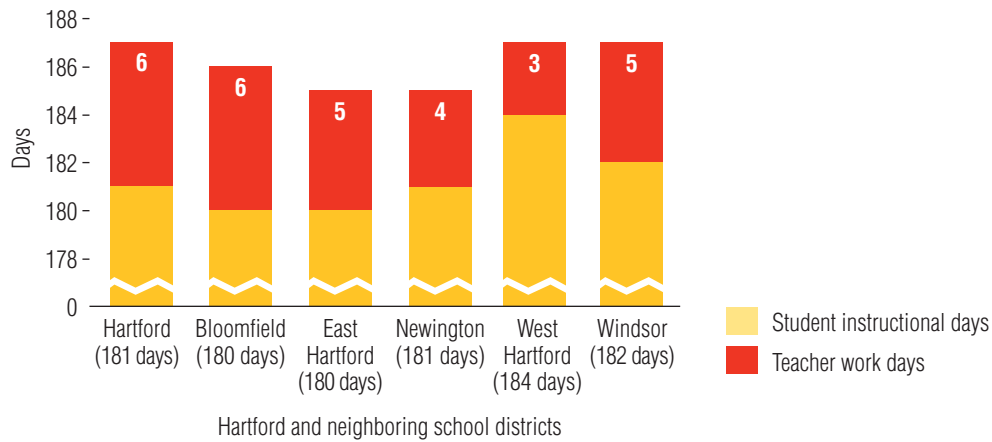
Figure 8. What is the length of the contractual teacher workday?



Although they may appear slight, when compounded on an annual basis these deviations add up to significant disparities in teacher work time and student learning. **Comparing two school districts, each with a 180-day school year, a thirty-minute difference in the student school day translates into 15 fewer days per school year between them.**

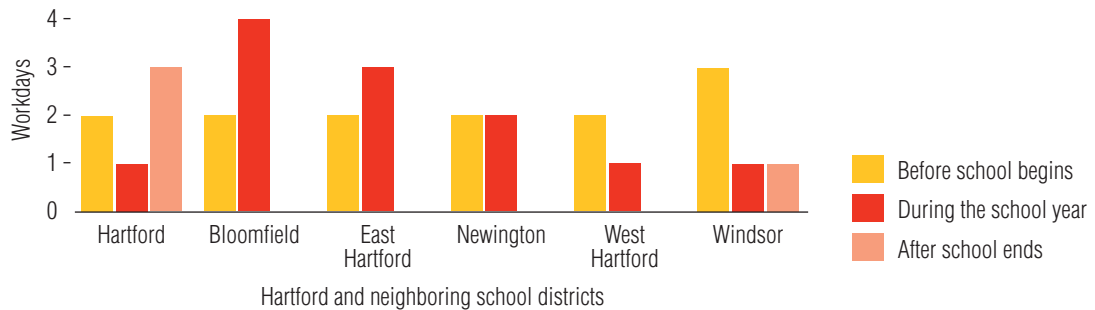


Figure 9. What is the length of the contractual teacher work year?



As Figure 9 shows, Hartford has more teacher work days when students are not scheduled to be present than most of the neighboring districts. In terms of how Hartford falls among other districts in the nation, both it and the surrounding districts are very much at the low end of teacher work days. About half of the 100 districts in the TR³ database have over 10 days of teacher work days and only 27 have 6 or fewer days like Hartford.

Figure 10. How are teacher workdays distributed over the year?



Source: District calendars for Hartford, Bloomfield, East Hartford, Newington, West Hartford, and Windsor.

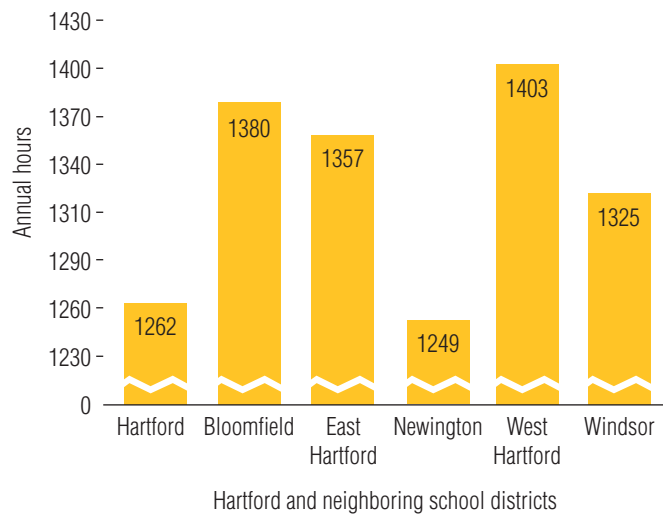
When the district schedules teacher work days is important, too. Unlike the neighboring districts, Hartford places most of their six teacher professional development days at the end of the school year, as shown in Figure 10.

“Most teachers at my school leave right after school.”

—Second-year teacher



Figure 11. How many contractual hours do teachers work in a year?



*Calculation is based on a 6-hour, 45-minute work day for Hartford. Some schools within the district deviate from this schedule.

Figure 11 shows the number of hours that teachers must be on site, in their school buildings, according to the Hartford teacher contract. Hartford requires far fewer hours than most of the neighboring districts. Compared to the 100 districts in the TR³ database, Hartford is again at the low end, requiring among the fewest on-site hours.

In the Hartford teacher contract, every minute of the teacher's work day is spelled out, reducing principals' flexibility, curtailing teachers' ability to exercise professional judgment, and making it harder for schools to operate.

For example:

- The contract stipulates that teachers need be present only 10 minutes before and 10 minutes after students arrive and depart.
- The contract limits faculty meetings to twice per month; the meetings may not exceed one hour.
- Secondary teachers cannot be required to attend more than two 45-minute meetings (such as team or grade-level meetings) per month. Pre-K-grade 6 teachers cannot be required to attend more than one such meeting per month.

“Students often arrive before teachers are at school, but the union rep says I cannot ask teachers to arrive a few minutes early because it would encroach on their time.”

—Hartford principal



Strengths & weaknesses of teacher scheduling in Hartford

Strengths

Hartford's calendar includes six teacher work days without students.

Policies exist to encourage collaboration, such as required faculty meetings, weekly extended work days for secondary teachers, and monthly extended work days for elementary teachers.

The school day can be extended to increase student instructional time. The school year can be extended to increase staff professional development time.

Weaknesses

Half of the teacher work days occur at the conclusion of the student school year. These work days are most valuable before or during the school year when the time is used to prepare for the current students and teaching load.

The time available to implement this collaborative work environment is not available. The teacher work day is already the shortest of neighboring districts and at the bottom 10 percent of the districts in the TR³ database.

The contract makes it too difficult to conduct business after school.

Though some schools have extended schedules, on average the teacher work day is too short at 6 hours, 45 minutes. This is only 20 minutes longer than the student day.

Only eight schools have extended school days and only one has an extended school year. Only new or magnet programs have taken advantage of this flexibility.

Even under these arrangements, the extension of learning time is still quite minimal and does not result in a dramatic increase in school time. Furthermore, it is unclear if the longer school day directly correlates to an increase in instructional time.

Recommendations for the teacher work day

- 1. Lengthen the teacher work day.** The teacher on-site work day, as defined by the contract, should move immediately to seven hours with a goal of working toward eight hours. Though teachers can voluntarily stay beyond the teacher work day (and many teachers do), the brief work day does not send a message of professionalism, nor does it help teacher fit in time to meet with students, collaborate with other teachers, and plan lessons.
- 2. Give teachers more planning time throughout the school year.** Redistribute the teacher work days at the conclusion of the school year to before or during the student school year. Teacher work days are most beneficial to teachers and students when they can be used to plan and tailor instruction. For example, shifting teacher work days to the end of each marking period would allow teachers time to examine student performance data and design instruction to meet student needs.



Goal 6. Policies encourage teacher attendance and minimize the deleterious impact of teacher absences.

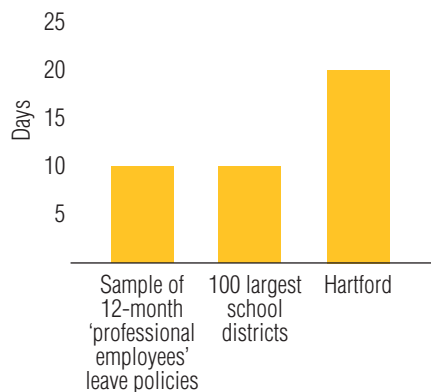
Hartford has extremely generous leave policies. Hartford teachers currently receive 20 days of sick leave, five of which can be taken as personal days. At 20 days, this is twice as many as the average number of days provided by the 100 large school districts in the NCTQ TR³ database.

Connecticut statute grants teachers a minimum of 15 sick leave days a year—the highest of any state.

The Hartford teacher contract also states that teachers who exhaust their 20 allotted leave days can have an additional five days of leave. It is therefore possible for teachers to be absent 25 days per year, or 14 percent of the school year, without consequence.

In spite of the fact that Hartford teachers work a 10-month contract, they receive twice as much sick leave as the average American worker on a 12-month contract, as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. How many sick days are allowed annually?



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.nctq.org/tr3, HPS/HFT 2008-11 collective bargaining agreement.

On average, Hartford teachers use 11 of their 20 allotted leave days for sick leave. This compares unfavorably with a Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that workers on a 12-month contract on average take nine sick leave days a year.⁶

Combining all types of teacher absences, whether due to sickness, personal days, professional development, or other reasons, teachers in Hartford are away from the classroom on average 15 days a school year or 12 percent of the school year. Studies of broader patterns have found public school teachers miss 5 percent of the school year and workers in other occupation miss only 3 percent.⁷

Hartford's policies for using leave for professional development purposes are quite lax. The only requirement is that teachers notify their principal 10 days in advance of their absence. Other school districts restrict the number of professional

"I have one teacher who has been out since the second day of school."

—Hartford principal in February

"The year after [this teacher] got tenure, he started taking Mondays and Fridays off."

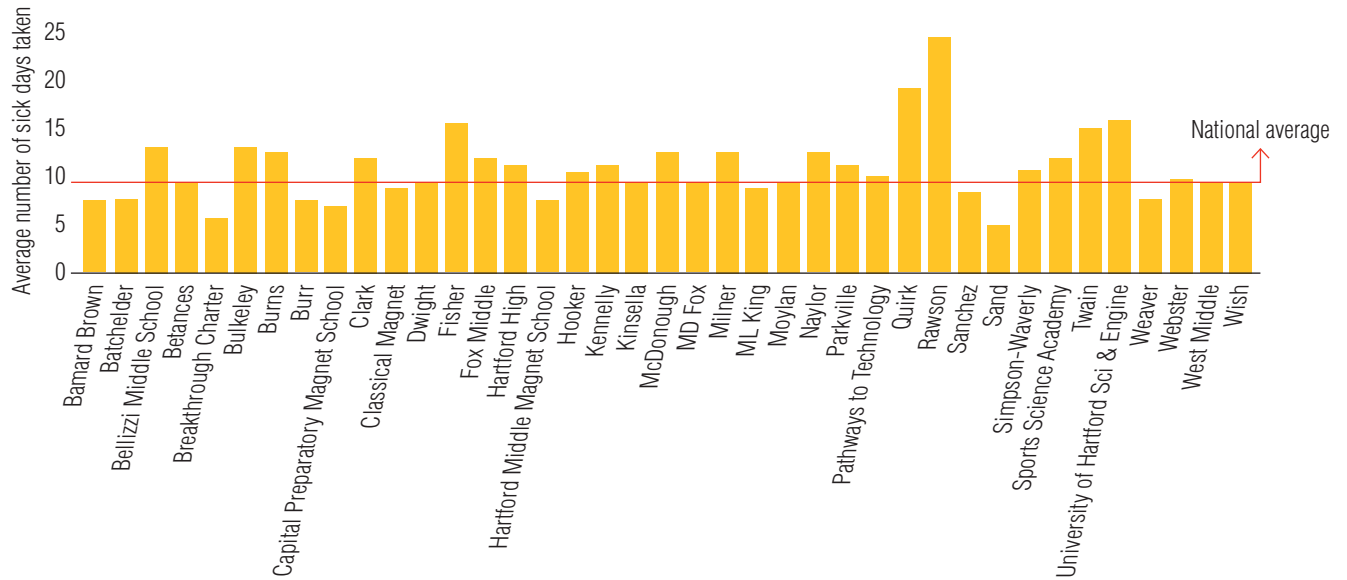
—Hartford principal

6 Ehrenberg et.al. (1991) "School District Leave Policies, Teacher Absenteeism and Student Achievement," *Journal of Human Resources* and Podgursky, Michael, (2005) "Check the Facts: Fringe Benefits," *Education Next*.

7 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey 2006*, Table 47.

development days teachers can use during school hours, generally between two to five days. Other districts prohibit teachers from taking any professional leave on days that students are present.

Figure 13. How many sick days are taken by teachers at Hartford schools?



Source: Hartford Public Schools human resources, 2007-08

Figure 13 shows the tremendous variation in sick leave days taken by teachers across the Hartford school district, with Rawson and Quirk schools easily doubling the number of days taken by teachers in many schools. It is incumbent upon the school district to examine such schools to determine the root of such liberal leave allowances.

Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford’s attendance and leave policies

Strengths

- Some principals monitor teacher absences.
- The contract states that extending a holiday, weekend, or break may be considered a pattern of abuse.
- The contract requires medical documentation after five consecutive days of absence or if a teacher’s attendance record exhibits excessive use or abuse (as determined by the school’s administrator).
- The Hartford Evaluation Handbook states that “Absenteeism and tardiness should be included in the determination of acceptable job performance.”

Weaknesses

- The number of sick leave days given is excessive and well above the national average.
- Hartford has no district-wide system to facilitate principal monitoring of absence data.
- The contract does not discuss the use of district-approved physicians for second medical opinions.
- No specific guidelines for evaluating attendance are given. It does not appear that teachers are currently being disciplined or dismissed for excessive absenteeism.



Recommendations on teacher attendance and leave

1. Reduce the number of sick leave days. To more closely align the number of sick leave days Hartford teachers receive with the national average (and still comply with state policy), the district should provide 15 days of sick leave, rather than 20. Officials should also press for a change in state law to 10 sick days a year. In many workplaces, each month worked puts about a day into a worker's sick leave. Teachers generally work for 10 months and should thus have 10 days of sick leave.

Figure 14. How much could Hartford save if sick and professional leave were reduced?

	Results of current leave policies	Results with one-third reduction
Leave days taken per teacher	13.7	9.1
Yearly substitute cost per teacher (\$100/day)	\$1,370	\$910
District's total substitute cost (1,901 teachers)	\$2,604,370	\$1,729,910
Savings		\$874,460

2. Closely monitor teacher attendance. To determine if and where there are patterns of sick leave abuse, Hartford should implement a district-wide tracking system to facilitate principals' ability to monitor teacher attendance, including leaves of absences and leave without pay. This system should include an analysis based on school performance, helping to identify schools and teachers with above-average absenteeism.

The district should encourage principals to exercise their authority to request doctors' notes for use of leave surrounding nonschool days or patterns of excessive leave. Hartford may want to consider a contract provision that allows principals to request an additional medical opinion paid for by the district for teachers whose habitual use of sick leave is excused by a doctor's note.

3. Make teacher attendance a mandatory component of teacher evaluations. Teacher attendance and tardiness are allowed to factor into teacher evaluations, but Hartford should make this an official part of the evaluation instrument.

4. Restrict professional development to nonstudent days. An excessive amount of time that teachers are away from the classroom in Hartford is due to professional development. While sometimes staff development during school hours is unavoidable, it should occur only as a last resort and for no more than two days a year.

Because the teacher work day in Hartford is so short, school-based professional development could occur before the start of the day, as is done in many schools. Teachers are generally too tired to partake in meaningful professional development after school hours.

Developing Effective Teachers, Exiting Ineffective Teachers

Goal 7. The district should provide all new teachers with an induction program, with particular consideration given to teachers in high-needs schools.

Induction is a critical time for new teachers. The difference between having a lot, some, little, or no support can explain a great deal of the successes or failures new teachers experience. A strong induction program also provides the building blocks for leading up to all-important decision made at the end of the fourth year of teaching: whether to award tenure to a teacher.

Unfortunately, new teachers in Hartford receive limited support. Policy describes that they will attend a summer orientation program and are supposed to be assigned a mentor once in the classroom. Each building is supposed to have a “lead mentor” who oversees the mentoring program and “building mentors” who work with individual teachers. But interviews with teachers and administrators reveal that mentoring is not in practice in several, if not many, schools.

Hartford’s induction policies reflect the remnants of Connecticut’s BEST Program, which the state legislature required for two decades until it was repealed this year. BEST was intended to be a comprehensive program of mentoring, professional development, and assessment of a professional portfolio. In the last few years, Hartford’s program dwindled, consisting of centralized help in creating the state-mandated portfolio and a few officially appointed mentors.

Hartford’s three-year Strategic Operating Plan has two goals related to new teacher support slated to begin in spring 2009: provide a two-year induction and assign new teachers an effective building-based mentor.

“You are left on your own to find support; everyone’s so busy.”

—Third-year teacher

Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford’s new teacher support

Strengths

Lead mentors are selected based on their experience and training.

Policy allows new teachers eight half-days of release time to observe other teachers.

Lead mentors receive a small stipend.

Weaknesses

Not every new teacher is assigned a mentor; there are often fewer mentors than necessary to meet the needs of new teachers.

Individually assigned mentors have little in the way of qualification requirements; they are not selected for their performance or mentoring skills.

District officials, teachers, and administrators acknowledge that this does not occur due to the lack of substitutes.

Individually assigned mentors receive no stipend. There is little incentive, either monetary or as an honor, to take on this responsibility.



Recommendations for improving new teacher support

1. Assign all new teachers a full-time coach for the first two months in the classroom. Although there is no exact recipe for a successful new teacher induction program, clearly teachers in Hartford need more support. The current model of mentoring, where mentors may meet with new teachers at best once a week, does not provide enough support.

Because the capacity of individual schools is limited, the district needs to take a greater responsibility in managing teacher induction. Efforts to fix similar mentoring structures in big urban school districts across the nation are generally of limited success.

Hartford might consider a bolder strategy than is in place in most districts and, which would also help in its recruitment efforts. Assign the first-year teacher a temporary, full-time coach—an effective teacher who was perhaps ready to retire the previous June. This coach would both co-teach and mentor the new teacher for the first two months of the school year. (After the first two months, depending upon funding, the coach could continue to support the new teacher in weekly or biweekly visits.) Providing this level of support in the first two months is much preferable to providing support that is spread out too thin over two or three years, as most districts are inclined to do.

This approach need not require additional revenue; Hartford could redistribute funds previously spent on rewarding additional degrees (see recommendation for Goal 1) to compensate the coach.

This intensive support, which would be unique in the nation (but not in many countries), and should be marketed as a recruitment strategy. Many first year teachers may be willing to take a lower salary than may otherwise be offered with the promise of that kind of support.

2. Select highly effective and experienced teachers as coaches/mentors. Hartford should choose coaches or mentors based on their record of 1) advancing student achievement and 2) their ability to work with adults. Insofar as possible, coaches should be matched with teachers by grade and/or subject. Furthermore, new teachers should have the opportunity to provide feedback on coach or mentor performance.

3. Require that new teachers observe accomplished teachers. New teachers often say that the most beneficial aspect of induction is having the opportunity to observe more accomplished teachers. Opportunities for peer observation should be frequent throughout a teacher's first year, provided the individual school or district can implement a program that will add real value.

The problem with observation programs such as these is that strong principals will know who new teachers should observe and weaker principals will not know as well. For a program like this to work well, some district coordination is necessary, particularly in order to intervene in schools with weaker leadership.

As Teach For America and other school districts have done, the district may want to create a video library, filming high performing teachers as additional resource for new teachers. A video library ensures that the teacher is observing genuinely strong performance and allows the district to target a new teacher's greatest needs.

Goal 8. Instructional effectiveness should be the preponderant criterion of formal teacher evaluation. Evaluation results based primarily on evidence of effectiveness should differentiate between high- and low-performing teachers and form the basis for deciding whether to award tenure.

The evaluation of the **nontenured** Hartford teacher considers the following criteria:

- The teacher's classroom performance from a minimum of two observations, measured against the state's teaching standards.
- Student work samples selected and presented by the teacher to demonstrate improved student learning.
- The degree to which the teacher meets goals and objectives developed collaboratively with the evaluator.

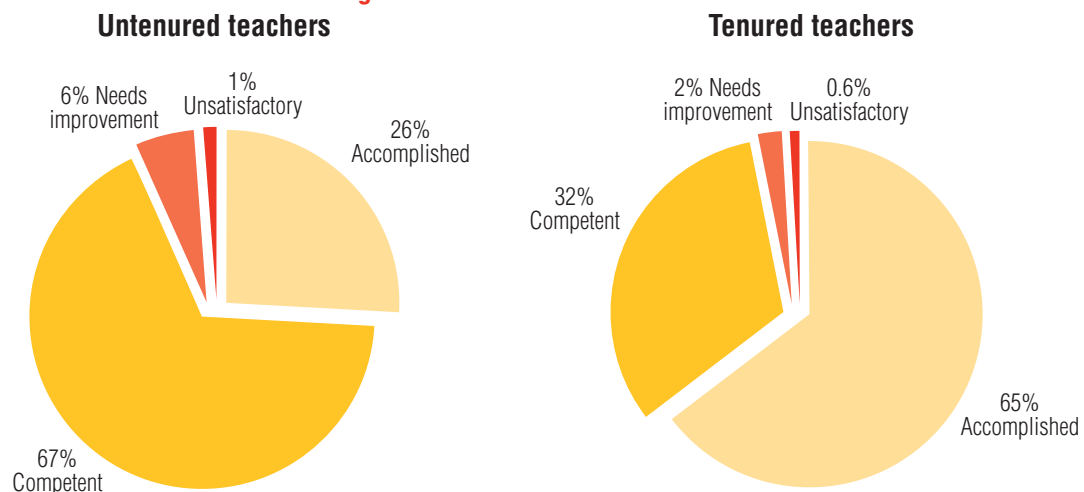
The evaluation of the **tenured** Hartford teacher considers the following criteria:

- The teacher's development and implementation of a professional growth plan.
- Data sources selected by the teacher to document student learning, including but not limited to student work samples, teacher journals, artifact collections, interviews/questionnaires, study group feedback, pre- and post-test measures, self-evaluations, standardized test results, videotapes, and/or student or parent feedback. No one source is required.
- Classroom observations are not included unless the teacher's performance is in question.

Evidence of student learning is not the preponderant criterion in Hartford's teacher evaluations. Also, both nontenured and tenured teachers determine which evidence will be considered to demonstrate improved student learning; as a result, there is no assurance that any objective evidence is included in the evaluation.

Without such evidence, Hartford's evaluation instrument cannot adequately differentiate between high- and low-performing teachers. As shown in Figure 15 below, few teachers receive an unsatisfactory rating.

Figure 15. What are the evaluation ratings of Hartford teachers?



Source: Hartford Public Schools human resources, 2007-08 school year data.

Because evaluation ratings are the basis for awarding tenure, Hartford grants tenure to teachers without clear evidence of whether or not they are effective. There is no separate process by which the district reviews teachers' performance to determine whether to award tenure to a probationary teacher. Any teacher with a satisfactory rating will receive tenure virtually automatically.

"If you get someone who is substandard but has gotten evaluations as 'competent,' it is hard to remove them."

—Hartford principal



Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford's teacher evaluation criteria

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The language in the evaluation handbook emphasizes a connection between teacher evaluation and student learning.</p>	<p>The preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations is not evidence of student learning. The evaluation instrument does not require consideration of objective evidence of student learning nor does it articulate that a teacher may not receive a satisfactory rating if deemed ineffective in the classroom.</p> <p>There is currently no data system in the Hartford schools that connects teachers with individual student performance, making it virtually impossible to conduct a value-added assessment of teacher performance over time.</p>
<p>Teachers have input into the development of goals and objectives for professional growth.</p>	<p>Teachers select their own evidence of student learning to show their evaluator.</p> <p>Teacher ratings are inflated: less than 1 percent of teachers were rated unsatisfactory in 2007-2008, and two-thirds of tenured teachers received the highest rating of "accomplished." There is a clear disconnect between school performance ratings, student performance, and the evaluation ratings of teachers.</p> <p>These inflated ratings form the basis for tenure decisions, and result in the awarding of tenure to teachers without objective evidence of whether they are effective in the classroom.</p>



Recommendations for teacher evaluation criteria

- 1. Factor student performance into teacher evaluations.** Objective evidence of student learning should be the most significant criterion of any evaluation. This evidence can include not only standardized test scores, but also classroom-based artifacts such as tests, quizzes and randomly selected student work. (See Figure 16.)
- 2. Make student learning the preponderant criterion for the evaluation rating.** The evaluation instrument should be structured so as to preclude a teacher from receiving a “competent” or “accomplished” rating if found ineffective in the classroom. An instrument that gives as much weight to factors that do not have any direct correlation with student performance does not hold teachers accountable for their most important function: teaching.
- 3. Evaluators should identify other evidence of a teachers’ effectiveness apart from what is supplied by the teacher.** Evaluations in which teachers collaborate in the development of goals and objectives for their professional growth wisely allows teachers to contribute to the process. However, ceding to teachers full control over which evidence will be considered in their evaluations prevents a full and objective review of their performance. Evaluators must be able to identify and review evidence beyond what teachers choose to submit.
- 4. Tenure decisions must be based on cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness, not simply an evaluation rating.** Tenure is a significant milestone in a teacher’s career, and should only be awarded after deliberate and thoughtful consideration of a teacher’s performance. The district should develop a process, such as a hearing, where the cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness would be considered for each teacher and a determination made of whether to award tenure. Such a process also protects the teacher’s rights, as he or she is fully aware of the process and has an opportunity to participate.

Figure 16. Sources of objective evidence of student learning

Many educators struggle to identify possible sources of objective student data. Some examples include:

- Standardized test scores.
- Periodic diagnostic assessments.
- Benchmark assessments that show student growth.
- Artifacts of student work connected to specific learning standards that are randomly selected for review by the principal or senior faculty, scored using rubrics and descriptors.
- Examples of typical assignments, assessed for their quality and rigor.
- Periodic checks on progress with the curriculum coupled with evidence of student mastery of the curriculum from quizzes, tests, and exams.



Goal 9. Teachers’ performance is assessed regularly, through multiple observations.

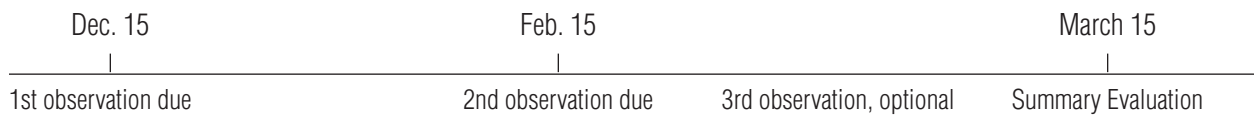
Like many districts, Hartford evaluates nontenured teachers more frequently than veteran tenured teachers. While a school principal or his/her designee may observe a nontenured teacher two or three times in a given year, a principal does not ever have to observe a tenured teacher in the classroom. All obligations for the evaluation of tenured teachers can be met through individual conferences with the teacher.

Further, although nontenured teachers receive a summative evaluation rating each year, tenured teachers only receive a rating once every three years. Of the 100 large districts in the NCTQ TR³ database, over 40 percent require annual evaluations of tenured teachers and 35 percent require tenured teachers to be evaluated at the same or with less frequency than Hartford requires.

Nontenured teachers – Professional Appraisal Phase

The evaluation of nontenured teachers includes formal classroom observations.

Figure 17. Observation timeline



* Professional Intervention may begin at any time, ideally before the end of 1st semester

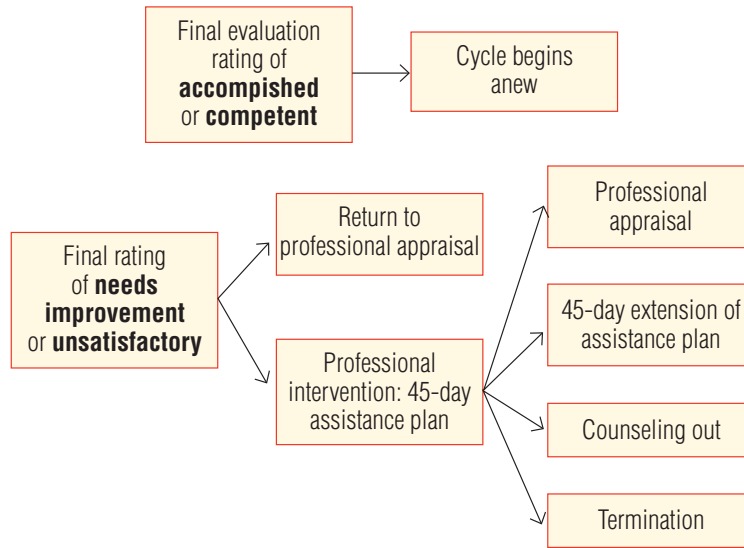
These observations are normally performed by the principal, who may share the responsibility with other administrators or department chairpersons. The use of department chairs or lead teachers to assist the principal in evaluations varies from school to school.

Tenured teachers – Professional Growth Phase

All Hartford tenured teachers are on a three-year professional growth cycle that may or may not include formal classroom observations:

- Year 1: Teacher and evaluator (usually the principal) collaborate to develop the goals and objectives of a professional growth plan. The plan is reviewed and modified, if necessary, at mid-year and end-of-year conferences. There are no classroom observations unless performance is in question. The teacher may be placed on an assistance plan at any point.
- Year 2: Repeat of first year.
- Year 3: At the end of the year, the teacher prepares a final report in which she assesses her success in meeting the goals and objectives of the customized professional growth plan. The teacher and evaluator meet to discuss the report and evidence selected by the teacher of student learning. The evaluator assigns the teacher a final evaluation rating.

Figure 18. What happens to tenured teachers as a result of the Year 3 summative evaluation?



Strengths & weaknesses of Hartford's approach to teacher evaluation

Strengths

Nontenured teachers must be formally observed twice and at least once by end of first semester.

Informal observations are permitted and can be factored into a teacher's evaluation rating.

There is an established process for the professional development plan of a tenured teacher that requires the plan to be reviewed regularly during each three-year cycle.

Weaknesses

Tenured teachers are not observed teaching unless their performance is in question.

Nontenured teachers are generally observed by only one party, providing no opportunity to correct bias or misperception on the part of the evaluator.

Conversations with principals and teachers suggest that informal observations and "walk-throughs" are infrequent in many schools.

Tenured teachers only receive a formal evaluation rating once every three years.



Recommendations for improving teacher evaluation

1. All teachers should be observed frequently, and by more than one person. Principals, their designees, peer reviewers, and occasionally third party observers working for the central office can and should observe all teachers, both tenured and untenured, frequently. Not all feedback need be formal. Many principals find it helpful to make brief but frequent visits to classrooms, jotting a few quick notes down to discuss with the teacher. Especially at the secondary level, observers may need to follow several linked lessons to see how a teacher is faring. Having subject matter specialists observe teachers for the content of their lessons is particularly important.

Protocols that incorporate multiple observers' reflections permit the district to assess the robustness of individual principal's ratings, measured against other observers. Correlation of findings may reduce concerns over the arbitrary nature of evaluations, as teachers rightfully perceive the single-observer evaluation prone to bias or favoritism.

2. Observations should be unannounced. In order to ensure that evaluators view a typical lesson, observations should not be scheduled. Evaluators need to view what normally occurs in a teacher's classroom, not lessons and activities that have been specially prepared for the observation.



Goal 10. Teachers who demonstrate instructional deficiencies should receive assistance; teachers who do not improve should be dismissed.

In 2007-2008, 26 nontenured teachers were dismissed or resigned in lieu of termination. Two tenured teachers resigned in lieu of termination through a separation agreement.

There is a clear disconnect between the number of teachers rated unsatisfactory (or lower) on their performance evaluations and student achievement in Hartford. These figures, along with rates of nonrenewals and teacher dismissals, suggest that principals are not holding teachers to a high enough standard. The evaluation procedures currently in place in Hartford appear sound on paper, but are not used effectively to hold teachers accountable.

Nontenured teachers in need of improvement

If at any time a nontenured teacher demonstrates instructional deficiencies, the teacher may be identified for intervention. The Professional Intervention Phase lasts 45 days and can be extended for an additional 45-day period. Intervention plans are customized by the teacher and evaluator according to the teacher's need. Mentoring, observation of other teachers, professional development, and coursework are all options in helping the teacher achieve improvement goals. Every teacher on an improvement plan must be observed twice for a minimum of 45 minutes. One of the observations must be accompanied by a pre- and post-conference with written feedback.

“Teachers can't contest the content of evaluations but they can contest procedural things. People retain their jobs if the principal fails to meet even one deadline in the dismissal process.”

—Hartford principal

Nontenured teachers must be observed in the first half of the school year; consequently, intervention for any identified deficiencies can begin quickly. If deficiencies are not immediately identified, the observation schedule still ensures multiple opportunities for remediation to begin.

At the conclusion of the 45-day period, a determination is made that the deficiencies have been corrected, additional remediation time is necessary, or the teacher's contract will not be renewed.

Tenured teachers in need of improvement

A tenured teacher who demonstrates instructional deficiencies is either identified for classroom observations (tenured teachers are not otherwise observed; see goal 9) or is identified for intervention.

Intervention requirements and timelines are the same for tenured teachers as for nontenured teachers. Intervention may begin at any point during the year or during the three-year evaluation cycle, however, a teacher rated unsatisfactory in the summary evaluation report at the end of the three-year cycle would not receive support until the following school year. Tenured teachers who improve after being placed in intervention return to the regular three-year professional appraisal cycle. Tenured teachers who do not improve can extend remediation for one cycle, can be counseled out of the district or the district can begin dismissal procedures against the teacher. The dismissal procedures are specifically outlined in state statute, and require multiple steps with deadlines for notification of intent to dismiss and timelines for the hearings and appeals process.⁸

“One teacher I put on Intervention a couple of years ago is now one of my best. It can work if you utilize it correctly.”

—Hartford principal

8 Connecticut General Statute 166:10-151.



Strength & weaknesses of Hartford intervention policies

Strengths	Weaknesses
Teachers can enter remediation at any time during the year.	The district does not track which teachers enter intervention or at what point in the school year this occurs.
	The summary evaluation for tenured teachers occurs too late in the school year to begin remediation within the same year, allowing unsatisfactory teachers to return to the classroom the following fall without any improvement.
The period to assist struggling teachers is brief and structured.	While the period to assist and recommend dismissal if needed is brief, it appears that principals do not take advantage of this option nearly enough.

Recommendations for Hartford intervention policies

- 1. Struggling teachers should receive immediate support.** Any teacher with identified deficiencies needs to receive support as soon as possible. The frequency of evaluation of nontenured teachers increases the likelihood that struggling teachers will not go unrecognized. However, principals must ensure that tenured teachers receive immediate support; the option to place a tenured teacher in remediation during the three-year cycle should be used more frequently and intervention should begin as soon as instructional deficiencies are noted.
- 2. Teachers who do not improve should be eligible for dismissal.** Nontenured teachers with unsatisfactory performance should not have their contract renewed for the following year. Tenured teachers who receive two unsatisfactory evaluations in five years should be eligible for dismissal. The poorly performing teacher who continues to be rated unsatisfactory after remediation should be considered for dismissal in the same year.
- 3. The district should support principals in dismissing ineffective teachers.** Principals should receive early and significant support from the district with regard to underperforming teachers. Such support should include an outside observation by a district observer. Documentation of this support that includes electronic records is especially critical should dismissal become necessary.

Benefits to the district and teachers of recommended policy changes

NCTQ recommendation	Benefits to HPS	Benefits to teachers/HFT
Higher teacher salaries	Larger and presumably more talented applicant pool Better teacher retention More prestige for working in Hartford	Higher teacher income More prestige for teaching in Hartford
Mutual consent hiring	More cohesive school teams with a greater dedication to school mission Decreased teacher turnover	Greater individual choice on assignment and improved teacher satisfaction at school site
Hiring timeline advanced to earlier in the year	More choice in hiring teachers and larger applicant pool Smoother start to the school year	Assignments settled earlier, more time for preparation for the following school year Financial benefits to members who notify early of their intention to resign
More monitoring of sick leave abuse	Reduced teacher absenteeism leads to more teacher time with students	Higher morale and professionalism
Increased support for new teachers	More effective first year teachers Less turnover and burnout Makes HPS more attractive place to begin a career	Higher morale for first year teachers Less turnover
Increased number of informal evaluations	More feedback on work and tailored teacher development Increased communication between administration and teachers	More opportunity to build skills Increased fairness in evaluations

Appendix

COMPENSATION

Goal 1. Compensation should be targeted to making the profession attractive to new teachers, particularly in shortage fields and high-needs assignments. Salary schedules accommodate teacher effectiveness in addition to experience.

Indicators

- i. The district's starting salary is competitive with other school districts in the area.
- ii. Tenure is rewarded with a large salary jump. Step increments do not increase with seniority but rather reflect productivity connected to higher student achievement.
- iii. Additional financial incentives, including bonuses, advanced placement on the salary schedule, and tuition reimbursement, are targeted to filling positions or retaining teachers in high-needs schools and critical shortage content areas.
- iv. The salary schedule does not automatically award permanently higher salaries for advanced degrees or credits.
- v. Teachers are financially rewarded for their effectiveness.
- vi. Teachers are offered various levels of health coverage and contribute to this coverage accordingly.

Rationale

All teachers should have the same opportunity for salary advancement.

Starting salaries for teachers have risen significantly in many districts over the last decade. While higher salaries almost certainly help attract a greater number of promising candidates, the current structure of most salary schedules may be detrimental to retention of teachers in the early years of their careers, when teachers typically improve their craft exponentially. While salaries progress uniformly for each additional year of experience, a teacher's professional growth is not the same from year to year. In fact, school districts tend to award smaller salary increases to new teachers, reserving larger increases for teachers with more seniority. This pay structure runs contrary to research on teacher effectiveness, which suggests that many teachers level out as they near the 5-year mark and decline in effectiveness towards the end of their careers.

The first few years in the classroom also correspond to when tenure is awarded and when many teachers quit the profession or change to a lower-needs district. Targeting the largest salary increase to tenure not only recognizes the strides teachers have made in effectiveness, it incentivizes the decision to stay in the classroom and in a high-needs district.

Teacher salaries should be competitive with those of surrounding school districts.

Districts compete for the people they need with other, typically nearby, districts. Candidates often make decisions about where to apply based on a comparison of salaries among several districts in the same area. Research is clear that a district's salaries are measured meaningful against local rather than national labor market prices.

School districts seeking to attract the most qualified candidates may also need to find ways to be competitive with the starting salaries of other professions requiring a similar degree of education, such as nursing or accounting. One reason teachers' salaries fall short of those in other professions is the shorter work year. One way to increase competitiveness is to transition to 12-month contracts, where teachers develop their craft, analyze student achievement data, build new curricula, plan in teams, mentor or coach new teachers, etc. over the 6-8 summer weeks.

Financial incentives should be used as a way to attract the most qualified candidates to positions of the highest need.

Beyond making the district attractive to potential teacher candidates, districts must work towards successfully filling positions of high need--whether it is due to a shortage of qualified teachers in particular subject matter or high teacher turnover in particular schools related to a challenging student population, less desirable location or other factors. Although research is far from clear over what kind of financial incentives (and how much) might work to attract effective teachers, more closely reflecting market needs in pay is a good start. Research also suggests that a substantial increment is needed, no less than about 3 percent of beginning salary and perhaps much more.

Furthermore, the same strategy can be used towards targeting existing incentives where their impact would be greatest. While most districts offer some form of tuition reimbursement, many have a very general policy which specifies only the amount of money covered per teacher per year. An effective alternative would be to target money being spent on additional teacher coursework to help teachers in becoming certified/highly qualified in areas of high need to the particular district. Districts may also consider financial incentives to encourage teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to serve in high-needs schools.

Salary schedules need to value factors that are directly correlated to student achievement.

Traditionally, teacher pay is based on an individual's experience and her advanced educational attainment. Though this structure is transparent and easily administered, research shows that these two factors are not linked to student achievement, except for the first few years of experience. While one might assume advanced degrees result in higher teacher effectiveness, research proves otherwise, particularly for degrees not related to the specific subject matter taught. Nonetheless, more than half of all teachers have master's degrees and states often require this degree, despite its lack of impact on student achievement. Teachers without advanced credits or degrees are often limited in their ability to advance on the pay scale, since many salary schedules end the lane for teachers with a bachelor's degree significantly earlier than other lanes reserved for teachers with additional credits or degrees. For example, in Baltimore County, Maryland (a state which requires a master's degree as part of teacher licensure renewal), a teacher with a master's degree can increase her salary by 69 percent over the course of his career verses a 14 percent increase for a teacher with a bachelor's degree. Reallocating this distribution of salary from years of experience to student results would not cost a district more money; it would just reallocate the money.

Teachers should be rewarded for improving student performance and for additional activities that enrich highly productive teachers' careers, such as mentoring or coaching, peer review, or other similar activities.

Over the past ten years, there has been a growing movement to reward teachers for the outcomes of their students. Some districts have attempted this in partnership with their union, while others initiatives (such as in Florida, Minnesota, and Texas) have been spurred by state legislation. A carefully designed system of performance pay can effectively be used as a means for districts to reward teachers who produce greater-than-average student learning gains. Performance pay should not be viewed as an incentive for teachers to work harder, but as a means to recognize and reward their effectiveness.

Teachers need flexibility with regard to both their financial contribution and level of coverage for health insurance.

Health insurance is one of the largest expenses for employers, costing districts anywhere from 25–35 percent of a teacher's salary. A standard one-size-fits-all option for health care offers more coverage than many teachers need and costs the district more than it can afford. Younger teachers often do not have the same coverage needs as older teachers or teachers with families. Offering a choice of plans with different levels of coverage and corresponding teacher contributions could be attractive to younger teachers, cost-saving, and more in line with the practices in sectors other than education.

Research

Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What Does the Research Say? a paper from the Education Commission of the States, found that compensation plays a key but complex role in recruiting and retaining teachers. In general, according to ECS, research strongly supports only the recommendation that policymakers ensure that teacher salaries in their state or district are comparable to those in neighboring states or districts.

In their paper *Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement*, Eric Hanushek, John Kain, and Steven Rivkin concluded that there are “important gains in teaching ability over the first few years of a career, although there is little evidence improvements continue after the first couple of years.”

Dan Goldhaber's “When Should We Reward Degrees for Teachers?” found no evidence that experience matters after five years in the classroom, with most of the growth in the first year or two.

Ronald Ehrenberg and Dominic Brewer in “Do School and Teacher Characteristics Matter? Evidence from High School and Beyond” found that, contrary to popular perception, substantial evidence exists that teachers holding master's degrees have a slightly negative impact on student performance.

Similarly, studies by Goldhaber and Brewer (“Evaluating the Effect of Teacher Degree Level on Educational Performance”; “When Should We Reward Degrees for Teachers?”) and William Fowler (*Developments in School Finance, 1996*) found that most master's degrees in specific subject areas do not lead to increased student performance. One exception that was noted was for secondary students of teachers holding an advanced degree in mathematics; these students performed slightly better than students of teachers without an advanced degree or a degree in a subject other than mathematics.

Brian Rowan, Richard Correnti, and Robert Miller (“What Large-Scale, Survey Research Tells Us about Teacher Effects on Student Achievement: Insights from the ‘Prospects’ Study of Elementary Schools”) looked at the impact of elementary teachers earning master's degrees in a subject area, and they found no effect.

Although there may be select subjects in which a teacher's possession of an advanced degree in that subject is associated with increased student performance, few teachers actually hold advanced degrees in content areas specific to what they teach. In its report *The Condition of Education 2002*, the National Center for Education Statistics found that a small minority (22 percent) of secondary teachers holds a master's degree in the subject they teach and even fewer elementary teachers (7 percent) earned an advanced degree in a specific academic subject.

Dan Goldhaber and Emily Anthony concluded in *Can Teacher Quality Be Effectively Assessed?* that low-income students in North Carolina made more statistically significant gains from being assigned to a Board-certified teacher than did middle-class kids. Most Board-certified teachers were teaching students of higher socioeconomic levels, however.

William Sanders, on the other hand, concluded his 2005 research on nationally certified teachers in North Carolina by asserting that the difference between teachers with and without the credential was for the most part negligible.

A panel of the National Research Council reviewed 20 studies of the NBPTS's credential and contracted with researchers for the extension of some of the studies. They concluded in 2006 that teachers with the National-board certification are more effective than those without, although the effect size is in dispute.

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Promising Practices

Many districts offer some credit for past teaching or related work experience and signing bonuses to teachers working in high-needs schools, however the amount is too often too low to act as much of an incentive. In contrast, teachers at high-needs schools in **Orange County, Florida**, earn up to \$6,000 in bonus pay for every year they teach at a high-needs school and are placed at a higher step on the salary schedule for past related experience. Newark public schools offer a hiring bonus (\$3,000-\$4,000) to new teachers of critical certification areas.

Just as most districts have some policy regarding tuition reimbursement, many offer some type of top-up in pay for teachers who have earned National Board certification. The increments should help the district get accomplished teachers where they are needed most. National Board Certified teachers in **Columbus, Ohio**, receive a stipend of \$1,500, but those willing to be placed at the discretion of the superintendent receive an additional \$1,500 for a bonus totaling \$3,000.

Baltimore provides subsidized apartments for teachers in the center of the city. Teachers pay below market rate, \$1,175 for a two-bedroom apartment and \$650 for a one-bedroom apartment. The Abell Foundation began the initiative, subsidizing rent through tax breaks. The apartments are in the geographic center of the city, a mere five blocks north of the school district office and about eight blocks south of Johns Hopkins University.

Almost no district ignored master's degrees in its salary schedule, but some do minimize the pay bump. The master's degree differential for teachers in **Austin, Texas**, for example, is only \$820 a year. This is largely a reflection of state law, as Texas licensure policy does not require teachers to earn a master's degree for licensure renewal. Texas districts do not include lanes for teachers who have earned credits beyond either a bachelor's or master's degree. **Broward County** schools in Florida award higher salaries for teachers with a master's degree though the district distinguishes the bonus between those with "in-field" degrees and those with degrees designated "out-of-field" (\$3,650 vs. \$2,150).

In **Denver**, the district and union worked collaboratively to put into place ProComp, a program which is designed to link teacher compensation more directly with the mission and goals of Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. While this innovative compensation system is not perfect—it still rewards teachers with higher pay for advanced degrees and professional development course accumulation—it is a giant step in the right direction. Instead of the traditional lock-step pay system of most districts, teachers in Denver would be able to earn higher salaries by: receiving satisfactory classroom performance evaluations, meeting annual objectives related to student academic growth, exceeding testing growth goals, working in a school judged distinguished based on academic gains and other factors, and working in a position and/or school deemed high needs. Under ProComp, more of the earning potential is loaded towards the front-end of a teacher's career; most permanent changes in a teacher's salary level are capped by their 14th year of service (the exceptions being cost-of-living increases and money earned for students' academic growth). This system of compensation, which links compensation more closely with instructional outcomes for students and rewards teachers for meeting and exceeding expectations, enables the district to attract and retain the most qualified and effective teachers by offering uncapped annual earnings in a fair system.

Another model which seeks to reform the current teacher compensation system has been developed by the **Teacher Advancement Program**, or TAP. The system is being implemented in over 50 charter schools and public school districts all across the country, including: Chicago Public Schools, Wake County North Carolina, and Columbus City Schools in Ohio. One of the four core components of the TAP model is performance-based compensation. Teachers in TAP schools are eligible for financial awards based upon the average of the scores they earn on multiple evaluations of their classroom teaching, as well as their classroom-level achievement growth and school-level achievement growth, both of which are measured using a value-added model. Master and mentor teachers (another piece of the TAP system which seeks to keep expert, veteran teachers in the classroom) receive salary augmentation as these teachers take on more responsibility and authority, and work a longer school year than the typical classroom teacher. Additionally, the system encourages districts to offer stipends to those who teach in "hard-to-staff" subjects and schools.

Districts could likely save money by making their benefits packages more flexible. The school district of **Providence, Rhode Island**, fully embraces this practice by reimbursing teachers who opt not to enroll in the district's medical insurance plans. Upon presentation of proof of alternative health care coverage, teachers pursuant to a non-Providence School Department plan satisfactory to the teachers' union receive an annual payment of \$750 for dropping individual coverage and \$1,500 for dropping family coverage.

TRANSFER AND ASSIGNMENT

Goal 2. Teacher transfer policies should support a rigorous process for screening and selecting applicants. Teacher assignment should be based on the mutual consent of teachers and principals.

Indicators

- i. All vacancies are posted electronically and readily available to all applicants, external and internal. Principals have unlimited access to all applicants.
- ii. Teachers must actively apply for available vacancies, regardless of whether they are transferring voluntarily; have lost a job through a program change, enrollment shift or school closing; are returning from a long-term leave or layoff; or are a new hire to the district.
- iii. Principals and/or school committees select applicants to interview and approve the assignment of all teachers to their school. In addition to presenting academic and professional credentials, applicants teach a sample lesson and demonstrate writing proficiency.
- iv. Schools and the district make a concerted effort to employ teachers with high academic capital (looking at GPAs, coursework, and the selectivity of the applicant's college or university), particularly in low-performing schools.
- v. Districts have practices in place to provide high-touch service to applicants so that those of the highest quality remain available during the bulk of the staffing season.

Rationale

Hiring decisions are best made on the school level.

Like most professionals, teachers rely extensively on the expertise, support and commitment of their colleagues. And like other institutions, schools function best when staff members share a vision for their enterprise. School leaders with input from teacher teams should therefore have the power to interview and choose teachers whom they think would make a good fit for their school, including those who are transferring from another school within the district.

Teachers should also be able to accept or turn down a job. Teachers who are satisfied in their positions are likely to be more productive and stay in their positions longer.

In teaching, being smart matters.

Although there are many facets of a “good” teacher, researchers point to the particular value of a teacher’s “academic capital” in improving student achievement. In other words, teachers with higher test scores on both college entrance and basic skills exams, as well as those who graduate from competitive colleges and universities, tend to yield better results in the classroom. In a 2008 study, researchers from the Illinois Education Research Council used state data to show that a concerted effort to place teachers with high academic capital into struggling schools corresponded with increases in student achievement.

Too often schools get only a cursory look at applicants.

The more information schools have on applicants, the more thorough decisions will be. To help schools identify their promising candidates, teachers should provide a sample teaching lesson and demonstrate writing proficiency. For candidates who will be teaching in urban schools, where many of the children will be poor and minority, school leaders should consider administering an inventory of the teachers’ characteristics such as Gallup’s Teacher Perceiver Instrument or the Haberman Star Teacher Selection Interview. Qualities such as persistence, flexibility, open-mindedness and high expectations for students will likely serve an urban teacher well.

Research

Rutgers University Professor Edward Liu found that teachers who participated in a hiring process that gave them a comprehensive view of their school were on average more satisfied with their jobs than those teachers who did not participate in such a process. Liu suggests that school-level interviews be conducted by a cross section of the school community and include both teaching demonstrations as well as classroom observations by the prospective teacher. Liu argues that an information-rich screening process results in better placements for both teachers and schools.

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) has monitored closely New York City's move toward mutual consent in teacher hiring. Since 2005, the number of teachers applying for transfers has decreased by 21 percent, suggesting that the current corps of teachers is more satisfied in their current positions and that turnover will decrease if teachers and principals have mutual consent in selection processes.

In a 2008 study from the Illinois Education Research Council, researchers found that Illinois experienced positive results in student achievement following an effort to distribute teachers with high academic capital among its struggling schools. Moreover, the study showed that the teachers' academic capital offset any shortcomings associated with teachers' inexperience, and that concerted efforts to recruit high-quality teachers in Chicago boosted the state's results.

A 2007 study from the Urban Institute's CALDER Research Center revealed a similar pattern of success among teachers with strong academic backgrounds recruited through Teach For America and NYC Teaching Fellows. The data showed that the influx of these teachers into NYC schools improved student achievement gains. The effect of this is approximately half the gain that a student would experience under a third-year teacher as opposed to a first-year teacher—an effect generally recognized as meaningful. The authors suggest that TFA teachers were able to offset their lack of experience with better *academic* preparation. They also suggest that perhaps an unmeasured, but nonetheless important factor, *motivation*, plays a role in the findings.

In another study, *Is it Better to be Good or Lucky?*, Dan Goldhaber and two colleagues endorse site-based hiring over hiring done by a central office. However, the authors also note that these local practices can fall short if schools either do not have the tools or expertise to make informed decisions about staffing or do not recognize their relative attractiveness in the district's labor market.

A rigorous and extensive study by Mathematica Policy Research also found that students with TFA teachers make significantly more progress than students with other teachers, even those who have years of experience and teaching credentials. The sophisticated study compares the performance of students of TFA teachers to the performance of students of teachers in the same schools and at the same grades. To ensure the results were not skewed by an unequal distribution of students, researchers randomly assigned students to the different classrooms before the school year began.

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Promising Practices

New York City's 2005 contract with the teachers' union instituted major reforms requiring both teachers and principals to mutually agree to a teacher's placement. In other words, schools have the right to choose which teachers they want to hire, regardless of a teacher's seniority, and teachers have to apply to vacancies, rather than being assigned to schools by the central office. To make these reforms possible, the district created a central system where teachers can view vacancies. According to a report by The New Teacher Project, the reforms have brought about early benefits, such as teachers reporting greater job satisfaction and a willingness to remain in their positions. However, the system comes up against trouble when teachers with guaranteed positions (generally all tenured teachers not in a district-declared lay-off) lose their jobs and cannot find another. Therefore a district must have a strategy for exiting those surplussed teachers who are not selected through mutual consent, as **Chicago** was able to negotiate in their 2007 contract. Such a teacher who interviews but is not selected during the 18-month period following her placement on the excess or surplus list is taken off payroll unless she finds a position through mutual consent.

Though the use of mutual consent varies across **California** school districts, the California Education Code (35036) has given principals at low-performing schools at least the right to refuse the assignment of a teacher to their schools. The 2006 law is designed to end the so-called "dance of the lemons," a term used to describe the practice of transferring poor-performing (and thus unwanted) teachers from school to school.

Teach For America (TFA) conducts a rigorous application process and selects only academically talented college graduates to teach in select urban and rural school districts. In 2008, almost 25,000 college graduates applied to TFA, of which only 20 percent were accepted. Collectively, they had an average GPA of 3.6 and average SAT score of 1320. Teach For America also evaluates applicants' writing abilities and their disposition towards teaching. Applicants are also asked to teach a sample lesson.

Goal 3. Local policies should minimize the deleterious impact of teacher excessing. Principals should not use excessing as a way to pass off poorly performing teachers.

Indicators

- i. Teacher performance is one of several factors in deciding which teachers to excess. Principals are allowed to make an exception to seniority rules for a high-performing teacher(s).
- ii. Teachers excessed due to school-specific program changes are kept on the school budget until they secure a new position (so that principals do not use excessing as a way to pass off poor-performing teachers). Teachers excessed due to district-wide changes, such as enrollment shifts or program cuts, who do not secure a new position through mutual consent are afforded assistance from the school district (help with job placement, professional development) and compensation for up to one year and then terminated.
- iii. Excessed teachers are tracked. Should a teacher be excessed twice, the district intervenes with support for a rigorous evaluation process.

Rationale

Though seniority is in general the fairest way of deciding which teachers should lose their jobs when there is an excess of teachers to positions, the prerogatives of seniority should be limited.

Although a number of districts do allow principals to make a few exceptions to seniority provisions, it is the exception rather than the rule, and often the most inspired and energetic new teachers are the first to be removed from a school. When teachers do lose their jobs because of a program change, enrollment shift or other factor beyond their control,, more senior teachers should (1) not be allowed to “bump” or displace less senior teachers from their jobs, and (2) be allowed to interview only for legitimate vacancies in a mutual consent selection environment.

Assistance to excessed teachers should be available, but temporary.

When teachers lose their positions through no fault of their own, a teacher's service to the district should be recognized. The district should provide teachers assistance in securing an appropriate position, such as paying teachers' salary and benefits for a limited period of time while they look for a job. In the long term, this temporary assistance is preferable to the district placing a teacher in a position not of her choosing, or placing a teacher in a school where the principal does not wish to hire the teacher. Districts should be mindful of the expense associated with this assistance and ensure that such protections are temporary in nature, lasting no more than one year.

Research

Two key pieces of research support the notion that the first few years of a teacher's career matter most to his/her professional growth. University of Washington researcher Dan Goldhaber, in “Everyone's Doing It, but What Does Teacher Testing Tell Us about Teacher Effectiveness?” (2006), found teacher-attributed gains in student achievement occur within the first few years of teaching.

Similarly, researchers Eric Hanushek, John Kain, and Steven Rivkin in *Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement* (1998) suggest that teachers make important gains in the first two years of teaching, but very little thereafter.

An October 2007 Urban Institute report, *Are Public Schools Really Losing Their 'Best'?: Assessing the Career Transitions of Teachers and Their Implications for the Quality of the Teacher Workforce*, examines which teachers leave the workforce, presenting evidence that the most effective teachers not only stay in the profession longer, they also tend to stay in the toughest schools. Teachers who never transferred schools or districts produce stronger student gains. Authors: Dan Goldhaber, Betheny Gross, and Daniel Player.

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Promising Practice

Dallas school board policy allows the district to target tenured teachers for layoff who have one or more areas “below expectations” on their performance evaluations. After laying off probationary teachers, the district in the fall of 2008 let go of teachers with performance problems, about a quarter of the total number. A teacher's seniority in the school system was only used as a third criterion after the others were taken into account.

Excessed teachers in **Chicago** are given 18 months at fully salary to secure a new position. After this period, teachers who are not hired by a principal are laid off.

Similarly the school district in **Austin, Texas**, gave excessed teachers one year to secure new placements (through mutual consent hiring). Teachers unable to find a new assignment became permanent substitutes at full salary. Those teachers still unable to secure a new position by March 2 were fired at the end of the school year. The district usually bans fired employees from reapplying for districts jobs but waives that rule for these employees.

Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia and Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland have an innovative way to deal with teacher excessing. Principals gather in the spring with a list of all excessed teachers and their performance records. Principals and their supervisors meet to openly discuss where to place excessed teachers, with the idea that the matches made should benefit the most schools. This “excessed placement meeting” helps a principal to act not for the good of her school alone because other principals will insist that she take her share of the teachers who have been found to be surplus. It also encourages principals to find ways to exit poor teachers rather than ways to pass them on in this “dance of the lemons.” Union representatives are invited to attend, and excessed teachers are given an early opportunity to interview for available vacancies and to provide preference requests if not selected during the interviewing process.

Goal 4. The timelines for hiring and assigning teachers, including transfers, should minimize the disruption to schools, classrooms, and students, and should not disadvantage the district in the teacher labor market.

Indicators

- i. Budgets are developed and distributed to principals early in the spring or late winter so that staffing decisions can be made by April 1.
- ii. Transfers are prohibited during the school year, except in unusual circumstances.
- iii. Teachers who apply to transfer for the following school year secure assignments by the end of the current school year or early in the summer.
- iv. Policies require retiring and non-returning teachers to provide notice to schools in the spring, before the transfer season begins, to ensure that schools have sufficient information to identify staffing needs for the following year.

Rationale

A spring transfer season benefits teachers, school, and students.

Inevitably, schools face turnover each year as teachers retire, change positions or transfer to new schools. Such changes can be quite disruptive to schools if the rate of staff turnover is particularly high, or if such changes take place during the school year. Ideally, all transfers and new assignments should take place during the spring or early summer so that teachers are aware of their new placements before the current school year ends. Spring deadlines ensure that schools and teachers are able to begin planning for the new school year during the summer months. Even more important, spring hiring deadlines help ensure that districts have their pick among recent graduates seeking employment, rather than lose them to other districts or professions. Allowing voluntary transfers once the school year has started should be prohibited, since they are extremely disruptive to classrooms where routines have been established and relationships formed.

Given the unique nature of staffing schools, retiring and non-returning teachers should give notice early in the spring, to the extent possible.

Districts should take steps to discourage untimely retirements and resignations that might preclude the possibility of filling teaching positions with the best candidates for the job. Districts should inform teachers of their professional responsibility

to notify the district of their intention to leave by the beginning of the spring transfer period wherever possible, but no later than June 1, and ensure that teachers' insurance coverage and other benefits continue through the end of the school year even if they plan to retire. Penalties for late notification may include a reduction of the teacher's last pay check or revoking a teacher's license.

Research

In 2003 The New Teacher Project published a groundbreaking study on hiring deadlines for new teachers, and their work has important implications for transfer deadlines as well. The study highlights how district timelines prove to be a major obstacle to hiring talented young teachers. TNTP found that large urban districts that failed to make job offers to new teachers until the summer months missed the opportunity to tap into a pool of talent that in turn sought secure employment elsewhere, often in suburban districts that hire staff earlier in the spring. The report also found that the qualifications of these teachers could have helped to alleviate shortages in critical areas.

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Promising Practices

Denver Public Schools' 2006 strategic plan sets an ambitious timeline for hiring teachers. However, the goals are also realistic and take into account the unpredictable nature of staffing, particularly in the summer months, when changes in staffing may occur. The district aims to hire at least 75 percent of teacher candidates by April; 90 percent by May; and 100 percent before the start of the new school year. In other words, the vast majority of teachers—90 percent—are hired well before the current school year ends, leaving the district with only 10 percent of teachers to hire and place over the summer months. An earlier timeline allows the district to compete for top applicants; the later the timeline, the fewer options for both teachers and school districts.

Nashville's teachers' contract directly acknowledges the connection between retirement procedures and optimum teacher placement. The contract states that teachers have a "professional responsibility" to notify the district before March 15 if they do not intend to remain in the district the following school year. **San Francisco** offered teachers a bonus in 2007-2008 of \$400 if they notified the district of their resignation by March 1.

California's school code gives principals the authority to hire teachers new to the district beginning April 15, effectively ending preferences to transferring teachers after that date.

Some districts hire through the year, providing a contract and guaranteeing a job for teachers but waiting until principals are ready to place the recruits; large districts often "over hire" in math, science, and special education. That way, when last-minute vacancies occur, there are available quality candidates in those fields who are extras in a school awaiting a real assignment.

WORK LIFE

Goal 5. The schedule and duties assigned to a teacher should support the teacher's ability to be effective

Indicators

- i. The district's calendar includes teacher work days without students before the start of the student school year, during the student school year and after the conclusion of the student school year to ensure common planning, team collaboration and professional growth.
- ii. The district provides adequate planning/preparation time to teachers during the work day. The district provides weekly collaborative time for teachers.
- iii. Teachers work an eight-hour day on site.

Rationale

Teacher work days without students allow teachers time to adequately prepare for the classroom before the start of the year and assess growth during and after the school year. Daily time without students allows for the host of activities needed to support and improve instruction.

In addition to setting a benchmark for student instructional time, successful districts ensure that teachers have time away from their classes. That time allows teachers to assess student progress, engage in collaborative planning, prepare classrooms and lessons, assemble materials, help students individually, help colleagues, and communicate with parents. In *The Learning Gap: Why Our Schools Are Failing and What We Can Learn from Japanese and Chinese Education*, Harold Stevenson and James Stigler highlight differences in how American and Asian teachers spend their day. They observe that teachers in Japan are with students only 60 percent of the day. The remaining time is mostly spent planning lessons, collaborating with other teachers and meeting with students one on one. American teachers, in contrast, generally have less than one hour of planning a day.

Teachers' work is complex and requires at least an eight-hour work day on-site.

Because so much of a teacher's work involves interaction with others, teachers need to be at work on-site both before and after the student day. Taking a typical student day and adding time for those tasks results in what most other professionals consider a "full" work day—eight hours.

Research

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development found in a recent report that teachers in the U.S. spend more time teaching students than their counterparts in all other OECD countries, while receiving close to the least time for activities outside of classroom instruction.

The Massachusetts 2020 program's Expanded Learning Time Initiative annual report from 2008 found that in the first 10 Massachusetts schools that launched an extended day program in 2007, average proficiency rates in math went up 9 percent, in English language arts (ELA) 6 percent, and in science 2 percent compared with proficiency rates over the previous few years.

Researchers Dave E. Marcotte and Steven W. Hemelt examined the effect of lost school days on student performance. They found that in Maryland, in a year with five school day cancellations due to weather (which is the average number for the state), the number of 3rd graders who met state proficiency targets was 3 percent lower than in years with no such school closings.

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Goal 6. Policies should encourage teacher attendance and minimize the deleterious impact of teacher absences.

Indicators

- i. Sick leave is commensurate with months worked (e.g., 10-month contract provides 10 days of leave).
- ii. Teachers are required to notify the principal or principal's designee of each absence.
- iii. Principals (in addition to the payroll department) have access to data on teacher absences on a monthly and annual basis.
- iv. The district requires medical documentation for habitual use of sick leave and can require additional documentation from a doctor other than the teacher's own should sick leave abuse be suspected.
- v. Attendance is a factor in teacher evaluations.

Rationale

Student learning suffers when teachers are absent.

While teachers should have leave available for times that they are sick, abuse and overuse of sick leave is a real problem in schools, with a negative impact on student performance, school culture, and district finances. For example, Clotfelter and her colleagues found that every 10 absences lower mathematics achievement by the same amount as having a new teacher instead of a more experienced teacher (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Center for American Progress, 2008). They also concluded that a disproportionate number of teacher absences occur in schools serving predominately low-income children, giving them yet another hurdle to achievement. Another study suggested that teachers' absence patterns tend to reflect those of their colleagues.

In addressing absences, principals are the first and most important line of defense. Most good teachers have good attendance and don't need incentives to come to school when they already have a strong work ethic. But the much smaller number of teachers who show patterns of abuse need to be confronted and dealt with aggressively by their principals.

Research on the effectiveness of attendance incentives among teachers is almost nonexistent, and not a few school districts have tried incentive plans only to give them up when they fail to cut substitute costs.

Economist Raegen Miller, a former teacher who has extensively studied the problem, nonetheless suggests that districts experiment with incentives aimed not only at minimizing absences among those who abuse the system but also getting better attendance from those who might try a little harder. A school-wide incentive plan could also mobilize peer pressure for the cause. One approach might be to give principals direct control over a pot of money out of which they would pay their substitute

teachers and also award teachers with high attendance at the end of the school year. Such a fund might also serve the useful purpose of alerting districts to principals who tolerate frequent and excessive absenteeism among their staffs.

Research

Raegen Miller and his colleagues Richard Murnane and John Willett offer an examination of the effects of teacher absences on student achievement and a review of policies that improve attendance in “Do Teacher Absences Impact Student Achievement? Longitudinal Evidence from One Urban School District” (2007). Miller (2008) also speaks directly to policymakers in a report issued by the Center for American Progress, *Tales of Teacher Absence: New Research Yields Patterns that Speak to Policymakers*.

Charles Clotfelter, Helen Ladd, and Jacob Vigdor (2007) also address the impact of teacher absences on student achievement in *Are Teacher Absences Worth Worrying About in the U.S.?*

For more on the relationship between individual absenteeism and workplace absence norms, see “Worker absence and shirking: evidence from matched teacher-school data” (Bradley, Green & Leeves, 2007).

Podgursky (2003) reports the high rate of teacher absence in comparison with other professional employment in “Fringe Benefits”; Marguerite Roza uses Podgursky’s research to examine the costs of teacher absenteeism in a January 2007 Education Sector report, *Frozen Assets: Rethinking Teacher Contracts Could Free Billions for School Reform*.

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Promising Practice

The **Dallas** schools in the 2008-09 school year began rewarding attendance on a sliding scale of absences so that teachers with up to five absences get some benefit. For teachers with zero or one absence, it matches their retirement contributions up to \$1,000 per year. For teachers absent two days, the district will match 75 percent of the teacher’s retirement contribution. Teachers absent three to five days receive a district match of 50 percent. The plan is aimed at addressing the relationship between high teacher absenteeism, high student absenteeism, and low student performance. It costs more than the district hopes to save in substitute costs, but the district expects to see improvements to student attendance and graduation rates as a result.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND EXITING INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Goal 7. The district should provide all new teachers with an induction program, with particular consideration given to teachers in schools serving low-income students.

Indicators

- i. New teachers receive regular and consistent support from “mentor(s).” District establishes a minimum time requirement for mentors and mentees to meet. Time is documented.
- ii. Mentors are selected on the basis of their own effectiveness, subject-matter and school expertise, and their ability to work well with other adults.
- iii. Training is provided to mentors; mentees provide feedback on mentor performance.
- iv. Mentors are compensated for their time.

Rationale

Too many new teachers are left to ‘sink or swim’ when they begin teaching.

Most new teachers find themselves overwhelmed and under-supported at the outset of their teaching careers. Although differences in preparation programs and routes to the classroom do affect readiness, even teachers from the most rigorous programs need support once they take on the myriad responsibilities of a classroom. Unfortunately, a “survival of the fittest” mentality prevails in many schools; figuring out how to successfully negotiate unfamiliar curricula, discipline and management issues and labyrinthine school and district procedures is considered a rite of passage. New teachers often receive the most difficult schedules, more than two subjects to prepare for or the most challenging students.

Talented new teachers can become disillusioned by the lack of support they receive. Those with the most options outside of teaching, such as science teachers, are among the most likely to leave.

Simply assigning a mentor is insufficient.

A quality induction program includes mentoring as an important avenue to address the myriad needs of a new teacher, especially during the initial four to six weeks of her career. Throughout this initial phase and until the new teacher demonstrates effectiveness, she must receive additional supports such as occasional release time to observe outstanding teachers and collaborative planning time that is used effectively.

Simply assigning a neighboring classroom teacher to check on a new teacher is inadequate. A mentor needs training based on standards for teaching that will help her in conducting observations and providing feedback. Ideally, she has release time to meet with and observe the teachers under her wing. As much as possible, new teachers should be matched with mentors who share subject area or grade and who have experience in the new teacher’s school.

Research does not tell us whether a program based at the school or one at a central location, with mentors going out to schools, is preferable. Our promising practices include an example of each. If mentors are not site-based, there must be an administrative structure for holding mentors accountable for their work, such as surveys of the new teachers who work with them or principal feedback.

Research

The cost of teacher attrition and the case for more and better teacher induction is described in *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers from the Alliance for Excellent Education*.

Matthew Springer and colleagues gauged the impact of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), one aspect of which provides teachers with a system of ongoing professional growth supported by mentors and master teachers. The researchers found positive effects on student test scores in the elementary grades but negative effects in grades 6 through 10. An earlier study conducted on behalf of TAP by Lewis Solmon and colleagues concluded that the program's schools produced better results on average than did comparison schools.

The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz evaluated its own program by comparing three districts where all first-year teachers received mentoring support according to its model. In the teachers' second year, each district received a different level of mentor support. The study found that those teachers receiving full support from a dedicated mentor, as in their first year, had a greater percentage of classes with positive gains than the other two districts that received less support.

Jonah Rockoff showed in *Does Mentoring Reduce Turnover and Improve Skills of New Employees? Evidence from Teachers in New York City* that "retention within a particular school is higher when a mentor has previous experience working in that school, suggesting that an important part of mentoring may be the provision of school specific knowledge." Rockoff also found that new teachers who receive other forms of support are more likely to remain in the district and their schools.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research released a study on Chicago's \$3 million induction and mentoring program. The study found that mentoring alone is ineffective; strong school leadership, a welcoming faculty that assists new teachers and intensive levels of induction strongly influence teachers' intentions to continue teaching.

Harry Wong details comprehensive induction programs in districts with low teacher attrition rates in the article "Induction Programs That Keep New Teachers Teaching and Improving." He calls for a multiyear induction program that provides each new teacher support from several trained and funded veteran teachers.

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Promising Practices

The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz offers districts a mentoring program spanning at least the first two years of teaching. The program recommends at least 1.25-2.5 hours per week of interaction between mentors

and new teachers. Mentors are selected according to evidence of outstanding teaching practice, strong intra- and interpersonal skills, experience with adult learners, respect of peers and current knowledge of professional development. They are provided with initial training as well as ongoing professional development. New teachers are paired with mentors who have experience in similar subject areas and grade levels. Mentors are trained to document evidence of new teacher growth.

The Center encourages districts to use centrally deployed, full-time mentors who work in three or four schools with a caseload of no more than 15 new teachers. The advantages of this model include mentor selection based on qualifications rather than availability, forming of a mentor community that trains together, and time to gain school-specific knowledge to impart to new teachers. Mentors are managed by a district administrator in cooperation with principals and schools in an effort to invest principals in the program while leaving the management and training to an individual with dedicated time and knowledge. Mentors typically serve three years in the position and are paid the same salary that they would otherwise earn as a classroom teacher; they return to the classroom when they finish their three-year service. The New Teacher Center discourages stipends as an incentive to serve as a mentor.

The **Teacher Advancement Program**, operated by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, seeks to develop and retain effective teachers by offering teachers additional professional development, career paths, and performance-based evaluation and compensation. The professional development component restructures the school schedule to provide time during the regular school day for teachers to meet. Time is designated for groups of teachers working in similar content and/or grade levels to set goals; identify, learn and implement instructional strategies; and assess student progress all under the guidance of a master teacher.

Goal 8. Instructional effectiveness should be the primary criterion of formal teacher evaluation. Evaluation results based primarily on evidence of effectiveness should differentiate between high- and low-performing teachers and form the basis for deciding whether to award tenure.

Indicators

- i. The evaluation instrument considers objective evidence of student learning, including not only standardized test scores, but also classroom-based artifacts such as student work, quizzes, tests, and progress in the curriculum as well as other measurements of student learning.
- ii. The district connects student data to teacher data to measure teacher performance. The data comes from a state data system, or where a state system is unavailable, the data comes from the district or an outside provider.

Rationale

While districts often consider many factors in teacher evaluations, the most important reflect the teacher's ability to produce learning gains. Teachers should therefore be judged first and foremost by their impact on students using evidence garnered through subjective and objective measures.

Unfortunately, many evaluation instruments used by districts, some of which are mandated by states, are structured so that teachers can earn a satisfactory rating without any evidence that they are sufficiently advancing student learning in the classroom. It is often enough that teachers appear to be trying, not necessarily succeeding. Many evaluation instruments give as much weight, or more, to factors that do not bear any direct correlation with student performance, such as taking professional development courses, assuming extra duties like sponsoring a club or mentoring and getting along well with colleagues. Teacher evaluation instruments should instead emphasize teacher effectiveness and combine both human judgment and objective measures of student learning.

A teacher's effectiveness must be measured by multiple means that capture students' acquisition of basic skills as well as more advanced, complex knowledge.

The results of standardized tests do not by themselves reflect everything a teacher brings to the classroom, but they can be one determinant to see whether teachers are imparting basic skills to students. More advanced intellectual work might be evident through examination of student work, teacher portfolios, the quality of assignment, classroom tests and quizzes and other indicators of student learning.

The most promising model for calculating student learning from standardized test scores is called "value-added" because it is able to separate out factors in student achievement other than a teacher's skill. The skill produces the value she has added to a student's time in school. Most experts believe that a minimum of three years of pre- and post-test scores are needed for a meaningful evaluation of a teacher's ability. A relatively new tool, value-added analysis is understandably regarded with reservation by states and teachers. Nonetheless, it is widely agreed to be the best available objective approach to teachers' effectiveness. The Teacher Advancement Program currently uses it as part of its teacher evaluations, and value-added data is made available to some teachers in Ohio districts and New York City for the purpose of improving their teaching.

Tenure should be a significant and consequential milestone in a teacher's career.

The decision to give teachers tenure (or permanent status) is usually made automatically, with little thought, deliberation or consideration of actual evidence. District policy should reflect the fact that tenure is intended to be a significant reward for teachers who have consistently shown effectiveness and commitment. Tenure and advanced certification are not rights implied by the conferring of an initial teaching certificate. No other profession, including higher education, offers practitioners this benefit after only a few years of working in the field.

To make tenure meaningful, districts should institute a clear process, such as a hearing, for considering whether or not a teacher advances from probationary to permanent status. This would ensure that a teacher's performance is reviewed before a determination is made. This also protects the teacher's rights, as he or she is fully aware of the process and has an opportunity to participate.

Districts should also ensure that evidence of effectiveness is the preponderant (but not the only) criterion for making tenure decisions. However, most districts confer tenure at a point that is too early to have collected sufficient and adequate data that reflect teacher performance and simply adopt state minimum requirements for tenure as their own. Ideally, districts would accumulate five years' worth of such data. This robust data set would prevent effective teachers from being unfairly denied tenure based on too little data, while also preventing the district from granting tenure to ineffective teachers.

Research

Several seminal papers by William Sanders and his colleagues on Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System, developed by Sanders, showed that the effectiveness of the teacher is the major determinant of student academic progress, clearly demonstrating the need to connect teacher effectiveness to student outcomes in any effective education evaluation system.

A 2001 study published by the Chicago Consortium on School Reform provided evidence that, taken together, standardized test results and other measures of student work can provide a good picture of teacher effectiveness. It presents the results of a study of Chicago teachers' assignments in mathematics and writing in grades 3, 6 and 8. The results showed that students who received more challenging intellectual work also received greater gains on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in reading and mathematics as well as on the mathematics, reading and writing portions of the Illinois Goals Assessment Program.

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Promising practices

The national program **Teach For America** sets high standards that are focused on student results. It looks for its teachers to show one-and-a-half years' growth in math and reading in one school year (this generally only applies to elementary) or two years' growth in either math or reading in one school year (elementary or secondary) or 80-percent mastery of state student learning standards—as measured by teacher-chosen diagnostics. TFA teachers meet with their supervisors at least four times a year primarily to assess their students' progress and to investigate strategies to improve student learning. The teacher and supervisor look at subjective as well as objective measures of student learning.

Although New York State law prohibits it from being used for teacher evaluation, **New York City's Teacher Data Toolkit** gives teachers and their supervisors a check on how much learning progress they are making with their students. Available to teachers and principals whose work includes 4th through 8th grade English language arts and math, the kit consists primarily of a "value-added" data report for each teacher that isolates the effect of a teacher's instruction on student achievement from factors about students, classrooms, and schools that are outside a teacher's control. The model uses these factors to predict gains for each student. The report compares a teacher's results with other City teachers in the same subject and grade, including for student subgroups, such as English language learners and low-performing students. Notably, the report was developed with the local teachers' union, the United Federation of Teachers, which also pushed the 2008 law forbidding its use in evaluations. For a sample report, visit: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B3A5AC13-D924-487C-A932-323E1664437D/0/SampleTeacherDataReport.pdf>

Goal 9. Teachers' performance is assessed regularly, through multiple observations.

Indicators

- i. All teachers are evaluated annually.
- ii. Evaluations include classroom observations that focus on and document instructional effectiveness. Teachers' observed behaviors are assigned degrees of proficiency based on standards and defined by scoring guidelines.
- iii. Teachers are evaluated by trained observer(s). Observers may include the principal, outside observers from the central office, department heads, or selected teachers.
- iv. Teachers are observed informally (without prior notice) at least once, but preferably more, during the evaluation year.

Rationale

Evaluations of all teachers should occur annually to provide feedback and guidance.

Annual evaluations are standard practice in most occupations. However, few states and districts mandate annual evaluations of all teachers. Not only do annual evaluations provide the opportunity for feedback (important for both novice and veteran teachers alike), but they underscore the fact that teachers are professionals.

Teachers are observed with no notice given at least once and preferably more during the year.

Logic tells us that evaluators will get the best picture of a teacher's performance if they have the opportunity to observe a teacher's unrehearsed lesson. Especially at the secondary level, observers may need to follow several linked lessons to see how a teacher is faring. Even apart from that, observations with thoughtful feedback can help teachers get better.

Evaluations that reflect the sum of multiple observers' reflections and observations reduce concerns over the arbitrary nature of evaluations.

Teachers frequently perceive the single-observer evaluation to be arbitrary and prone to bias or favoritism. Observations performed by trained multiple observers including peer observers promote greater acceptance by teachers. Furthermore, districts that have used more than one observer have proven more successful in dismissing low-performing teachers.

Promising Practices

In the **Teacher Advancement Program**, operated by the National Institute for Excellence in Education, each teacher is evaluated four to six times a year by multiple trained and certified evaluators. As evaluations are conducted throughout the year, principals have TAP's Performance Appraisal Management System available to them to help organize and track evaluation data to ensure accuracy and inter-rater reliability among the evaluators. The evaluation includes a measurement of how much learning growth the teacher's students achieve during the year. The teacher receives support and guidance throughout the year to help the teacher meet the accountability standards.

The **Texas Professional Development and Appraisal System** offers a strong example of scoring guidelines for teacher observation. The evaluation criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior, including "the performance of teachers' students." In addition to classroom observations, evaluators must document teachers' contributions to improving student achievement. Each of the eight domains is scored independently, and a teacher rated unsatisfactory in one or more domains is placed on an intervention plan, ensuring that classroom effectiveness is the *preponderant* criterion of a teacher evaluation. (<http://www5.esc13.net/pdas/docs/PDASTeacherManual.pdf>)

Goal 10. Teachers who demonstrate instructional deficiencies receive assistance; teachers who do not improve are exited from the district.

Indicators

- i. A principal can evaluate a teacher and place him/her on an improvement plan at any time when a teacher's performance is in question. Observations occur early enough in the year to provide sufficient time for poor-performing teachers to improve and for administrators to make a decision about teacher's continued employment by the end of the same school year.
- ii. There are formally stated consequences for unsatisfactory evaluations and a clear mechanism to assist struggling teachers. Assistance includes a professional development plan. The plan may include mentors or peer observers, opportunities to observe effective teaching, and content and grade-specific coaching. Peer observation programs include union collaboration and support from the union in helping to exit poor performers from the district.
- iii. There is a clear and reasonable timeframe for teachers with unsatisfactory evaluations to demonstrate satisfactory improvement as indicated through a follow-up evaluation. (Note: There is no perfect timeframe for these programs.)
- iv. The district requires that all tenured teachers who receive two consecutive unsatisfactory evaluations or who receive two unsatisfactory evaluations within five years be formally eligible for dismissal. Districts should never retain a probationary teacher with even one unsatisfactory rating.
- v. Evaluation ratings are not subject to the grievance process.

Rationale

Evaluations and subsequent remediation should guarantee sufficient time for the teacher to correct any deficiencies yet should not detrimentally affect the quality or flow of instruction.

Teacher evaluations are too often treated as mere formalities, rather than as important tools for rewarding good teachers, helping average teachers to improve, and holding weak teachers accountable for poor performance. District policy should reflect the importance of evaluations so that teachers and principals alike use them as a tool for improving teaching and determining who is a good fit for the classroom.

Teachers who receive a negative evaluation should be given help and guidance on how to improve instruction. These improvement plans should focus on performance areas that connect directly to student learning and should outline deficiencies, define specific actions that will address these deficiencies, and describe how progress will be measured. While there is no ideal length of time for improvement, limiting the length of remediation ensures that student performance is given priority.

Districts should articulate policies wherein tenured teachers who receive two negative evaluations eligible for dismissal. The poorly performing teacher who continues to be rated unsatisfactory after remediation should be considered for dismissal in the same year.

Tenure should be a significant and consequential milestone in a teacher's career.

Ideally, weaknesses and deficiencies would be identified and corrected during the probationary period, or if found to be insurmountable, the teacher would not be awarded permanent status. However, in the absence of meaningful tenure processes based on teacher effectiveness that includes student achievement results, limiting significant consequences to the probationary period is insufficient. Further, any probationary teacher who receives a negative observation should be placed on an improvement plan, and if improvement is not evident should be non-renewed or discontinued. While voluntary or involuntary transfers of ineffective teachers should not be disallowed, the reasons for such transfer must be valid and justifiable to ensure that ineffective teachers are not simply passed around the school district.

The decision to give teachers tenure (or permanent status) is usually made automatically, with little thought, deliberation or consideration of actual evidence. Though tenure is generally a reflection of state licensure policy, districts can do much more to make the process meaningful. Tenure should be a significant reward for teachers who have consistently shown effectiveness and commitment. Tenure should not be an entitlement. No other profession, including higher education, offers practitioners this benefit after only a few years of working in the field.

To make tenure meaningful, districts should institute a clear process for considering whether or not a teacher advances from probationary to permanent status. Such a process could include a review outside of the school, consideration of student achievement results or at minimum a commitment by the principal attesting to the competency and proficiency of the probationer. This would ensure that a teacher's performance is reviewed before a determination is made.

Districts should also ensure that evidence of effectiveness as defined by student achievement is the preponderant (but not the only) criterion for making tenure decisions. However, most states confer tenure at a point too early to have collected sufficient information on a teacher. Ideally, states would accumulate at least three years' worth of information, and tenure would not be granted for at least four years.

Research

The New Teacher Project found in a 2007 study of the Chicago school system that 87 percent of the city's 600 schools did not issue a single "unsatisfactory" teacher rating between 2003 and 2006. This, despite the fact that 69 of those schools had been deemed, by the city, to be failing educationally. Of all the teacher evaluations, only 0.3 percent produced "unsatisfactory" ratings, while 93 percent of the city's 25,000 teachers received ratings of "excellent" or "superior."

It is now widely accepted among education researchers that teacher effectiveness varies a great deal, even acknowledging that some students are more challenging to teach than others. Robert Gordon and colleagues argued in a 2006 paper that with only one or two years of data on student test outcomes, a district can learn a lot about which teachers can get significant gains and which cannot. The paper recommended that states aim for denying tenure after two years to about a quarter of probationary teachers and exiting them from the district.

Using data from nearly 10,000 North Carolina teachers and their students, Dan Goldhaber and Michael Hansen reported that schools appear not to be very selective about who receives tenure. One-third of all teachers who performed in the bottom quartile in pre-tenure years also performed in the bottom quartile in post-tenure years.

Schools rarely dismiss tenured teachers for incompetence. Illustrating this point, a 2006 investigation by Scott Reeder of Illinois' Small Newspaper Group revealed that in the 18 years from 1986-2004, only two teachers per year—in a state that employs more than 95,000 tenured teachers—were dismissed for incompetence. Only 61 of Illinois' 876 districts even attempted to fire a tenured teacher and just 38 succeeded. Yet, it is commonly held that 5 to 15 percent of the 2.7 million tenured teachers in the United States perform at incompetent levels.

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Promising practices

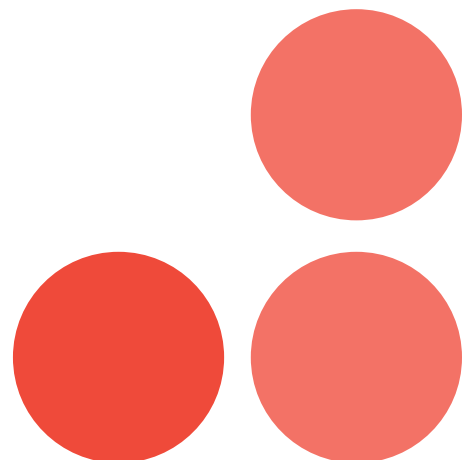
Montgomery County, Maryland's Peer Assistance and Review. A joint effort of the district and the teachers' union, the program puts decisions about tenure for new teachers and contract renewal for teachers who have been deemed unsatisfactory into the hands of a 12-member committee, half teachers and half administrators appointed by the superintendent. "Consulting teachers" offer intensive help and make recommendations to the committee, which can reconsider its decision after a meeting with the teacher in question and the school principal.

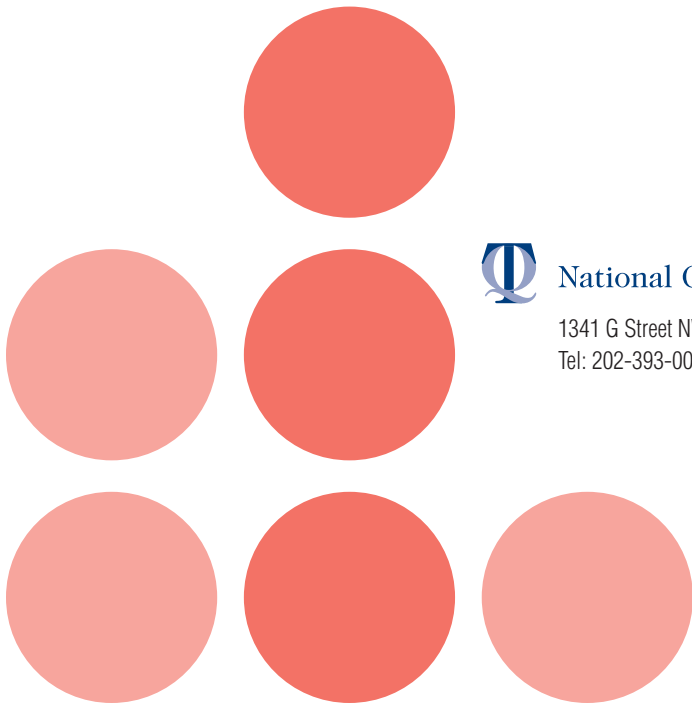
The **Labor Support Unit** (LSU) of the New York City district works to help principals support struggling tenured teachers until they improve or are exited from the system. Because the process to dismiss an incompetent teacher is often so burdensome, the LSU assists principals in designing support plans for ineffective teachers; helps them organize the documentation for possible dismissal; and coordinates with the **Peer Intervention Plus** program (expert retired teachers who observe and coach the teacher) and lawyers from the **Teacher Performance Unit**.

Struggling tenured teachers who are in danger of receiving disciplinary charges for incompetence receive support from the peer teachers as part of the Peer Intervention Plus program. Intervention lasts approximately three months. The peer teachers then offer their own recommendations in regard to competence. The principal remains free to perform his or her own observations and evaluations. The teacher may decline observations by PIP+, but that information may then be used against the teacher in a disciplinary action. Thus far, 51 out of 56 times the peer observer has agreed with the principal that the teacher was unsatisfactory. The two must concur for a recommendation of termination to be made. If the teacher in question does not resign, the Teacher Performance Unit (TPU) begins litigation.

New York City's schools introduced a Web-based **Tenure Tool Kit** for principals in 2007. The kit guides principals through teachers' three-year probationary period by offering resources for how teachers can improve and an organized place to track a teacher's progress and filing deadlines for denying and granting tenure.

The city's criteria for granting tenure include "significant professional skill," evidenced by lesson plans and observations, and "a meaningful, positive impact on student learning," measured by a broad range of possible student work products, including reports, projects, and other examples of student work. The number of teachers denied tenure, as well as those placed on an extended probationary period, doubled from 25 in 2005-2006 to 66 when it was introduced to the next year. In 2007-2008 164 teachers were denied tenure and 246 had their probationary period extended.





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