



# Teacher Quality Roadmap

Improving Policies and Practices in the School District of Philadelphia

May 2013

#### About this study

This study was undertaken on behalf of the 137,000 children who attend school in The School District of Philadelphia.

#### About NCTQ

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

#### Partners and Funders

This study was facilitated through the partnership of the Philadelphia School Partnership and the Philadelphia Education Fund, which convened educators and other stakeholders during the research process. Funding was provided by the Philadelphia School Partnership and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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## Snapshot of The School District of Philadelphia

- 8th largest district in the country
- 242 schools
- 9130 k-12 teachers
- 137,512 k-12 students
  - 82 percent economically disadvantaged
  - 8 percent English language learners
  - 14 percent students with disabilities

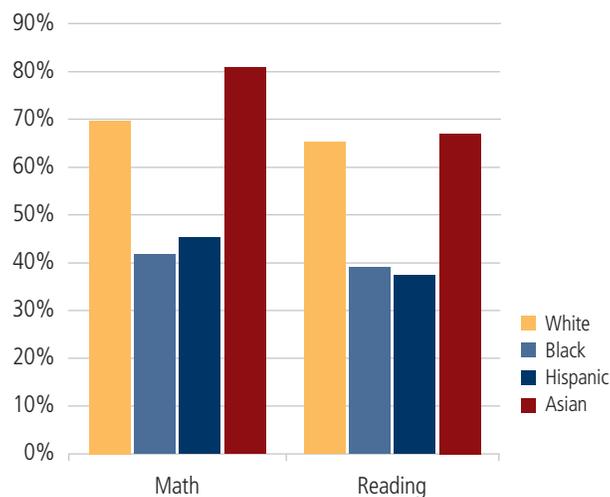


# Introduction

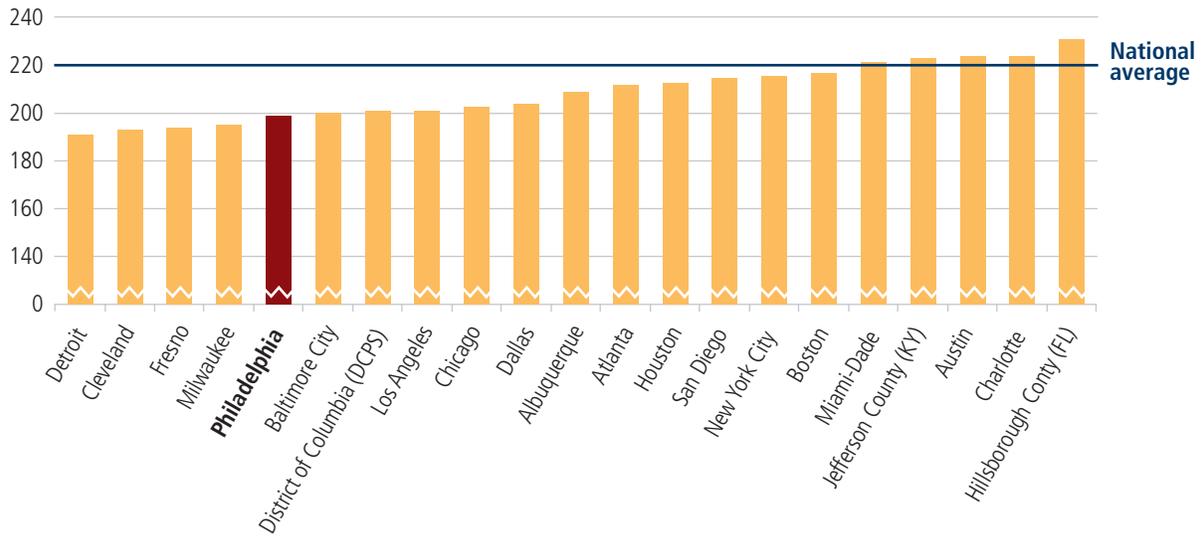
At the request of the Philadelphia School Partnership and the Philadelphia Education Fund, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) undertook this analysis of teacher policies in The School District of Philadelphia.

In recent years, Philadelphia has made strides toward improving student outcomes in the district. The district's on-time graduation rate rose to 61 percent in 2011, a 12-point increase over a seven-year period. Test results on the statewide test, the Pennsylvania System for School Assessment (PSSA), have also indicated an increase of about 5 percent in reading and math proficiency rates since 2007. Despite these gains, less than 50 percent of students scored proficient in math and reading on the PSSA in 2012. In addition, significant achievement gaps between certain subgroups indicate that far too many Philadelphia students perform years behind their more advantaged peers. When compared with their peers in other urban districts using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — a test generally viewed as a reliable indicator of student progress — Philadelphia students are in the bottom quartile of urban districts and well below the national average.

**Percentage of Philadelphia students scoring advanced or proficient on the PSSA by ethnicity, 2012**



National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – 4th grade reading 2011<sup>1</sup>



In June of 2012, the Philadelphia School Reform Commission hired William Hite as Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia. Superintendent Hite faces the dual challenges of achieving dramatic academic gains while dealing with major cuts to the district’s revenues. In January, the superintendent released an action plan spelling out his priorities for improving student outcomes, one of which was to identify and develop committed and capable teachers.

## What this report seeks to accomplish

This report attempts to shed light on teacher policies that can be improved both immediately and in the long term to increase the quality of the teaching force in the district. We explore these policies both as they are written and as they are practiced.

NCTQ frames this analysis around five standards supported by research and best practices from the field for improving teacher quality.

1. Staffing: District policies facilitate schools’ access to top teacher talent.
2. Evaluations: The evaluation of teacher performance plays a critical role in advancing teacher effectiveness.
3. Tenure: Tenure is a meaningful milestone in a teacher’s career and advances the district’s goal of building a corps of effective teachers.
4. Compensation: Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and reward high-quality teachers, especially teachers in hard-to-staff positions.
5. Work Schedules: Work schedules and attendance policies maximize instruction.

For each standard we provide several recommendations, some for The School District of Philadelphia and some for the state of Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. 2011. National Assessment of Educational Progress.

<sup>2</sup> Go to [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3) to compare over 100 school districts’ contracts, laws and policies.



This symbol reflects practices that the district can initiate administratively or through an action of the School Reform Commission, without requiring a change in the teacher contract.



This symbol accompanies recommendations whose implementation requires negotiation between the school district and the teachers' union.



This symbol accompanies recommendations that require a change in state policy to implement.

## Methodology

To undertake this study, a team of NCTQ analysts first reviewed the district's current collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. We also looked for any state laws affecting local policies. We compared the laws and policies in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania with the 114 school districts found in our Tr3 database ([www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)). This exercise allowed us to determine where Philadelphia falls along the spectrum of teacher quality policies and to identify practices that the district might emulate. In a number of areas, we also collected data from school districts and charter management organizations that surround Philadelphia, its biggest competitors for teacher talent.

NCTQ then held focus groups with students, community leaders, policy makers and advocates, and parents to hear about their experiences with Philadelphia district schools, shaping the focus of our inquiry. We also met with teachers, principals and district administrators to deepen our understanding of how policies play out in practice. We reached out to the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers to gain their perspective; unfortunately, that organization did not respond to our request for input.

As is our practice, we tried to conduct surveys of teachers and principals to gain a broader sense of staff attitudes and experiences. The number of responses to the survey was not sufficient to consider it a representative sample, so information from the survey was treated similarly to responses to questions in the focus groups. Quotations in this report come from these surveys or from our focus group meetings. The quotations are not necessarily statements of fact, but rather they represent teacher and principal perceptions about Philadelphia policies and practices.

Finally, we looked at a range of teacher personnel data to give us a better understanding of the outcomes of teacher hiring, transfer, evaluation, attendance and compensation policies. (See appendix A for a description of the data requested and received.)

A draft of our analysis was shared with the district to verify its accuracy. The school district provided valuable feedback. NCTQ also reached out to the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers for feedback on a draft, but, again, they did not respond.



...of a few... these two principles - right and wrong... from the beginning of...

## Standard 1

# Staffing

### District policies facilitate schools' access to top teacher talent.

#### Indicators on which this standard is assessed:

- 1.1 The district recruits an ample supply of candidates who have the personal and professional characteristics found to correlate with teacher effectiveness.
- 1.2 Principals and/or school committees select the applicants they wish to interview and have the final say over teacher assignment.
- 1.3 The district's staffing timeline ensures that almost all vacancies are filled by June of each school year; accordingly, teachers who are retiring and resigning provide notice before transfers occur.
- 1.4 When positions must be cut, teacher performance is a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.
- 1.5 Decisions to terminate a poorly performing teacher occur swiftly and are made by educational leadership, not a court of law.
- 1.6 Principals are trained on low-cost retention strategies for top teachers.

#### **1.1 The district recruits an ample supply of candidates who have the personal and professional characteristics found to correlate with teacher effectiveness.**

**Finding:** The district appears to provide little support to its principals to help them make a good hire, either by way of screening candidates or providing guidance on sound hiring procedures and strategies.

Overall, Philadelphia's system for recruiting and placing new teachers is not functioning as needed. While the number of teachers that the district has to hire on an annual basis has significantly declined in recent years to approximately 200 to 300 teachers — a small fraction of the overall teacher workforce of about 9,100<sup>2</sup> — many teachers in focus groups mentioned long waits to hear that they had a job and to receive their assignments. Principals also reported being unclear about hiring procedures and their options for hiring new teachers.

2 This number includes only K-12 teachers in the district.

## Applicant screening

Numerous district officials, principals and even parents noted that Philadelphia’s screening process is not robust enough, leaving principals with the job of sorting through large files of applications to find qualified candidates.

When the central office screens a candidate, they check only for credentials, such as degrees and state certifications, and then conduct a brief interview consisting of three general questions chosen from an approved list of six. The applicant is scored on a numeric scale from “below average” to “exceptional.” However, there is no rubric to set expectations for each rating so that they are standardized — what is an average application to one person may be exceptional to another — and there is no apparent training of interviewers. The questions asked, while a good start to understanding an applicant’s thinking, are not extensive enough to gain a true picture of an applicant’s ability to be effective in the classroom.<sup>3</sup>

After applicants are screened by the central office, some teaching positions in Philadelphia give principals the opportunity to interview and select staff directly (see section 1.2 for further information). In these cases, principals stated that it was difficult to determine which questions were the best ones to ask. The district does not require or even strongly urge principals to ask candidates to conduct a demonstration lesson. Some principals were reluctant to schedule demonstration lessons, fearing that another school would offer a promising candidate a position before they were able to complete their interview process.

## Academic caliber of candidates

The academic caliber of prospective teachers is important and should be a factor when candidates are screened. Like many school districts, Philadelphia gives too little weight to a teacher’s academic background. Many studies over the years have shown that teachers who were themselves strong students are more apt to be effective teachers. For example, research finds that teachers with higher scores on tests of verbal ability, such as the SAT or ACT, or even a simple vocabulary test, are more likely to be effective.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, there will always be a certain portion of candidates who are strong but lack a solid academic record. Districts should make sure that academic caliber is given appropriate weight while also giving staff the flexibility to consider other important strengths.

One proxy, although by no means the only proxy, for the academic caliber of teacher candidates is the admissions selectivity of the teacher preparation program. The selectivity of a college is essentially a proxy for *verbal ability*, as more selective institutions require higher verbal ability for admission.<sup>5</sup> We found little evidence that the district properly scrutinizes applicants’ academic qualifications before they are hired. In fact, the district only keeps track of the most recent degree a teacher attained, and for about 12 percent of teachers, there was no college or university information kept on file at all.

3 At the request of the district, NCTQ agreed not to publish the questions used in the interview process.

4 Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rockoff, J., & Wyckoff, J. (2007). *The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high poverty schools*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

5 Ehrenberg, R., & Brewer, D. (1994). Do school and teacher characteristics matter? Evidence from high school and beyond. *Economics of Education Review*, 14.



Below are the 10 institutions most often listed as attended by Philadelphia teachers. We ranked each of these schools to reflect its commitment to accepting teacher candidates from the top half of the college-attending population.<sup>6</sup>

### Academic selectivity of teacher preparation programs

College/University	Adequate attention to academic measures
Arcadia University (Formerly Beaver)	Yes
Bloomsburg University	Yes
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	Yes
Holy Family University	No
Kutztown University	Yes
La Salle University	Somewhat
Millersville University	Somewhat
Penn State University	Yes
Temple University	Yes
West Chester University of Pennsylvania	Somewhat

*Notably, Temple University, one of the biggest suppliers of teachers to The School District of Philadelphia, pays adequate attention to academic measures during admissions as do five of the other institutions in the area. Philadelphia should formalize the process of considering the most fruitful sources of strong teacher candidates, that is, institutions that screen for academic caliber in their teacher candidates.*

Any of the following measures might be part of a district's consideration to assess a candidate's academic aptitude and diligence:

- College GPA (not just in the major), focusing on performance in the last few years with attention to rigor of course selection
- High school participation in AP courses; number of courses scoring 3 or more
- SAT or ACT score
- Selectivity of institution
- High-quality writing samples
- High raw score on state licensing tests
- Number of times a state licensing test was taken before passed

<sup>6</sup> These ratings were developed by evaluating the academic criteria by which teacher preparation programs (and their affiliated institutions) admit students. A program earns a "4" by adhering to at least one of the following policies: 1) requiring a 3.0 GPA for admission, 2) using a standardized test of academic proficiency that allows comparison of applicants to the general college-going population (e.g., ACT, SAT), or 3) being housed in an institution that is sufficiently selective (as indicated by a mean combined SAT mathematics and verbal score of 1120 or above or a mean ACT composite score of 24 or above). Schools that are a "yes" on the matrix earned a 3 or 4. Schools that are "somewhat" earned a 2. Schools that are a "no" earned a 0 or 1.

**Finding:** The School District of Philadelphia does not maintain sufficient data to know whether it recruits an ample supply of candidates likely to be effective teachers.

Philadelphia’s data systems have serious gaps that inhibit the district’s ability to support efficient teacher hiring practices. Characterized as “antiquated” by district officials, the district’s applicant management system receives data from applicants, but it does not have the functionality to package that information in a useful way for principals or district staff. There is currently no way for the district to centrally track which teachers principals may be interviewing and what the results are for each teacher (whom they accepted or rejected). Pertinent information about teaching candidates, such as their undergraduate institution, grade point average, prior work experiences, is also not stored electronically.

The district did make an effort to purchase an applicant tracking system in 2011, but the purchase was halted amid questions about the contracting process and the district’s fiscal constraints.<sup>7</sup>

**Hiring data and key questions**

Data	Key Questions
Number of vacancies, applicants, and positions filled by position type and school	Do we have a large enough applicant pool to support hiring high-quality candidates in each certification area and subject? Which are our hardest subjects to fill? Which schools have the hardest time filling vacancies? At what point in the hiring season do we know about most of our vacancies? When do we fill most of our positions? What are the barriers to hiring earlier? Based on trends from prior years, what vacancies can we project for the coming school year?
Academic background of teacher candidates (undergraduate institution, GPA, additional schooling and coursework)	What is the academic background of our applicants? What skills and knowledge can we expect based on their certification program and other training?
Type of assignment	What percentage of teachers landed in their position through site selection? Through a seniority-based placement? What are the teacher retention patterns based on assignment type?

**1.2 Principals and/or school committees select the applicants they wish to interview and have the final say over teacher assignment.**

**Finding:** Principals have limited authority over teacher placement, which is arguably the most important factor in well-run schools.

In focus groups, principals in Philadelphia overwhelmingly reported wanting more say over staffing in their buildings. They felt constrained by seniority placements, and the district’s site selection process did not give them as much flexibility as they expected. The following are quotes from principals that highlight their perceptions of the current process:

*“ I don’t know how principals can effectively staff for success — it’s unfair when we are not being given the autonomy to make the judgment calls about teachers.”*

<sup>7</sup> Woodall, M., & Marimow, W. (2011, February). Philadelphia School District backs out of contract for \$1.1 million applicant-tracking system. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.



*" The district can over-ride the site selection and place a teacher at your school. In the last couple years site selection has not been site selection."  
" In terms of us being able to go out and bring in the best talent — that is not happening."*

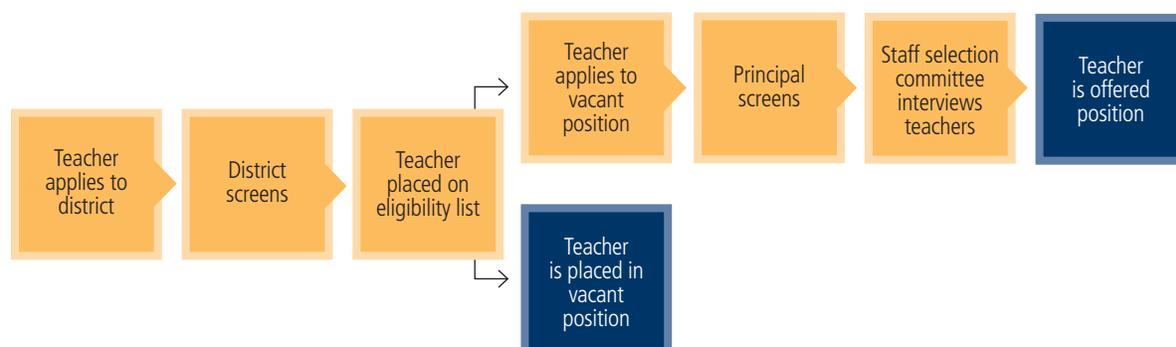
Extending such authority to principals isn't important just to them, it's important to teachers as well. A vital piece of a teacher's success in a school is "fit." In fact, research has shown that teachers who participated in a hiring process that gave them a comprehensive view of a prospective school were on average more satisfied with their jobs than teachers who did not participate in such a process. An information-rich screening process that includes interviews, demonstration lessons and community input results in placements that are better for both teachers and schools.<sup>8</sup>

In Philadelphia, teacher candidates are assigned to schools through two routes: "seniority-based assignment" and "site selection." Site selection was introduced by the district in 2001 as a way to give principals and teachers more say about assignment. As required by the district's contract with the teachers' union, half of all open positions at schools are required to be filled by site selection, which means that a teacher can apply for a position and then go through an interview process with a staff selection committee, usually comprised of the principal, teachers and a parent. The other half are to be filled through the traditional placement process using seniority, and in these cases, the principal has no input on the placement of teachers at his or her school.

**" Site selection empowers schools and has been successful in my school. We have found great teachers through the process."**

– Philadelphia teacher

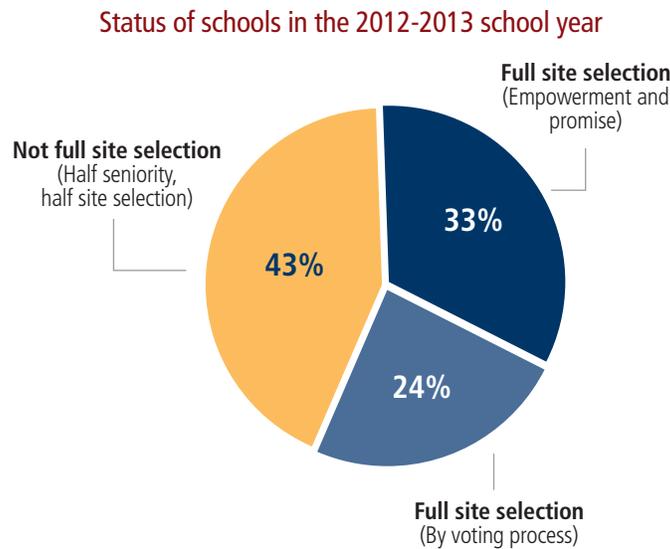
### Philadelphia teacher hiring process



*Following a central office screening process, all new applicants that meet the minimum credential qualifications are placed on an eligibility list. At that point, staff selection committees have an opportunity to interview candidates if the position is designated as site selection, or a teacher will be placed directly at the school by human resources.*

8 Liu, E. (2005, April). *Hiring, job satisfaction, and the fit between new teachers and their schools*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

Notably, with the agreement of two-thirds of the teaching staff, schools can fill all of their open positions by site selection. The commitment to site selection must be made each year by December 31 for the next hiring period. In the 2012-2013 school year, 57 percent of schools were designated full site selection. This number included schools with district-determined interventions (Promise Academies and Empowerment Schools—schools that serve the most disadvantaged populations), which mandate full site selection by virtue of their designation, as well as schools that voted for full site selection.



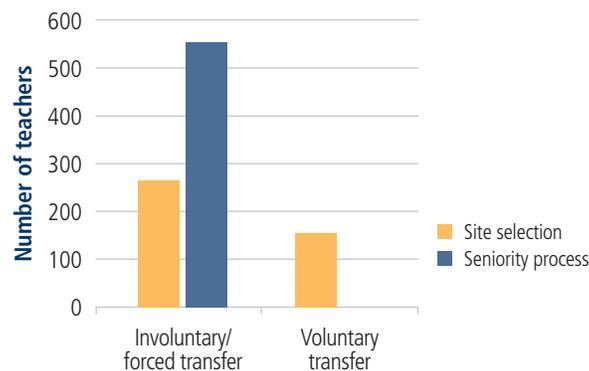
*Approximately one in four schools in Philadelphia voted to be full site selection schools in the last school year. However, a third of Philadelphia's schools are required to be full site selection because they are Empowerment Schools or Promise Academies. The remaining schools fill positions via the contractual arrangement of 50 percent site selection, 50 percent seniority.*

Many of the teachers filling open positions in Philadelphia in the last few years are not new to the district but rather are those who are being “involuntarily transferred” out of existing schools that are closing or have declining populations. The reduction of the number of students in the district, coupled with cuts in state and federal funding, has resulted in a decrease in the number of positions at many schools.

Both voluntarily and involuntarily transferred teachers can choose whether they want to be transferred to a new position using their seniority status or enter into the site selection pool. Once they choose one option, they cannot apply for positions available in the other pool. After reviewing transfer data in the 2012-2013 school year, NCTQ found that over 30 percent of teachers who were involuntarily transferred chose site selection as their transfer method. Even more notable, all teachers who voluntarily transferred out of their school chose site selection and not the seniority-based process. This suggests that teachers recognize the number of positions that are now filled via site selection, and they prefer to move to a school that is a good fit from the perspective of both the teacher and the school community.



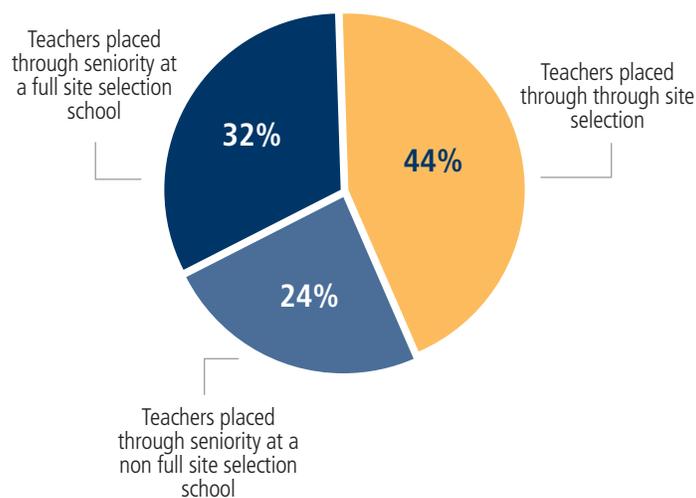
Teachers' choice of placement method, 2012-2013



*Thirty-two percent of teachers who were involuntarily transferred chose site selection as their placement method. All teachers who voluntarily transferred to a new position chose site selection.*

We found clear evidence that some principals are not taking full advantage of the district's efforts to give them more authority over hiring. Even when a school can hire a teacher through site selection, principals have accepted teachers through the seniority route.<sup>9</sup> In the 2012-2013 school year, 573 teachers selected the seniority route for assignment. None or very few of these teachers should have been eligible to be assigned to schools that were full site selection schools.<sup>10</sup> However, over half of these teachers did end up at a full site selection school. Principals at the schools did not vet potential candidates for open positions and simply received them. About one-third of all transfers in the 2012-2013 school year were placed at schools that had the right to interview and select its entire staff.

Placement of teachers in the 2012-2013 school year



*More than half of all vacancies for the 2012-2013 school year were filled through the traditional seniority-based assignment process even though the teachers' contract requires that at least half of all vacant positions be filled through site selection at non-full site selection schools.*

9 These teachers went through the hiring process prior to the summer reorganization. Hiring reopens in the summertime, and teachers from that pool are not included in these numbers.

10 Philadelphia teachers' contract. Article XVIII, Section C, Page 74.

We attempted to understand why principals so frequently relinquished their authority to choose their teachers. One of the problems appears to be that the district has no choice but to force-place teachers in schools because it is contractually obligated to find positions for teachers who lose their assignments through no fault of their own. For some hard-to-fill schools and subject areas, there simply are not enough candidates in the site selection pool to fill all of the vacancies, so principals have to choose from the seniority route. Other reasons are less persuasive. Principals cited the difficulty of gathering the staff selection committee in the summer months to interview teachers, choosing instead to accept candidates without interviewing them.

**Finding: The process for deciding how teachers are placed on the site selection and seniority-based lists for assignment to schools is confusing.**

As in many districts, some principals are “old hands” at figuring out how to work the system in their favor, while others are not. In focus groups, some principals complained that when they found a high-quality external candidate on their own that met all the credentials for a site selection position, they were not free to offer the position but had to send the applicant through HR to be placed on the site selection eligibility list — which often didn’t happen in a timely manner, if at all. The complexity of the process was confusing to some principals, particularly those who were newer to the district.

Other principals stated that there were workarounds to this problem if principals “knew who to talk to.” In any event, it was clear that principals had varying levels of information/skills to effectively hire the staff they wanted.

The teachers’ contract notes that *all* new hires shall be site selected (since no new teacher would benefit from going into the seniority pool). However, many new hires are automatically placed at schools by HR without an opportunity to visit and interview at schools. In focus groups, teachers new to the district stated that they were simply “placed at a school” a few days before the start of the year with no interview or selection process. The district admitted that this was the case for many new teachers.

**1.3 The district’s staffing timeline ensures that almost all vacancies are filled by June of each school year; accordingly, teachers who are retiring and resigning provide notice before transfers occur.**

**Finding: The district’s hiring timeline goes well into the summer, with many positions filled in August and September.**

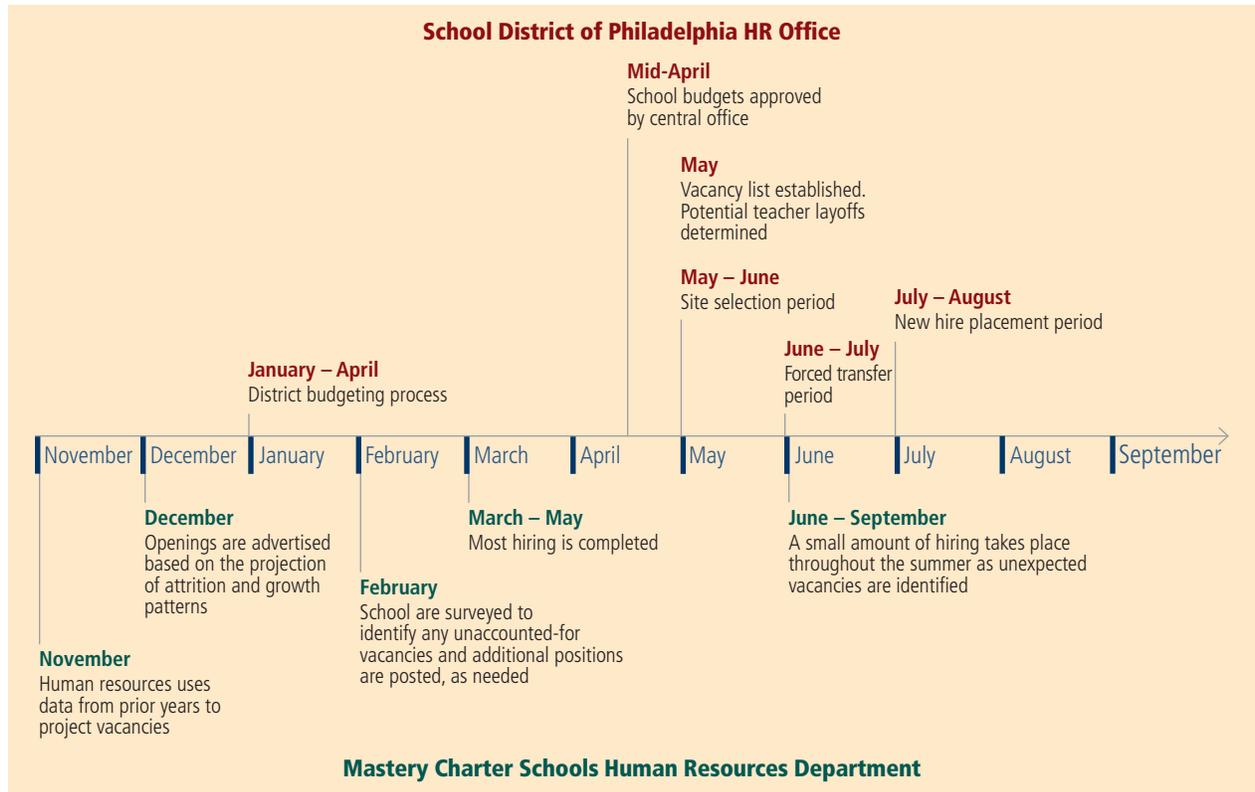
The school district’s hiring timeline complicates teacher hiring even further and hurts the district’s ability to hire the most talented candidates. The vacancy list is established in early May. Teachers with high levels of seniority whose positions have been cut from other schools are assigned first. Throughout May and June, teachers interview in schools and can be offered a position. In early July HR places teachers where there are still vacancies, absent any consideration of the principal’s or the teacher’s input. That leaves only the latter part of July and August to hire and place new teachers, after many talented candidates have already found positions in other districts or charter schools.

While Philadelphia continues to compete for teacher talent with nearby districts, charter networks are now the district’s biggest competitor. Mastery Charter Schools, Philadelphia’s largest charter operator, serves 8,000 students and hires



most of its teachers by May of each year.<sup>11</sup> Mastery continues to add campuses and grades to existing schools, making it necessary to hire 200 to 300 teachers a year — roughly the same number hired by the school district.

### Hiring timeline for 2012



While there will always be some positions that are filled at the end of the summer because of late resignations and retirements, the fact that Philadelphia conducts the bulk of its hiring so late puts them at a significant disadvantage. For the 2012-2013 school year, over 140 vacancies were filled in August, and 110 (12 percent) of all vacant positions were actually filled in September, *after* school started.

In addition to selecting from a smaller applicant pool, summer hiring also introduces logistical challenges. It becomes harder to require candidates to deliver a demonstration lesson involving real students and to pull together staff selection committees.

In recent years, the district has made some effort to hire earlier in shortage subject areas. For example, the district has provided commitment letters to partner programs such as the Philadelphia Teacher Residency and the Philadelphia Teaching Fellows. Since teaching fellows also have the option of applying to local charter schools, these commitment letters give confidence to candidates that they will have a position.

However, commitment letters are currently not an official part of the hiring timeline.<sup>12</sup> Such a protocol, if institutionalized, would give talented applicants the assurance of a position, lessening their incentive to seek a job elsewhere.

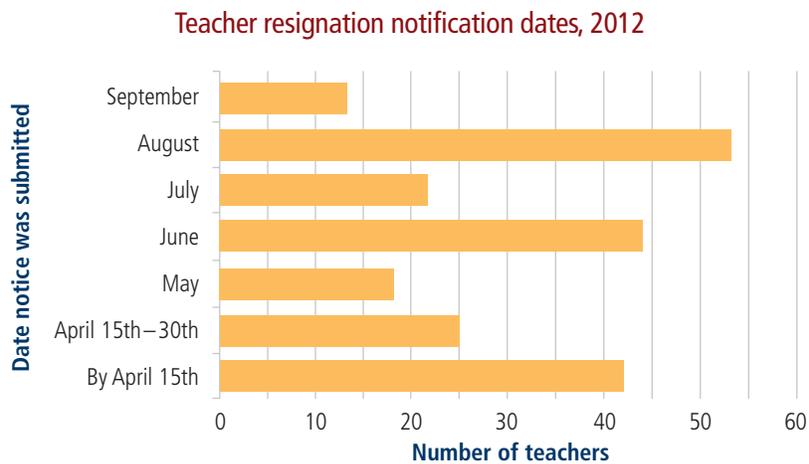
<sup>11</sup> Interview with Mastery HR staff

<sup>12</sup> The district notes that this process used to be part of the timeline prior to school closings and layoffs.

**Finding:** Teachers notify the district of their intention to resign later than they should, with only one in five resigning teachers submitting their notification in a timely fashion.

The district gives resigning teachers incentive to give notice by April 15th by agreeing to pay for health benefits over the summer if the resign by that date. If resignation notification is received after April 15th, costs for summer health care are subtracted from any final payments due to the teacher — for example, reimbursement for unused sick leave. Such incentives are common practice in school districts as a way to ensure that teachers provide notification in a timely manner so that their positions can be filled efficiently.

While the incentive seems effective with retiring teachers, it does not appear to affect the behavior of teachers who are resigning. Almost all (84 percent) of teachers who retired in 2012 notified the school district by April 15th. Resignation notifications were spread out through the summer. The district does not maintain data on the reasons for resignation, making it is difficult to ascertain why such a large portion of teachers are resigning well into the summer. It is likely that many teachers do not want to tell their principals that they intend to resign before the end of the school year.



*Over 50 teachers notified the district of their resignation last August, well beyond the deadline of April 15th. Delayed notification of resignation contributed to hiring and staffing delays for the 2012-2013 school year.*



## 1.4 When positions must be cut, teacher performance is a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.

**Finding:** As required by the state, Philadelphia employs a “Last In, First Out” (LIFO) policy, where seniority is the sole criterion for cutting positions.

Pennsylvania is one of only 11 states that *mandate* teacher layoffs be conducted according to reverse seniority. Most states are silent about the procedures districts must follow concerning teacher layoffs, but a growing number of states are passing laws that reduce the importance of seniority. In the last few years, quite a few states have passed laws prohibiting seniority as the primary determinant in layoff decisions. A number of states (e.g., Colorado, Indiana, Oklahoma) now require that a teacher’s *performance* be the top criterion for determining who will be laid off.

Through an excess of caution, the district may be losing some strong talent each year by informing newer teachers that they may be laid off. In the past few years, Philadelphia has sent out “pink slips”— a notice that it may have to lay off some teachers because of possible budget cuts. Although most of these teachers were ultimately not laid off, many of them resigned when they receive the layoff notification because they were uncertain about having a job the following year.

Certainly there is every indication that the practice of handing out pink slips sends a negative signal to young, usually non-tenured, teachers. In the summer of 2011, 1,272 teachers received layoff notices from the district, the largest amount in recent years. The district eventually recalled almost all laid-off teachers; however, 34 percent of those teachers resigned in the summer months before being recalled.

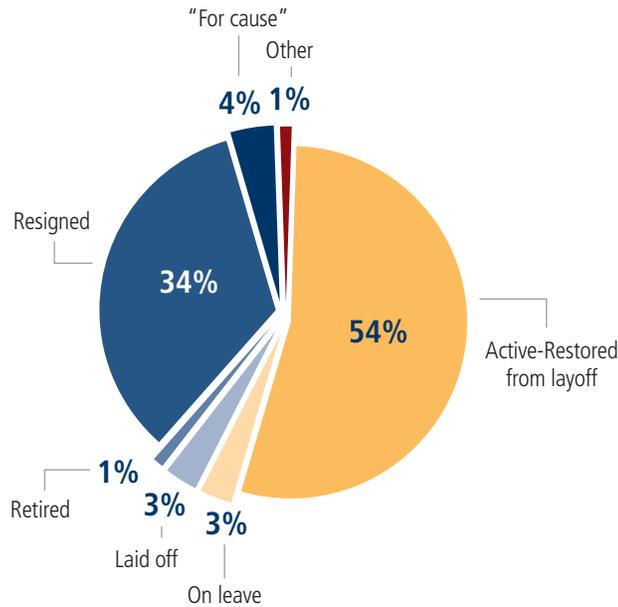
Accurate, reliable data projecting staffing needs and recalled teachers could inform decisions to alter the number of layoffs in future years, sparing some teachers the anxiety of receiving a pink slip. While the district was able to provide NCTQ with the status of all teachers who were laid off and then recalled, it does not monitor this data to ensure accuracy or to make hiring projections. (For instance, NCTQ learned that the district categorizes many of these teachers as leaving “for cause” (terminated) rather than “resigned” because they submitted resignation paperwork without providing 60 days notice.)<sup>13</sup> If the district did have quality data in this area, it could see the relationship between layoffs and resignations. Further analysis could determine the performance of the teachers who resign, and how students may be adversely affected by a layoff policy based solely on seniority.

13 When asked, the district identified teachers who were listed as terminated due to the 60-day-notice issue. NCTQ has listed those teachers as resigned in the chart, since that was the reason they separated from the district.

“ I didn’t want to leave the school district [but] it was a LIFO kind of place.”

- Former Philadelphia teacher

What happened to the 1,272 teachers that received layoff notices in 2011?<sup>14</sup>



*Of the 1,272 teachers who received layoff notices, about half are still teaching. A third resigned, many of whom were likely strong teachers the district could ill afford to lose.*

### 1.5 Decisions to terminate a poorly performing teacher occur swiftly and are made by educational leadership, not a court of law.

Commendably, Pennsylvania law states that a teacher can be terminated for a wide variety of reasons, including unsatisfactory teaching performance.<sup>15</sup> Many state laws on teacher dismissal fail to explicitly name unsatisfactory teaching performance as a reason why a teacher can be dismissed, making it hard for districts to press these decisions.

**Finding:** The district dismisses very few teachers for incompetency. Further, the district allows teachers with unsatisfactory performance ratings to remain the teacher of record in the classroom, often for multiple school years.

Dismissals, while not the path to a high-quality teaching force, are necessary in any organization as large as an urban school district. While most teachers will voluntarily exit the profession when they are told their performance is unsatisfactory, not all will do so, and therefore some dismissals are necessary. NCTQ examines the dismissal rate as an indication of whether the district is resolute in upholding high expectations for its teachers. When the dismissal rate is low, it serves as evidence that the district is likely not maintaining high standards for the quality of its teaching force.

<sup>14</sup> "For cause" includes teachers who were terminated, who did not return or who were "dropped" due to not having certifications.

<sup>15</sup> Pennsylvania School Code of 1949, Article XI, Section 1122, (C): The only valid causes for termination of a contract shall be immorality; incompetency; unsatisfactory teaching performance based on two (2) consecutive ratings of the employee's teaching performance that are to include classroom observations, not less than four (4) months apart, in which the employee's teaching performance is rated as unsatisfactory; intemperance; cruelty; persistent negligence in the performance of duties; willful neglect of duties; physical or mental disability as documented by competent medical evidence, which after reasonable accommodation of such disability as required by law substantially interferes with the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his employment; avocation of or participating in un-American or subversive doctrines; conviction of a felony or acceptance of a guilty plea; persistent and willful violation of or failure to comply with school laws of this Commonwealth.



According to the Philadelphia's termination data, 116 teachers were terminated over the course of three school years (between September 2009 and August 2012), an average of 39 teachers per year. In a workforce of 9,100 teachers, this represents an annual dismissal rate of about 0.4 percent.

Not only are these numbers low, the timeline also is very slow. A defined timeline with multiple steps for dismissing teachers ensures that teachers receive due process and a right to explain their side of the case. However, when this process becomes too long and bureaucratic, it can result in poorly performing teachers staying in classrooms far longer than they should.

NCTQ analyzed available documents for about 70 percent of the 116 terminations between 2009 and 2012 to determine the time it took to terminate a teacher. It took just a few months for some dismissals (e.g., where teachers had abandoned their job) and more than 12 years for other dismissals (e.g., involving a series of infractions). The **average** dismissal time was approximately two years. Most of the teachers remained in the classroom as the teacher of record while they were going through the grievance process.

According to state law, the final step of the grievance process is arbitration. The arbitrator, not an educator, has the final call on the appropriate action. As such, the district does not have the ability to dismiss an employee if an arbitrator, lacking any educational expertise, disagrees.

### **Finding:** The Peer Assistance and Review program does not appear to be recommending ineffective teachers for dismissal.

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is a coaching model in which the district assigns a coach to all first-year teachers and unsatisfactorily rated tenured teachers. The coach provides regular feedback on their instructional practice. According to the district, this program has resulted in a streamlined way for struggling teachers to get support and, if they do not improve, to be released from service. In the pilot year, there is data to support this assertion, with the district identifying for dismissal a much larger portion of its ineffective teachers. In years after the pilot, the data indicates that very few teachers were recommended for dismissal.

#### **Is Peer Assistance and Review resulting in ineffective teachers moving out of the classroom?**

	<b>2009-2010</b> (No PAR)	<b>2010-2011</b> (PAR in 45 schools)	<b>2011-2012</b> (PAR in 121 schools)
Number of first-year teachers terminated	0	5	0
Number of non-first-year teachers terminated	1	11	4
Number of teachers resigned in lieu of termination	No available data	3	0
Number of teachers retired in lieu of termination	No available data	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>

*In 2011-2012, the PAR program moved from a pilot of only 45 schools to implementation in half the schools in Philadelphia (about 121 schools). Given the larger number of schools participating, one might expect that the total number of dismissals would increase. However, between these years the total number of teachers exited through PAR actually decreased by 65 percent.*

## 1.6 Principals are trained on low-cost retention strategies for top teachers.

The downturn of the economy and the proliferation of charter schools have led to a significant decrease in hiring in recent years in Philadelphia. While some of the decrease in the overall number of teachers is likely to be permanent, an improving economy could increase hiring on an annual basis due both to stronger school budgets and increased job prospects for current and prospective teachers.

Like many urban districts, turnover, especially among teachers with five or fewer years of experience, is high in Philadelphia. While some turnover is inevitable, retaining highly effective teachers in the early stages of their careers would save the district time and money.



*Over 80 percent of Philadelphia teachers who resigned in 2012 have five or fewer years of experience.*

Given the many daily demands of managing a school, retention strategies for high-performing teachers is often an afterthought for principals. School leaders attending NCTQ focus groups were able to talk about strategies for improving overall school climate but had very little experience in providing incentives for individual high-performing teachers to stay at their schools. Recent research published by TNTP outlined some of the challenges, consequences and solutions surrounding the early exit of high-performing teachers from urban school districts.<sup>16</sup> The report advised that districts make the retention of high-performing teachers a top priority, and that they strengthen the teaching profession by setting high expectations for teachers.

Focusing on retention efforts in the early years, particularly for high-performing teachers who have shown that they are effective, would decrease the churn of teachers, particularly at low-performing schools. Simple, low-cost strategies to retain these teachers include recognizing them publicly at schoolwide meetings and giving them opportunities to provide feedback regarding the school culture and instructional practices.



## Recommendations for Philadelphia

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**1. Improve data systems.** Having high-quality data available for making decisions is of the utmost importance for Philadelphia. Investing in an applicant-management system is critical to monitoring the number and characteristics of teachers applying for specific positions, tracking principal decisions and automating processes that are currently being done by hand. Maintaining data in a robust system would also increase data integrity and therefore be more useful in decision making.
- 
**2. Collect outcome data for teachers who receive supplemental support, such as those in the Peer Assistance and Review program.** The district should continually review the number of teachers that improve, and those that are recommended for dismissal, after it has provided coaches via Peer Assistance and Review. Given the time, cost and potential value of this program, its impact should be closely monitored to allow for adjustments if it is not achieving its purpose.
- 
**3. Hire teachers earlier.** Current hiring timelines try to ensure that all positions are filled by early July. The district should use projections so that it can begin hiring earlier rather than later — even if budgeting is still being finalized. Providing commitment letters to teachers in shortage subject areas should become a codified part of the timeline, as these teachers are needed every year.
- 
**4. Avoid issuing unnecessary pink slips.** While anxiety over finances is understandable, the district needs to understand that issuing unnecessary pink slips will invariably result in high numbers of teachers leaving because they are worried about not having a job; many of these are teachers the district can ill afford to lose.
- 
**5. Provide better support for principals in recruiting and selecting new teachers.** The district must walk a fine line between preventing a hiring bottleneck at the central office and ensuring that principals can select from a pool of the best possible candidates. First, the district's screening should be completed in early spring so that there is a pool of high-quality, screened applicants available when principals are ready to conduct interviews. Second, the district should provide principals with tools — e.g., interview guides and strategies for learning the most about a prospective teacher in a short time period and for matching candidate strengths to school needs — so that they are well prepared to interview candidates during the site selection period.
- 
**6. Train principals on low-cost retention strategies for effective teachers.** High-performing teachers should understand their value to the school district. The district should offer training and regular reminders to principals about strategies to retain these high performers. Such strategies can be simple, such as a public acknowledgment of good work, but unfortunately are often a low priority in the daily running of a school.
- 
**7. Take full advantage of site selection where it is allowed.** Never place a teacher in a school without a principal's full consent. Earlier timelines and training for principals, mentioned above, are key to taking full advantage of placing teachers with the principal's consent.

 This recommendation requires only a change in practice.

 This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.

 This recommendation requires a change in state law.



- 8. Give principals the authority to decide who works in their buildings.** The district should revise its approach of a site selection model for only half the schools and negotiate with the teachers' union to commit to "mutual consent" hiring in which principals can interview candidates for all vacancies in the school. Current practices are confusing for both the principal and the teachers, and principals need the autonomy to staff for success. At a minimum, principals should be able to reject the assignment of a teacher to their school, including teachers who have lost their assignment in another school no matter what the reason, and extend this authority to all points of the school year.

**Where it's been done**

**New York City** was the first of the large urban districts to implement a mutual consent approach to staffing in 2005. Since then other districts have moved in this direction. A similar policy is part of the teacher contract in **Washington D.C.**, where excessed teachers with an ineffective rating are immediately dismissed. Teachers with a minimally effective rating have two months to find a new position, and teachers with an effective or highly effective rating are given a year to find a new position.



- 9. Negotiate more effective incentives for teachers to provide notification of resignations earlier (or disincentives for late notification).** Current policy is effective at giving incentives to potential retirees who notify the district of their plans, but the same is not true for other resignations. Work with the teachers' union to determine more effective incentives for early resignations or consequences for late resignations.



- 10. Allow performance to be a factor in determining which teachers will be laid off.** Not only is experience a poor predictor of teacher effectiveness after the first few years, it also results in more teachers being laid off when trying to close a revenue gap. (It is necessary to lay off more junior teachers because they are less expensive). If Pennsylvania is unable to make performance a determining factor in layoffs across the board, the following are compromises that remove at least some of the preference for seniority:
- Lay off first-year teachers first. Research shows that teachers who have been teaching for only one year are not likely to match other teachers' effectiveness. Targeting first-year teachers is preferable to treating all nontenured teachers the same.
  - Lay off nontenured teachers on the basis of performance, so that at least some of the lowest performers go first. The point is that protections for tenured and nontenured teachers can be treated differently.
  - Lay off teachers on the basis of a weighted system that gives more points to performance and fewer to seniority.



## Standard 2

# Evaluation

The evaluation of teacher performance plays a critical role in advancing teacher effectiveness.

### Indicators on which this standard is assessed:

- 2.1 All teachers receive an annual evaluation rating.
- 2.2 Observations occur early enough in the school year to provide sufficient time for struggling teachers to improve and for administrators to make a final decision about a teacher's continued employment by year's end.
- 2.3 Objective evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated.
- 2.4 Evaluations factor in multiple observations and feedback from multiple sources, such as school administrators, department heads, trained exemplary teachers, central office evaluators and content experts, along with responses to surveys of teachers' students. The observers provide regular feedback to teachers on their classroom instruction.
- 2.5 Classroom observations focus on a set of observable standards that gauge student learning.
- 2.6 Evaluations offer multiple rating levels to distinguish performance among teachers. Ratings differentiate substantial performance differences among teachers.

### **2.1 All teachers receive an annual evaluation rating.**

### **2.2 Observations occur early enough in the school year to provide sufficient time for struggling teachers to improve and for administrators to make a final decision about a teacher's continued employment within that school year.**

**Finding:** Philadelphia's non-tenured teachers receive annual ratings, but its tenured teachers are evaluated only once every three years.

The state of Pennsylvania has developed a new evaluation framework, and Philadelphia plans to implement that framework as part of a new evaluation system in 2013-2014. While the details of the district's new system are still somewhat uncertain, we do know that the state framework will begin to require the district to conduct annual evaluations for all teachers, not just non-tenured teachers.

## Current Evaluation Structure

### Non-tenured teachers

Philadelphia has built in better provisions than most districts for routinely monitoring the progress of its *new* teachers. Teachers with fewer than three years of experience are observed and rated semiannually. In addition to an evaluation by an administrator (usually the principal), first-year teachers receive feedback throughout the first year from consulting teachers (peer coaches) employed through the district's central office. Second and third-year teachers are observed at least twice each semester or even more often, including an observation by an official from the central office, if the teacher's initial observations are likely to lead to an overall unsatisfactory rating for the year. This level of support through the third year of teaching is quite unusual among the school districts we have studied.

### Tenured teachers

While the Philadelphia teachers' contract mandates that all teachers receive a *rating* each year, the contract makes a somewhat puzzling distinction between *rating* and *evaluating*. Currently, the contract states that the formal evaluation for tenured teachers — those with more than three years of experience — occurs only once every three years. In nonevaluation years, instead of a traditional observation, they receive a rating based on the perceived progress a teacher has made toward completing a personal "Professional Development Plan."<sup>17</sup> Teachers develop goals (with input from principals) based on a self-prescribed area for "targeted growth" and an action plan to achieve these goals. Progress is measured in a meeting between the principal and the teacher, but NCTQ could find no evidence of any requirement that data must be reviewed at that meeting. Both the middle and end-of-year reviews by principals consist of only forms for the teacher to fill out as a self-reflection on progress.<sup>18</sup>

The current contract requires tenured teachers who are rated unsatisfactory to participate in the Peer Assistance and Review Program.<sup>19</sup> A consulting teacher works with the teacher to improve; if there is no improvement the consulting teacher can recommend dismissal. However, current data indicates that actual dismissal through this process is rare (see section 1.5 for more information).

17 Philadelphia Teachers' Contract, Article XI, Section C, Page 25. Tenured teachers who are not in a formal evaluation year are required to create and implement a Professional Development Plan focused on supporting "professional development activities that are of value to teachers and that are planned to improve student achievement and school results." The principal is expected to meet with the teacher once a year to review the plan.

18 Professional Growth System Handbook. 2012-2013 Edition. The School District of Philadelphia in partnership with The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

19 The district was unable to provide a list of teachers who entered Peer Assistance and Review to confirm that this does in fact happen.



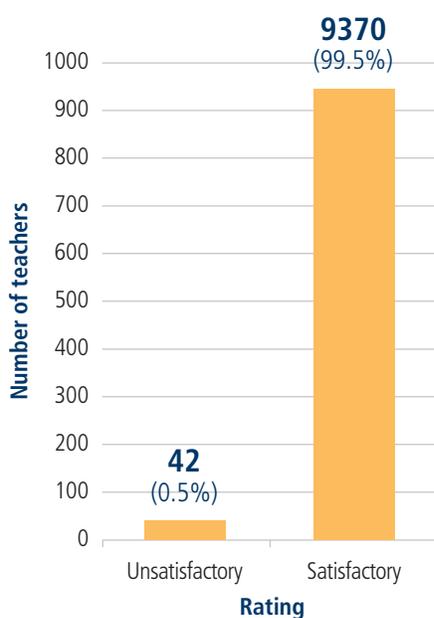
**Finding:** The district does not track or use its evaluation data to drive better personnel decisions.

Unfortunately, Philadelphia does not currently track the performance of its teacher corps. The central office could not tell us which teachers are due for evaluation in any given year, who has been evaluated and who has not, which principals are doing a good job with evaluations or the distribution of evaluation ratings within each school. While data on evaluation outcomes is scarce, the district does maintain data on the number of teachers rated unsatisfactory in the last school year (42 in 2011-2012) and their current status.

Tracking the evaluation process would enable the district to better assess the overall professional development needs of the district, as well as to identify individual teachers who need targeted support and follow-up. Similarly, such monitoring would allow school or district administrators to identify outstanding teachers for recognition, for possible recruitment to work in high-need assignments or as models for their peers. The district is in the process of selecting a teacher effectiveness data system to maintain evaluation-related data.

Collecting these data in real time would also help to monitor the validity and implementation of the evaluation system itself. The overall distribution of teacher evaluation ratings should reflect the actual performance of teachers, which is likely to have standouts on both ends of the spectrum, high and low performing.

**Actual distribution of performance ratings in the 2011-2012 school year**



*Almost all of Philadelphia's teachers were rated "satisfactory" in 2011-2012. With only two ratings and little variation, evaluation outcomes do not tell us much about the actual performance of teachers.*

**"It's rubber stamping. Everybody is satisfactory."**

– Philadelphia teacher

In reality, performance is much more likely to look something like a bell, with most teachers performing in the average range and the two tail ends of the distribution representing the weakest and the superstars.

### 2.3 Objective evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated.

**Finding:** Philadelphia teachers are not well-informed about the appropriate use of data in evaluations, particularly value-added data.

In NCTQ focus groups, a number of teachers voiced concerns about the use of test scores in teacher evaluation. There was confusion about the meaning of value-added measurement and how it could be used to evaluate teachers.<sup>20</sup> Some teachers feared that working with high-need students would put teachers at a disadvantage in their evaluations; they assumed that raw test scores would be used in evaluations rather than student growth from one year to the next. Principals noted that while they receive a great deal of training on new initiatives (including the new evaluation system), teachers are left out of the loop when new policies are announced, leaving them frustrated and unclear about what is happening.

**Finding:** Philadelphia currently bases evaluation ratings on observations only, but will begin to include student outcomes in 2013-2014.

An increasing number of states are requiring districts to consider student learning gains in teachers' evaluation ratings. In 2009, only four states counted student achievement as a major factor in a teacher's evaluation rating. Now, 22 states — including Pennsylvania — *require* student achievement or growth to be a significant or the most significant factor in a teacher's rating.

The changes in state law and impending changes in Philadelphia have the potential to create a more meaningful teacher evaluation system based on multiple measures, including evidence of student learning.<sup>21</sup> Pennsylvania's new evaluation framework will observe the following weights:

- **15 percent building-level performance data**, including, but not limited to, factors such as the school's overall student performance on state value-added assessments (as measured by student growth on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, known as the PSSA); the school's graduation and promotion rates; student attendance; student participation in Advanced Placement courses; and student performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)
- **15 percent teacher-specific data**, including, but not limited to, value-added state assessment data (as measured by growth on the PSSA); student progress in meeting the goals spelled out in Individualized Education Plans (required of students classified as special education); student performance on locally developed school district rubrics (or similar measures)
- **20 percent elective data**, which are locally developed measures that are selected by the district from an annual list created by the state, including, but not limited to, district-designed tests such as end-of-year subject exams, nationally recognized standardized tests, industry certification examinations, student projects and student portfolios

20 Value-added measurement refers to measuring the progress made by students over the course of one year while controlling for factors outside a teacher's control, such as poverty and parents' education.

21 Pennsylvania Education Code of 1949. Article XI, Section 1123

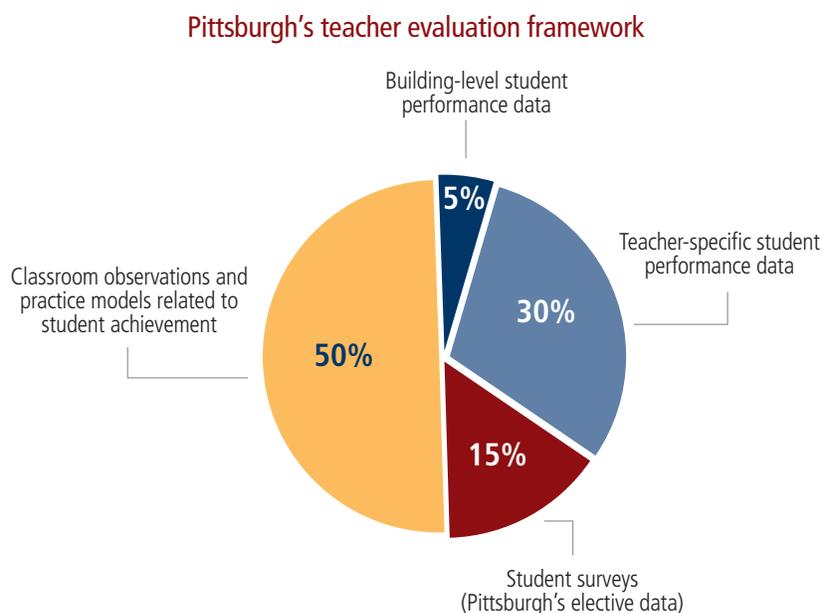


- **50 percent classroom observation of teachers** that relates to their progress toward student achievement via planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities.<sup>22</sup>

This distribution should raise some concerns for both the district and the state. The weight given to an individual teacher's student outcome data (15 percent), while a step in the right direction, is lower than what recent research recommends. New findings from the Measuring Effective Teaching Studies (MET) found that to ensure validity, objective teacher-specific student growth data measures (in the case of the study, value-added scores derived from state tests) should comprise 30 to 50 percent of an evaluation model.<sup>23</sup>

One goal of this new evaluation framework is the ability to differentiate teacher performance, so weighing building and teacher-specific data the same, as Pennsylvania does, is problematic. Such a system has the potential to mask a strong teacher's level of effectiveness by making her look weaker if building-level data is significantly lower than the teacher's individual outcomes, or, in the reverse case, overstate a weak teacher's effectiveness in a school that has high outcomes overall.

The state has shown some openness to modifications at the local level.<sup>24</sup> Pittsburgh, which has been piloting a new evaluation system since 2009, has modified the model reducing building level data to 5 percent from 15 percent and elective data to 15 percent from 20 percent, while increasing teacher specific data to 30 percent.<sup>25</sup> This is much more consistent with research findings and also allows teacher-specific data, which is more within the individual teacher's control, to hold greater weight. Pittsburgh also intends to use responses from student surveys to account for their elective data portion.



*Pittsburgh's modifications to the Pennsylvania evaluation framework increase the likelihood of being valid representations of a teacher's performance because they allow for greater emphasis on the individual teacher.*

22 Ibid.

23 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (2013, January). *Ensuring fair and reliable measures of effective teaching: Culminating findings from the MET Project's three-year study.*

24 Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949, Article XI, Section 1123 (e)

25 Pittsburgh Public Schools. (2013, January). *Empowering effective teachers. Education Committee update.* Pittsburgh, PA.

Neither the state nor the district has addressed how the teachers in nontested subjects will be evaluated. Many districts and states rely on student learning objectives for teachers in nontested subjects. High quality student learning objectives require identifying or creating assessments for measurement, accounting for student starting points and setting a student learning goal.<sup>26</sup> Philadelphia will need to identify assessments or another method of measuring progress for teachers in all nontested subjects, a group that is likely to be over half of the teaching force.

Sources of objective evidence of student learning beyond standardized test scores:

- Departmental exams and other district tests
- Periodic diagnostic assessments
- Benchmark assessments that show student growth
- Artifacts of student work connected to specific student 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.

## **2.4 Evaluations factor in multiple observations and feedback from multiple individuals and sources, with observers always providing oral and written feedback to teachers.**

**Finding:** While individuals other than principals will occasionally observe Philadelphia’s teachers, the district still places too much of the burden on school principals.

Research supports the importance of using multiple observers for evaluations and shows that adding an additional observer increases the reliability of observation ratings more than simply requiring more visits by the same observer. Even when visits by the additional observer are as short as 15 minutes, the reliability of an observation is improved.<sup>27</sup> With the exception of struggling teachers who are observed by both the principal and a second observer, most teachers in Philadelphia are observed only by their school principal or the assistant principal.

More evaluations by third party observers would support school leaders (who are often time-strapped) and provide content-specific feedback to a teacher. The central office coordinates consulting teachers who provide evaluation and support but only to first-year teachers or those tenured teachers who have received an unsatisfactory rating. Supervising assistant superintendents also participate in evaluation of teachers but only for second and third-year teachers who have received more than one unsatisfactory rating and are in jeopardy of being dismissed.

Incorporating the views of multiple, trained observers (particularly subject-area experts) serves an incredibly important purpose: It allows the superintendent to gauge the robustness of an individual principal’s ratings. When a principal’s

26 TNTP (2012, March). Teacher evaluation system comparative overview (presentation).

27 The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (2013, January). *Ensuring fair and reliable measures of effective teaching: Culminating findings from the MET Project’s three-year study.*



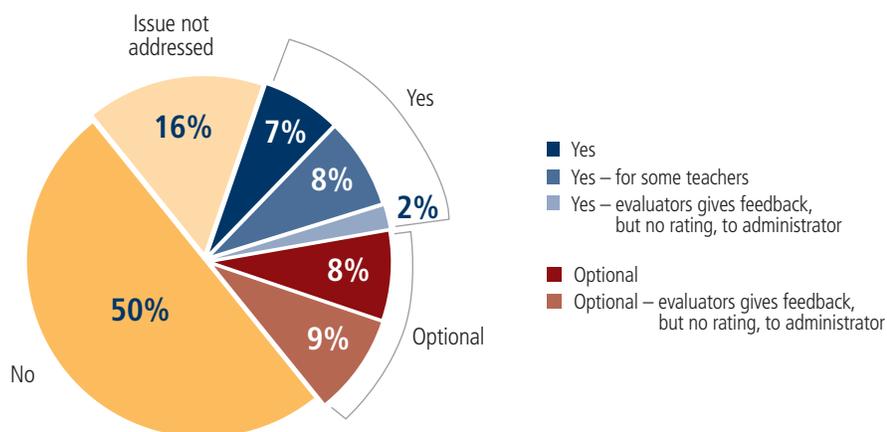
observations closely match those of an outside evaluator, the district and the teachers themselves can be more confident that the principal is unbiased and skilled at evaluation. If they do not match, the school district should increase training for principals in performing evaluations. Additional observations and evaluations can be conducted to the degree the budget allows. Even if only one teacher in a building is observed by a third-party evaluator, principals will have the benefit of a second expert opinion to verify their work.

There is a great deal of work underway nationally that could inform Philadelphia's observation practices. In Rochester, New York, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, teachers may request that a peer evaluate them in addition to an administrator. Cobb County, Georgia, allows department chairs to evaluate teachers if the principal thinks the chair is better suited for the job, usually in cases of subject-matter expertise.

### Where it's been done

**Hillsborough County, Florida, Washington D.C. and Memphis, Tennessee**, all use full-time "Master Educators" to support the evaluation of teachers. In Memphis, all teachers are evaluated by content experts as well as the principal. A modified version of such a model, where only some teachers receive third-party evaluations, would be less costly and still beneficial.

### Which districts allow peer evaluations? (Tr3 districts)



*Only one out of six districts in the 114-district Tr3 database allow peers to evaluate teachers.*

### Student surveys

Carefully crafted surveys have been found to correlate strongly with overall student achievement.<sup>28</sup> Given that Pittsburgh has included student survey results in the elective data component, Philadelphia has an opportunity to incorporate feedback from student surveys as one of the multiple measures in the evaluation process. An individual student generally

28 National Education Policy Center. (2010, December). Learning about teaching. Initial findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project. MET Project Policy Brief. Boulder, CO.

“ Teacher feedback is not effective. My first write-up was about not having contrasting colors and graphic organizers on my board, and my second was about teaching writing during a time allocated for a different topic.”

– Philadelphia teacher

observes a teacher for more than 1,000 hours a year. Multiply that student times a class of 30 and it is easy to see why 30,000 hours of observation are likely to be more reliable than the two hours an administrator may spend observing a teacher.

#### Where it's been done

**Atlanta; Denver; Dekalb County, Georgia; Gwinnett County, Georgia;** and **Memphis** all now require that student survey data be factored into teacher evaluations. In Memphis, input from students, parents and other teachers counts for 5 percent of a teacher's evaluation rating.

### 2.5 Classroom observations focus on a set of observable standards that gauge student learning.

**Finding:** Limited capacity and a compliance-driven environment constrain the ability of school leaders to provide high-quality feedback to teachers that focuses on evidence of student learning.

Since 2009-2010, Philadelphia has been using a modified version of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Effective Teaching and Learning. The Danielson Framework has four domains — Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Professional Responsibilities and Instruction — with a total of 22 indicators on which the teacher is rated. The district anticipates using this modified framework or something similar as it moves to the new evaluation system in 2013-2014.

Many states and districts that have implemented new observation tools in recent years have struggled with effective implementation. Based on focus group conversations with Philadelphia teachers, it seems that Philadelphia is no exception. Teachers identified a desire for more feedback focused on their impact on student learning. They noted that the feedback they received was often focused more on *compliance* than instruction. Too much feedback, they reported, centered on mandates related to paperwork or the classroom environment, rather than on improving the quality of their instruction. Teachers also mentioned that the debrief conversations after the observations felt more like going through a checklist rather than thoughtful conversation aimed at improving practice.

The feeling of a compliance-driven process may be due, at least in part, to the number of indicators that principals are currently responsible for observing in classrooms. Other districts have recognized this issue and have pared down their observation model to include areas of focus and/or only the most important elements for observation. For example, based on feedback from teachers and principals, Washington D.C., revised its IMPACT Teacher Evaluation system from 13 elements in 2009-2010 to nine elements in 2010-2011.



### Washington, D.C.'s changes with their evaluation rubric from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011<sup>29</sup>

2009-2010 teach domain standards	2010-2011 teach domain standards
T1: Focus students on lesson objectives	T1: Lead well-organized, objective-driven lessons
T2: Deliver content clearly	T2: Explain content clearly
T3: Engage all students in learning	T3: Engage students at all learning levels in rigorous work
T4: Target multiple learning styles	T4: Provide students multiple ways to engage with content
T5a: Check for and respond to student understanding during the lesson	T5: Check for student understanding
T5b: Respond to student misunderstandings	T6: Respond to student misunderstandings
T5c: Probe for higher-level understanding	T7: Develop higher-level understandings through effective questioning
T6: Maximize instructional time	T8: Maximize instructional time
T7: Invest students in learning	T9: Build a supportive, learning-focused classroom community
T8: Interact positively and respectfully with students	
T9a: Student behavior	
T9b: Reinforce positive behavior	
T9c: Address inappropriate, off-task, or challenging behavior	

*DC Public Schools reduced the number of standards observed in the classroom from 13 to 9 after one year of use of its teaching and learning framework.*

IMPACT only includes teacher/student behaviors that can be observed in the classroom; the district has created separate rubrics for planning and commitment to the school community. This allows the observer to rate only what she can actually see while in the classroom; a streamlined instrument such as this makes the process more efficient and allows for feedback to be targeted specifically to instructional practice.

## 2.6 Evaluations offer multiple rating levels to distinguish performance among teachers. Ratings differentiate substantial performance differences among teachers.

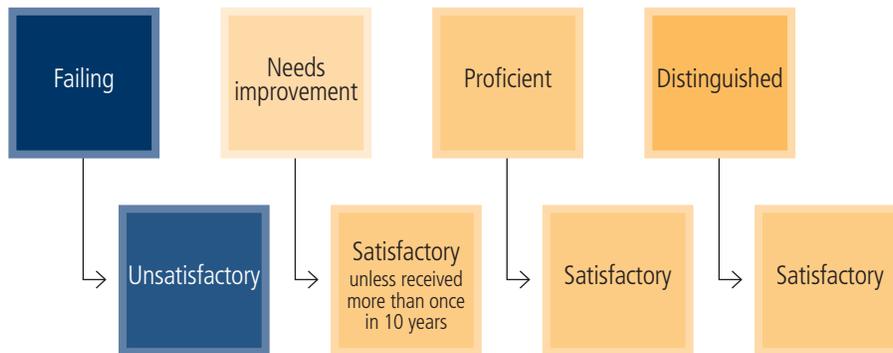
**Finding:** Pennsylvania's new state-mandated evaluation system will rate teachers on one of four ratings, but laws around dismissal have not been updated to reflect this change.

Multiple rating levels help school districts differentiate various levels of teacher performance. Including distinguished teachers in the same category as those who are minimally effective does not provide the information principals need to provide appropriate professional development and opportunities for leadership. In Philadelphia, teachers are either rated satisfactory or unsatisfactory. In the new model, there will be a shift to four ratings — distinguished, proficient, needs improvement, and failing — which will allow for more differentiation among teachers.

29 The District of Columbia Public Schools Effectiveness Assessment System for School-based Personnel. 2010-2011.

While the shift to four rating categories represents a clear improvement from the previous model, the state still aligns these ratings to a binary system for the purposes of dismissal. According to state policy, the first three ratings equate to satisfactory performance, while “failing” is considered unsatisfactory and may lead to dismissal. A teacher who receives a rating of “needs improvement” twice in a 10-year period is also considered unsatisfactory. While the rules for dismissal were clear under the old system, trying to squeeze ratings from the four new categories into the old binary system is likely to lead to confusion and disputes at the school district level.

### Pennsylvania’s new evaluation rating categories



*The new Pennsylvania evaluation system places teachers in four categories, three of which are considered “satisfactory” in most cases.<sup>30</sup> Two “unsatisfactory” ratings can be grounds for dismissal under Pennsylvania law.*

The new rating system does not modify the length of time it takes to dismiss an ineffective teacher. It can still take more than two full years to dismiss a tenured teacher who receives a failing rating, because tenured teachers still only get one rating a year.

While the state sets the general parameters for the evaluation system, it also allows school districts to decide how teachers’ scores on each part of the evaluation will correspond to ratings. The district has the latitude to consider how it will differentiate follow-up actions based on evaluation ratings.<sup>31</sup> The district also can consider whether a distinguished teacher should receive additional compensation and/or leadership opportunities and what professional development should be offered to teachers based on a rating of proficient, needs improvement or failing. (See the recommendations section for details on potential consequences for ratings.)

30 If a teacher receives a “needs improvement” rating more than once in 10 years, the second “needs improvement” is considered an unsatisfactory rating.

31 Pennsylvania School Code of 1949, Article XI, Section 1123 (e)



## Recommendations

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**1. Track evaluation data centrally and use it to drive decisions.** Update infrastructure, including technology systems, procedures and personnel that are not currently in place, to manage this data. At any time, the district should be able to report the number of tenured and non-tenured teachers in each rating level, broken down to the school level, and the follow-up for each (e.g., professional development or enrollment in peer assistance and review). When the district transitions to a more sophisticated evaluation system, detailed data on the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching force can help to inform professional development and provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of particular preparation programs.
- 

**2. Test the validity of the evaluation system by reviewing the range of ratings across the district.** By analyzing the full range of performance in evaluation ratings within schools and the district and comparing teacher ratings to student outcomes, the district will be able to see if counterintuitive patterns emerge. Is the range of ratings more like a normal curve or are ratings concentrated in one or two categories? The district should determine if the distribution of teacher performance ratings corresponds logically with student achievement. Are teachers rated highly where students are improving and, when students are not improving, are the teacher performance ratings lower? Use historical trends in Philadelphia student performance to arrive at appropriate benchmarks that a teacher should achieve to qualify for each evaluation rating. Hold principals accountable for their evaluation results.
- 

**3. Follow Pittsburgh's evaluation proposal example and decrease the percentage for building-level data, giving greater weight to teacher-specific data.** Building-level data, while helpful in providing an overall picture of a school and its performance, is not as predictive in determining a teacher's direct contribution to a student's success as are other student outcome measures.
- 

**4. Incorporate additional peer review and third-party evaluators from the central office to validate principal evaluations and provide content-specific feedback on teacher instruction.** These evaluators should be content experts and should serve the dual purpose of validating principal evaluations and assessing content-relevant instruction.
- 

**5. Incorporate student voice into teacher evaluations.** Feedback from students can help teachers improve and can give evaluators a better sense of teacher instructional practices. Carefully crafted student surveys have been found to correlate strongly with student outcomes and can be used as another measure of teacher effectiveness.

 This recommendation requires only a change in practice.

 This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.

 This recommendation requires a change in state law.

**Sample student survey:**  
**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

Check one box after each question.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. My teacher in this class makes me feel that s/he really cares about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My teacher really tries to understand how students feel about things.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Students in this class treat the teacher with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My teacher has several good ways to explain each topic that we cover in this class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My teacher makes lessons interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Students speak up and share their ideas about class work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My teacher respects my ideas and suggestions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. My teacher checks to make sure we understand what s/he is teaching us.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: Tripod Survey Questions<sup>32</sup>



**6. Differentiate rewards and consequences based on teacher ratings.** As the district completes its work on aligning the rating system with the evaluation model, it should consider how follow-up actions will vary based on a teacher's rating. Teachers who receive proficient ratings should have opportunities for professional development related to their needs, and those who are rated "distinguished" should have opportunities to serve in teacher leadership roles (see standard 4: compensation). Teachers who are rated "needs improvement" and "failing" should be given support to improve, and steps should be taken to inform those rated "failing" that their improvement must be immediate or they will be removed from the classroom.

32 The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (2013, January). *Ensuring fair and reliable measures of effective teaching: Culminating findings from the MET Project's three-year study.*



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



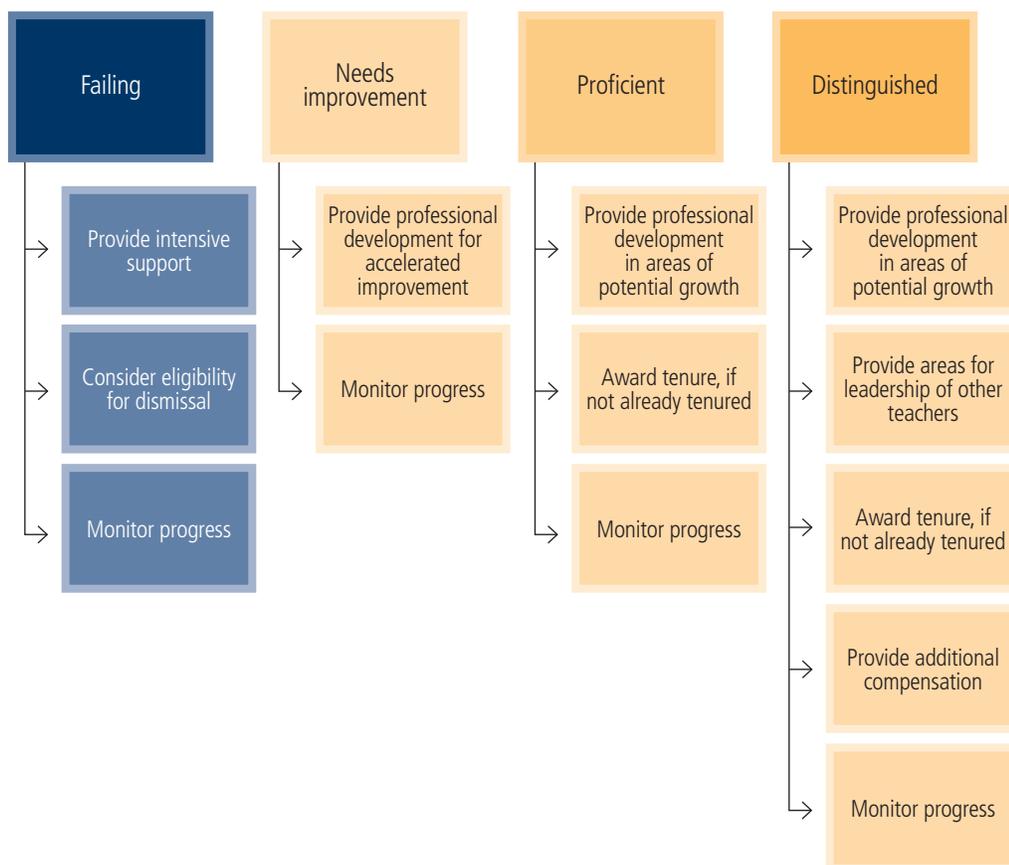
This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



### Recommended follow-up actions for each evaluation rating



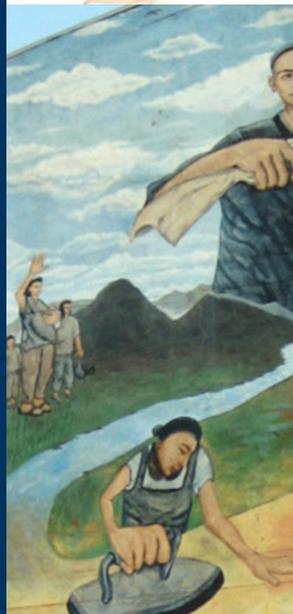
*Moving from two rating categories in the current evaluation system to four categories will create a structure that does a better job recognizing varying levels of teacher effectiveness and calibrating responses for an individual teacher.*

- 
**7. Reevaluate the current evaluation framework and take steps to ensure that the model is valid and reliable.** As the state rolls out its regulations for the new evaluation model, it should analyze whether the current breakdown of teacher-specific data is significant enough to ensure a valid instrument that effectively measures an individual teacher's performance.
- 
**8. Outline a dismissal policy that matches the new teacher evaluation system.** The new evaluation system differentiates teachers into four rating levels. For the purpose of dismissal, however, the state converts teachers back to just two ratings — unsatisfactory or satisfactory. It is important that the state provide clear guidance on dismissal that directly relates to the new rating system to avoid confusion on the district level.

 This recommendation requires only a change in practice.

 This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.

 This recommendation requires a change in state law.



## Standard 3

# Tenure

**Tenure is a meaningful milestone in a teacher's career.**

**Indicators on which this standard is assessed:**

- 3.1 A teacher's classroom performance is the primary criterion in the tenure decision.
- 3.2 Teachers receive tenure only after the district has acquired sufficient evidence of their consistent, effective performance.
- 3.3 Awarding tenure to a teacher involves an explicit point of decision based on a thorough review of a teacher's performance.
- 3.4 The tenure designation is not an obstacle to dismissing an ineffective teacher.

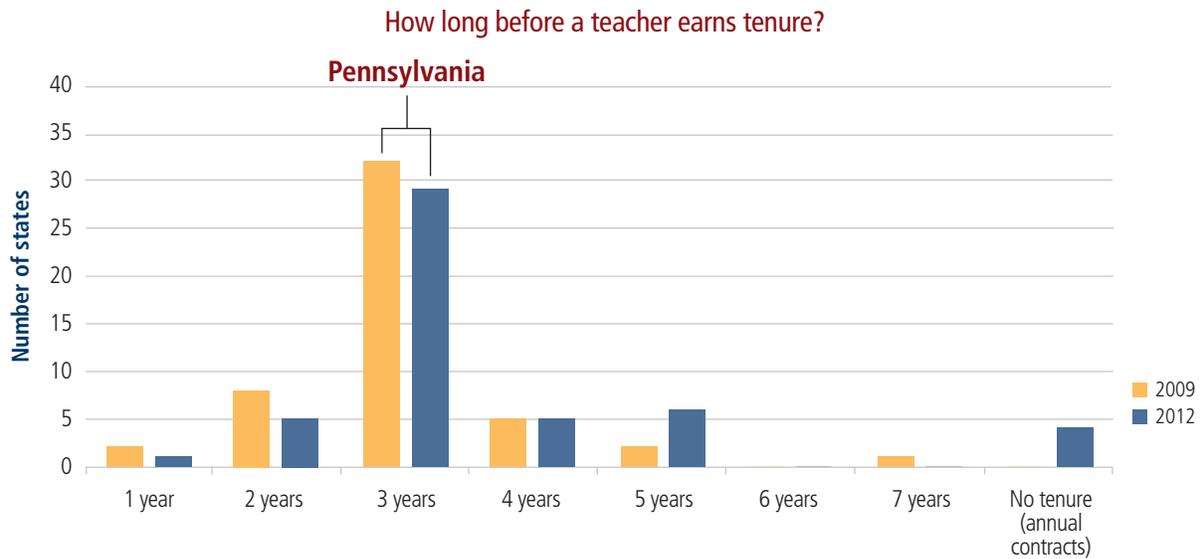
### **3.1 A teacher's classroom performance is the primary criterion in the tenure decision.**

**Finding:** Pennsylvania state law may be hindering Philadelphia's ability to factor student learning into the tenure decision, as it requires districts to make that decision after three years of employment.

The decision to award a teacher with tenure is effectively a \$3 million decision by a school district factoring in combined salary, benefits and pension over the course of a teacher's career.<sup>33</sup> It should be treated as an important decision for a district to make, but too often school districts make it without any reflection or evidence of effectiveness.

Across the United States, districts decide whether to award teachers tenure, but state law sets the terms. Over the past few years, there have been significant changes in tenure laws across the country, but not in Pennsylvania.

33 Estimated cost of post-tenure salary and benefits for a Philadelphia teacher based on current salary levels.

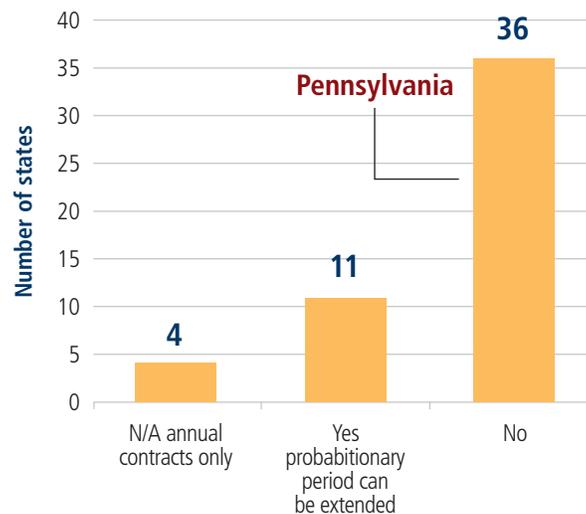


*In the past three years, 10 states have increased the time it takes to reach tenure, and three states essentially eliminated tenure requirements at the state level.<sup>34</sup>*

Making the tenure decision in a teacher’s third year does not allow principals to include three years of student outcome data in their decision-making process, since the third year of test data is generally not available until the fourth year. Teachers experience a steep learning curve in their first two years. Adding a year or two to the probationary period would give new teachers more time to improve and allow districts to more fairly assess a teacher’s performance.

Unlike districts in 11 other states, Pennsylvania districts do not have the option of delaying the tenure decision. If school leaders are unsure of a teacher’s performance, allowing for an extension in the probationary period can be helpful in giving new teachers more time to show their improvement.

### Are districts allowed to extend the probationary period for teachers?



*In 11 states, but not in Pennsylvania, a district is allowed to extend the probationary period before tenure, or award annual contracts rather than confer permanent status.*

<sup>34</sup> Florida, South Carolina and South Dakota (effective in 2016) essentially eliminated tenure requirements at the state level



**3.2 Teachers receive tenure only after the district has acquired sufficient evidence of their consistent, effective performance.**

**3.3 Awarding tenure to a teacher involves an explicit point of decision based on a thorough review of a teacher's performance**

**Finding:** A teacher's effectiveness is not examined when making a tenure decision in Philadelphia. Virtually all teachers earn tenure provided they are still employed in the district.

Neither the state nor the school district has policies in place that reflect the serious nature of the tenure decision. State law puts only one condition on tenure — that it shall be awarded after a teacher has “satisfactorily completed three (3) years of service in any school district of [the] Commonwealth.”<sup>35</sup>

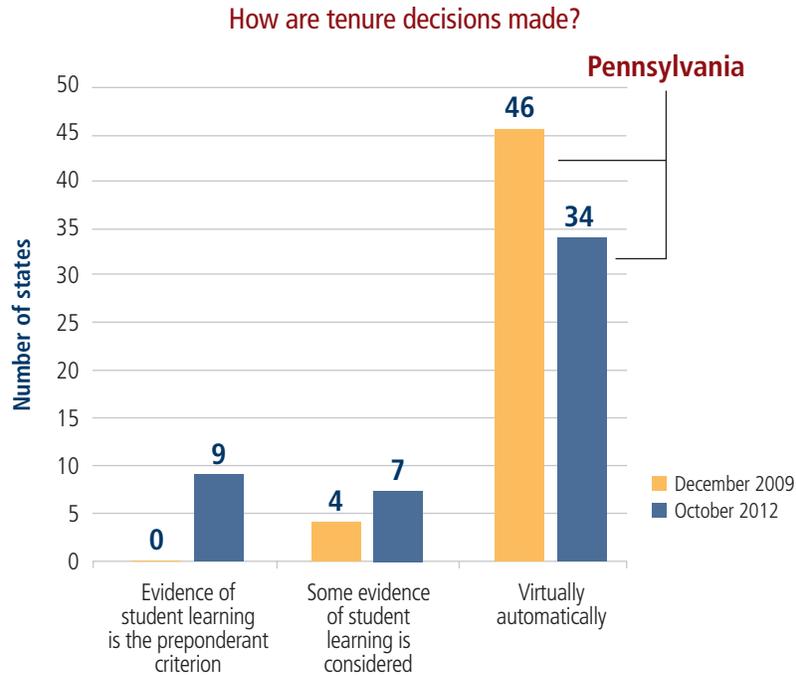
The sole expectation that a teacher earn a satisfactory evaluation sets a very low bar indeed: in the 2011-2012 school year, only 42 Philadelphia teachers out of about 9,400 (less than one percent) were rated as unsatisfactory.

Less than one percent of teachers are rated unsatisfactory



*For approximately every 225 teachers in Philadelphia, one teacher is rated unsatisfactory. The district does not maintain data regarding the performance of teachers who receive satisfactory ratings.*

35 Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949, Article XI, Section 1121 (c)



*While there have been some recent changes, the majority of states continue to award tenure virtually automatically.*

**Finding:** Philadelphia does not strictly apply the state’s minimal rules for earning tenure; teachers with unsatisfactory ratings are given time to improve.

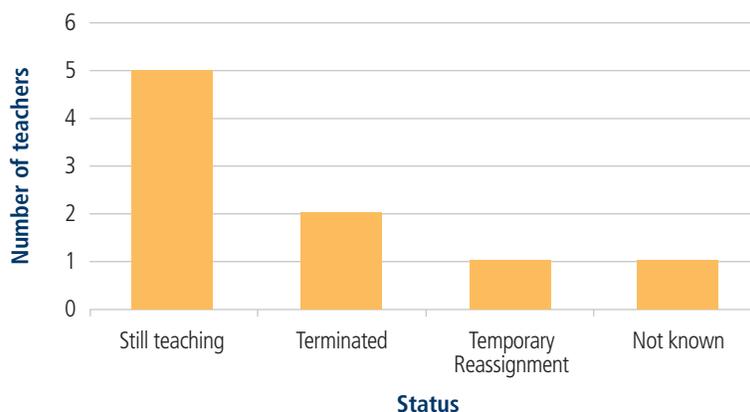
Although Philadelphia has the option of not renewing a non-tenured teacher’s contract at the conclusion of any year within the first three years, the district seems hesitant to do this without first going through the same evaluation and improvement process that only has to be afforded to tenured teachers.

Even when non-tenured teachers are rated unsatisfactory, their contracts are often still renewed. In 2011-2012, for example, five teachers who were rated unsatisfactory in their third year (at the tenure mark) received a teaching contract for the following year.<sup>36</sup>

36 The district notes that these teachers are still not tenured, as tenure decisions for the 2011-2012 school year have not yet been determined.



### What happened to teachers found unsatisfactory who were eligible for tenure?



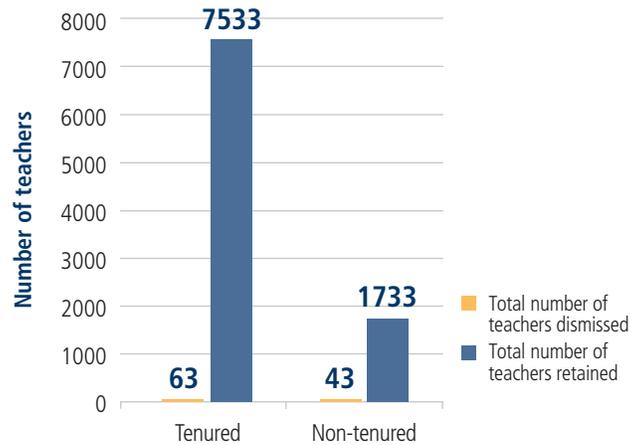
*Although few teachers are found unsatisfactory, even among those who are, some still seem to be awarded tenure. Out of nine teachers who were at the tenure mark at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, five are still teaching. Only two are known to have been terminated.*

The district's teacher support and evaluation process does provide some opportunity to make tenure a more meaningful designation, but the district does not seem to be taking advantage of this opportunity. The contract stipulates that teachers in their first year are to be provided with extensive support through a consulting teacher. At the end of that first year, the consulting teacher must make a recommendation for the teacher's retention or dismissal. However, only one teacher's contract was not renewed after one year of service in 2011-2012. The reason for dismissal was not teaching performance but violation of school leave policy.

The contract also stipulates that second- or third-year teachers who have had an unsatisfactory observation should be observed up to four times in a semester.<sup>37</sup> If a teacher does not improve by the end of these four observations, she can receive a summative unsatisfactory rating, and the district can dismiss her at the end of the semester. Since very few teachers receive a summative unsatisfactory rating, tenure is the only outcome.

37 Interviews with district staff

### Retention and dismissal of tenured and non-tenured teachers 2009-2012



*The rate of tenured and non-tenured teachers who are dismissed are both one percent or less, suggesting that the district is doing little to remove low-performing teachers before they earn tenure and are granted additional due process rights.<sup>38</sup>*

#### Illinois teacher tenure model

In Illinois, teacher tenure is now explicitly linked to the new evaluation system, which has four rating levels: Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory.

Teachers who achieve three consecutive ratings of “excellent” are granted immediate tenure after three years. In situations where this is not the case, tenure is extended to four years and two of the last three ratings within four years must be “excellent” or “proficient,” including the fourth year. Teachers who do not achieve such ratings by the end of the fourth year are dismissed.

### 3.4 The tenure designation is not an obstacle to dismissing an ineffective teacher.

After earning tenure, few Philadelphia teachers are dismissed for poor performance. If there were evidence that principals were making careful tenure decisions, this low dismissal rate would not be seen as a problem, but we found no such evidence.

An average of 20 tenured teachers have been terminated in each of the past three years for a variety of reasons (not just ineffective instruction). That rate represents 0.21 percent of tenured teachers in the district. Districts often cite the high cost and lengthy process as reasons for the rare dismissal of tenured teachers. In Pennsylvania, as in other states, state law interprets a tenured teacher’s appropriate due process rights as the right to file multiple costly appeals. Pennsylvania law results in some of the lengthiest timelines for dismissing a teacher in the United States. Even in cases of

<sup>38</sup> In the dismissal graph above, the total number of teachers decreased significantly over the three-year period. The numbers used here reflect the 2011-2012 workforce, the smallest of the three years. In addition 10 dismissed teachers had no data to indicate whether or not they were tenured upon dismissal. These teachers are not reflected in the above numbers.



inappropriate behavior, the district reports that average time from the initial incident or notice to improve to dismissal was over two years in Philadelphia, with some cases taking as long as 13 years. (See section 1 for more information.)

Why does it take so long? In Pennsylvania, the first step in the process is to appeal to the State Secretary of Education, which is standard and appropriate. However, the state then takes the dismissal decision out of the realm of educators and places it in the state courts.<sup>39</sup> A judge who does not have experience in the field of education decides if someone should be dismissed because of lack of effectiveness in the classroom.

Districts explain away low rates of dismissal, claiming that they counsel teachers out of the profession rather than dismiss them. Counseling is a common practice among districts and is preferable to formal dismissal proceedings. However, in a district as large as Philadelphia, dismissals are expected simply because some percentage of teachers (or any large workforce) will always refuse to be counseled out. Accordingly, districts should be tracking the number of teachers they counsel out rather than dismiss and be able to report on such data. While Philadelphia can provide the number of teachers who have gone through the Peer Assistance and Review program, it cannot provide numbers of teachers who may have elected not to go through the program and instead resigned.

## Recommendations

- 
**1. Hold a tenure review to decide whether to award tenure.** Tenure should be a significant milestone in a teacher's career and awarded only after deliberate and thoughtful consideration of a teacher's performance. Philadelphia should develop a review process in which the principal must review the cumulative evidence of a teacher's professional success and potential.
- 
**2. Use the opportunities for intense support and evaluation in the probationary years to identify and dismiss teachers who are not effective.** Philadelphia's process of providing a consulting teacher in the first year of a teacher's career (and longer, if needed) and more frequent observations by the principal to support teachers as they lay the foundations of their careers are effective steps. Ensure that this intensive support and evaluation process complements recommendations from the consulting teachers who reflect reasonable variations in teacher performance.
- 
**3. Track data on teacher performance.** To paint a true picture of the effectiveness of teachers in Philadelphia at any given time as well as dismissal rates, the district should maintain data on the number of tenured versus non-tenured teachers and their performance and the number of teachers who have left the district voluntarily rather than being dismissed.
- 
**4. Reward teachers who earn tenure with a significant pay increase.** A meaningful tenure process should be accompanied by a salary structure that recognizes the teacher's accomplishments. See Standard 4 for more ideas on how Philadelphia's salary schedule can work toward attracting, retaining and rewarding effective teachers.

39 PA Public School Code of 1949: Section 1132

 This recommendation requires only a change in practice.

 This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.

 This recommendation requires a change in state law.



5. **End the automatic awarding of tenure and require consideration of evidence of effectiveness in tenure decisions.** The state should articulate a process that local districts must administer in considering evidence and deciding whether a teacher should receive tenure. The process should require evidence of student learning rather than number of years in the classroom as the most significant factor in the tenure decision.



6. **Extend the probationary period for teachers to earn tenure from three to at least four years.** Pennsylvania policy results in districts using fewer than three years of information to assess a teacher's candidacy for tenure. If the probationary period is capped at any point fewer than five years, districts should have the option to extend the tenure decision. This step would allow teachers who are showing improvement to have additional time to improve rather than leave the classroom.





## Standard 4

# Compensation

**Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and reward high-quality teachers, especially those in hard-to-staff positions.**

### Indicators on which this standard is assessed:

- 4.1 The district's salaries are competitive with other school districts in the area.
- 4.2 Raises are tied to a teacher's impact on student learning, not indiscriminately to education credits or experience.
- 4.3 The district offers financial incentives to employ and retain effective teachers in high-needs schools and critical shortage content areas.

Any discussion of teacher compensation in Philadelphia must take into account the school district's dire fiscal condition. The district's current spending trajectory is expected to produce a \$300 million deficit by the end of the 2012-2013 school year, a startling 11 percent shortfall in the district's annual operating budget of \$2.6 billion.<sup>40</sup>

The district's financial woes are due, at least in part, to declining enrollment that has not been matched by a reduction in spending, decreased funding from state and federal governments, prevailing economic conditions, as well as growth in the district's wages and benefits, particularly health care benefits.<sup>41</sup> Given these challenges, the district's five-year financial plan includes recommendations to close underused schools and seek concessions from local unions.

Even with these considerable challenges, there are opportunities for the district to attract and retain strong teachers by *reprioritizing* existing resources that are not being strategically spent.

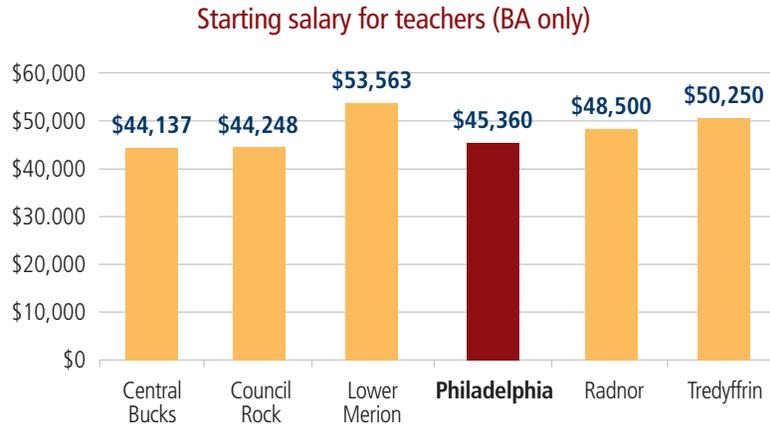
### **4.1 The district's salaries are competitive with other school districts in the area.**

**Finding:** Philadelphia teachers' starting salaries are competitive with most nearby school districts, but fail to maintain their competitiveness as a teacher's experience increases.

Philadelphia must compete for teacher talent with surrounding districts and the many charter schools in the city. It is especially important to offer starting salaries that are competitive to recruit teachers, and Philadelphia's starting salaries are competitive with surrounding districts.

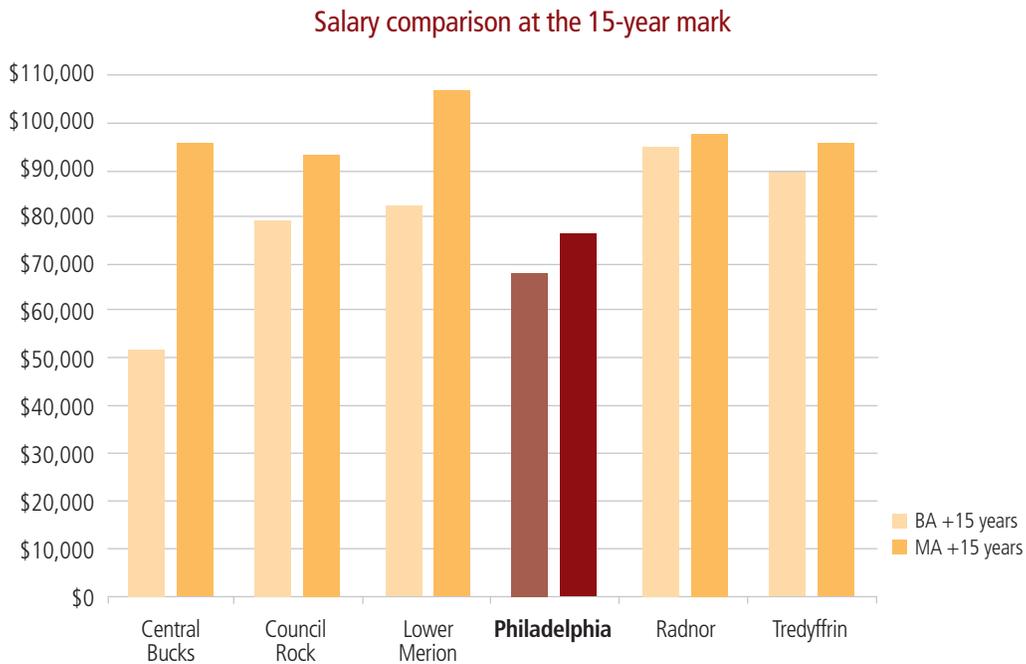
40 School District of Philadelphia Fiscal Year 2014 Proposed Operating Budget Update, April 18, 2013

41 Ibid.



*Philadelphia teachers (with a bachelor’s degree) begin their careers earning approximately \$45,000, roughly competitive with surrounding districts.*

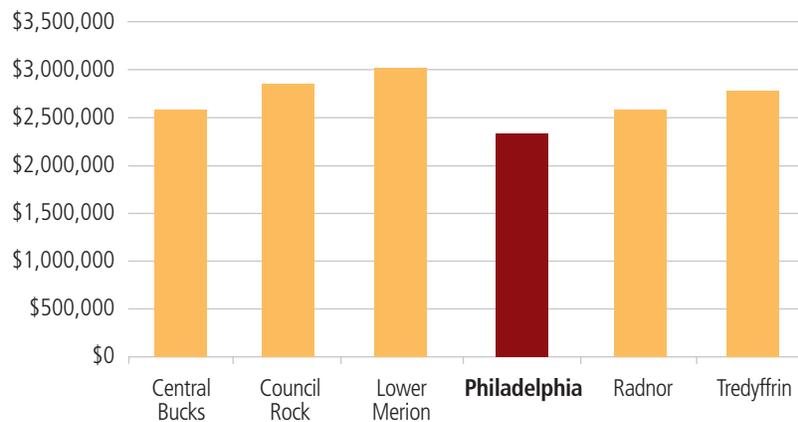
While Philadelphia’s salary structure matches pay in surrounding districts during the first 10 years of a teacher’s career, as teachers gain more experience, their pay falls behind area districts. Consequently, lifetime earnings for Philadelphia teachers are lower than those of teachers in nearby districts.



*As teachers progress in their careers, salaries in Philadelphia do not keep pace with surrounding districts. A teacher with a bachelor’s degree and 15 years of experience makes \$68,000, and a teacher with a master’s degree and 15 years of experience makes \$76,000. These salaries are far lower than salaries surrounding districts offer comparable teachers.*



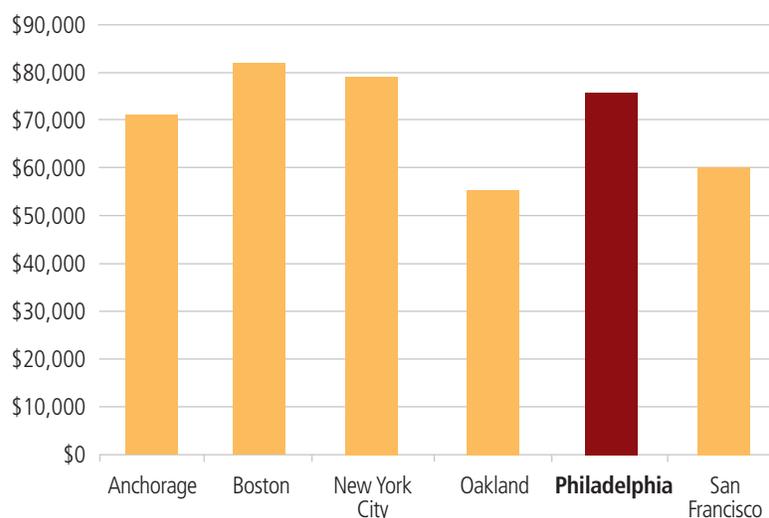
Typical Philadelphia teacher's lifetime earnings compared to comparable teacher in surrounding districts (current dollars)



*NCTQ uses a standard measure to calculate a typical teacher's expected lifetime earnings in any district we study: the salary of a 30-year veteran teacher who earned a master's degree after working five years, adding an additional 30 credits after 10 years and an additional 30 credits after 15 years to qualify for the "Master's + 60" salary level.*

Philadelphia is challenged by teacher salaries in that, while they are quite a bit higher than many other districts around the nation, they do not compare well with surrounding districts — districts with which it competes for talent. These surrounding district salaries are also higher than elsewhere in the country, even in places with a higher cost of living such as New York City and San Francisco. This makes it difficult for districts like Philadelphia, with a lower tax base than more affluent suburbs, to keep up.

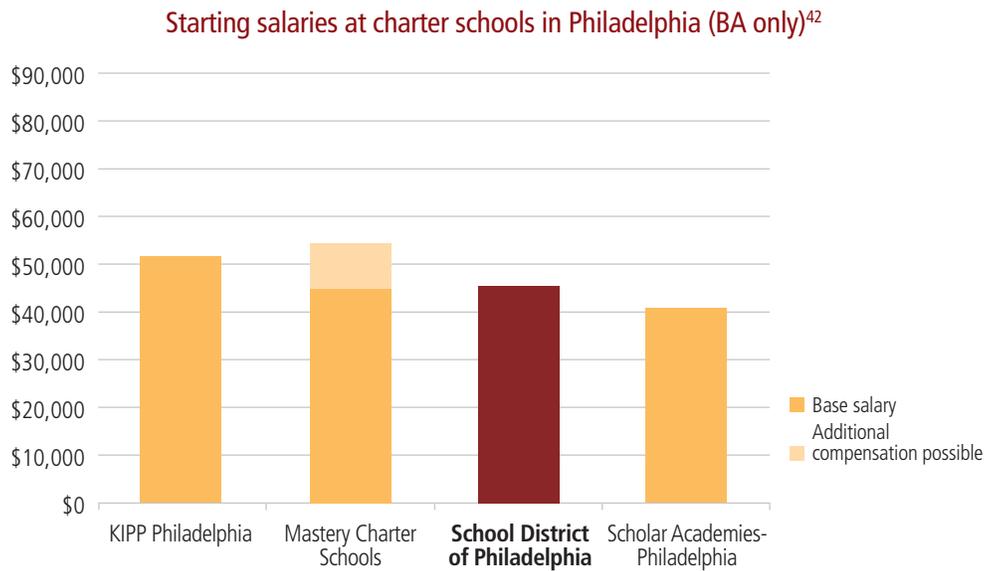
Teacher salaries of cities with high cost of living (MA + 15 years)



*In comparisons to districts in cities with higher costs of living, Philadelphia's teacher salaries are competitive, even above Anchorage, Oakland and San Francisco. They are even close to the annual teacher salary in New York, the city with the highest cost of living in the United States.*

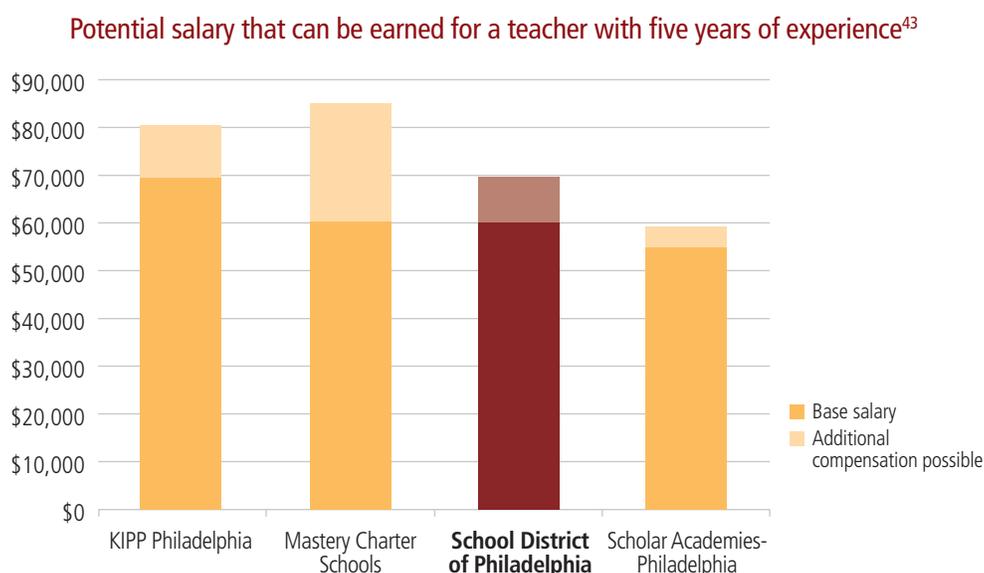
**Finding:** Philadelphia’s starting teacher salaries are competitive with area charters but have less potential for growth based on performance.

In addition to surrounding districts, Philadelphia must compete for teacher talent with nearby public charter schools — systems that tend to be far more agile in their hiring practices. While it is difficult to directly compare salaries between the district and charter schools because the former follow a traditional pay scale and the latter may offer additional compensation for longer school days or performance pay, a review of compensation structures in these schools indicates that Philadelphia’s starting salaries are competitive. Salaries of teachers in charters as they progress in their careers can fall below, meet or surpass district teachers depending on the charter network.



*Philadelphia’s starting salaries are competitive with three of the surrounding charter networks.*

42 Teachers at KIPP Philadelphia follow the salary scale of the school district, except that they get paid 15 percent more to compensate for a longer school day. The school district also pays more to teachers at Promise Academies who have a longer school day as well.



*Philadelphia's salary for a teacher with five years of experience is also comparable to nearby charter schools. Depending on the salary structure of the charter, Philadelphia's salary appears to fall in the middle but charter teachers in some schools can earn more based on performance.*

**Finding:** After factoring in unusually generous health care benefits, Philadelphia's teacher compensation becomes far more competitive with surrounding districts, a distinction that the district has not used to its benefit to recruit and retain talent.

Unlike many school districts, Philadelphia contributes 100 percent of the health care premium for not only its teachers but also for all of their dependents. Such a benefit is increasingly unusual, certainly in the private sector but also in increasing numbers of school districts. Across all employment sectors, employees are asked, on average, to contribute about 18 percent of their own health care costs and 28 percent of the health care costs for their families.<sup>44</sup> Out of 114 school districts in NCTQ's Tr3 database, 33 contribute 100 percent to a teacher's health care and even fewer, 11, provide full coverage to an employee's dependents.<sup>45</sup> While many of the districts surrounding Philadelphia contributed 100 percent of a teacher's health care premium in the past, all except Philadelphia have moved to cost sharing.

43 For the school district, the salary indicates a teacher with five years of experience and the range he or she can earn based on coursework. For KIPP, the salary is based on the district with a 15 percent differential for the longer day. For Mastery, the additional compensation is based on performance, as is Scholar Academies'.

44 Kaiser Family Foundation (2012). Annual Health Survey

45 The NCTQ database contains information on health coverage for teachers in 67 districts and health care for dependents in 55 districts. For the remaining districts, no information on health care coverage is provided in their contracts or in district policy documents.

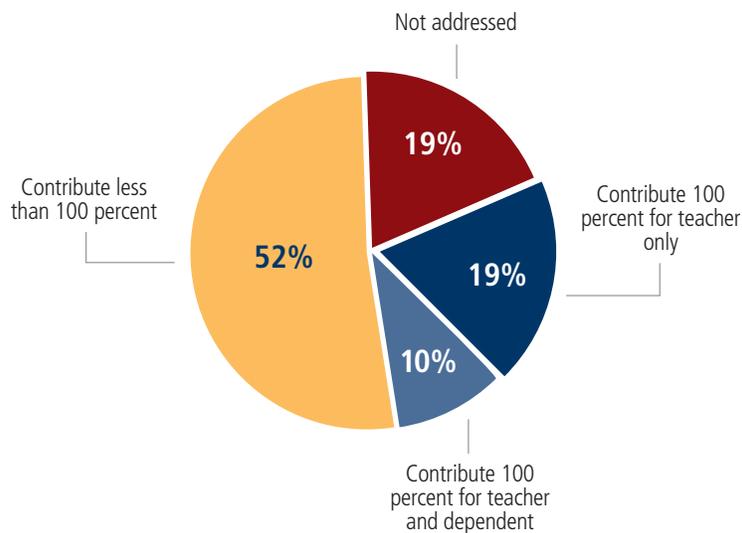
**Health care contributions – surrounding districts**

District	Portion of health care premium paid by teachers (effective 2014-2015)
Central Bucks	15.5% of premium
Council Rock	16% of premium
Lower Merion	2% gross pay
Philadelphia	0% of premium
Radnor	.95% of salary (2012-2013 SY)
Tredyffrin	10% of premium

*In Philadelphia’s surrounding districts, teachers are expected to pay some portion of their health care premium. In Philadelphia, the district pays all health care costs for teachers and their dependents.*

What does that mean in terms of dollars and cents? The School District of Philadelphia pays an average of \$6,710 per employee for health care coverage along with an additional \$4,353 that goes to the Philadelphia Federation of Teacher’s health and welfare fund to pay for prescription, dental and optical coverage. The cost of these benefits continues to grow from year to year.

**Tr3 district health care contribution (coverage of teacher and dependents)**



*While 29 percent of districts in the Tr3 database contribute 100 percent to a teacher’s health care, only 10 percent extend full coverage to a teacher’s dependents.*

Philadelphia is missing an opportunity to use this benefit as a recruiting and retention tool. In focus groups and survey responses, teachers did not identify this distinctive benefit as an advantage of working in the district. While covering all health care premiums is expensive for the district — and unusual for the area — it is not something that the district touts for recruitment purposes.



## 4.2 Raises are tied to a teacher's impact on student learning, not indiscriminately to education credits or experience.

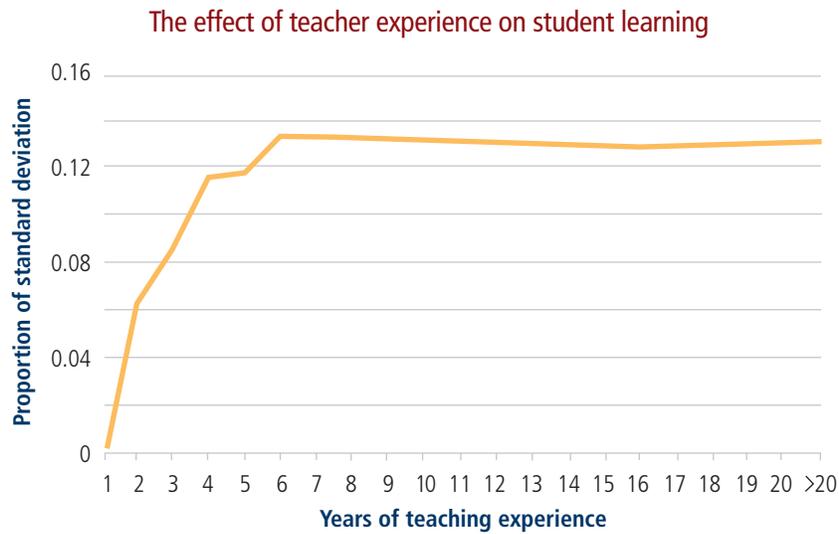
An extensive body of research over a number of decades has definitively concluded that graduate coursework does not, on average, make teachers more effective. In 2009, NCTQ asked university researchers to compile a summary of all existing research examining the impact of a master's degree on teacher effectiveness, as measured by student learning. (See page 59.) Out of 102 statistical tests examined, approximately 90 percent showed that advanced degrees had either no impact at all or even a *negative* impact on student achievement. Of the 10 percent having a positive impact, none reached a level of statistical significance. Those few studies finding a positive correlation between a teacher's degree status and student achievement were degree-specific. In these cases, teachers completed a degree in the subject they taught, but almost all of these cases studied high school mathematics teachers who had obtained an advanced mathematics degree.

**Finding:** Because the district offers little compensation for experience after 10 years, the only way for a teacher to achieve increases in salary is to earn additional credits.

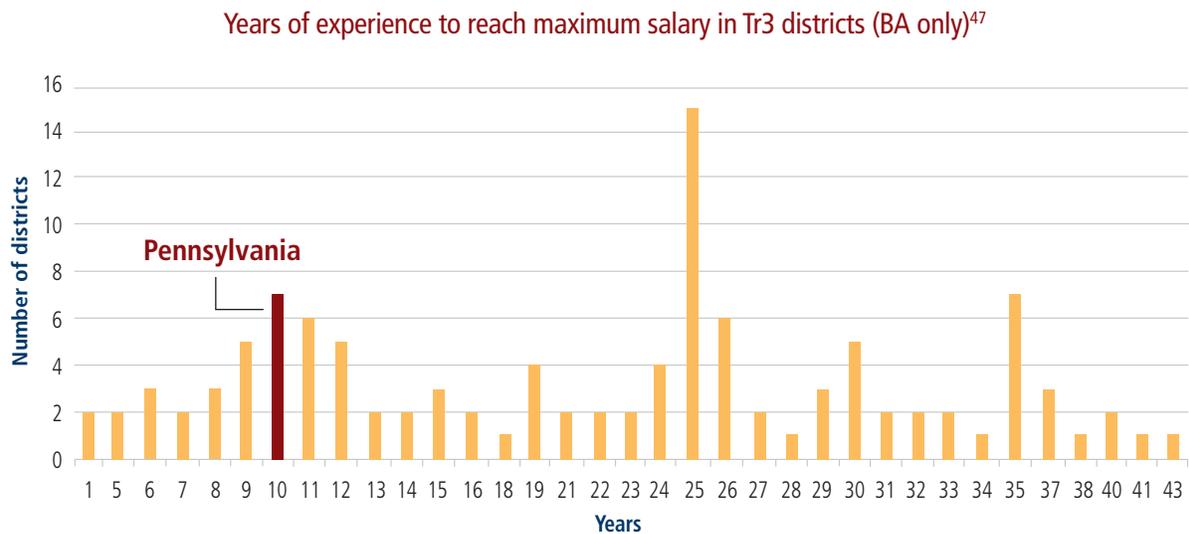
While a few school districts across the nation are tying pay to a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom, most traditional salary schedules reward teachers based on credits and experience only. A consensus body of research, however, shows that teachers, on average, do not become steadily more effective with each year they teach, nor do increases in their effectiveness occur at the end of their career.<sup>46</sup> In fact, the biggest jump in an average teacher's effectiveness comes in the first two years, followed by smaller increases through year five and flattening out in the remaining years. While this pattern does not accommodate other ways in which veteran teachers contribute to a school's well being, it does suggest that districts need to better recognize the value that novice teachers, those with three years under their belt, provide to the district.

Commendably, Philadelphia's salary schedule does not give too much weight to experience. The district allows teachers to reach a maximum salary after only 10 years of experience, a cap that is far lower than many other districts in NCTQ's Tr3 database.

46 Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin S. (1998). *Teachers, schools and academic achievement*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.



*This graph shows a typical trajectory of a teacher’s effectiveness in relationship to the years worked. It is a finding replicated many times. While it looks at the most important contribution a teacher makes — increasing student learning — it does not factor in other ways that more senior teachers contribute to a school’s well-being.*



*In Philadelphia, teachers can reach a maximum salary on any lane after 10 years of experience. After that, in order to earn more, they must accumulate credits.*

Philadelphia is a bit unusual in that it is theoretically possible to earn a salary of \$90,000 after only 10 years of service, provided one has also earned a master’s degree plus 60 credits (effectively three master’s degrees) and can teach

47 Harrison School District Two is excluded from the above graph because it only offers pay for performance. Baltimore City, Denver, District of Columbia, and Newark all offer a combination of years of experience and performance-based pay. The above graph only denotes years of experience to reach maximum salary and does not account for performance-based pay in these districts.



more than one subject. In comparison to surrounding districts, Philadelphia does require more academic credits for a mid-career teacher to reach a higher salary. Teachers in some nearby districts can qualify for a salary of \$90,000 with a bachelor’s degree (but with many more years of experience) or, in the case of all the other districts, a master’s degree

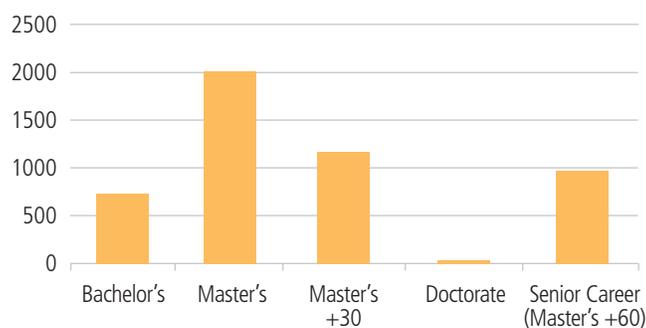
**When does a teacher qualify for a \$90,000 salary?**

Education level	Central Bucks	Council Rock	Lower Merion	Radnor	Tredyffrin	Philadelphia
Bachelor’s	Never	Never	Never	After 14 years	After 15 years	Never
Master’s	After 14 years	After 10 years	After 10 years	After 14 years	After 15 years	Never
Master’s + 30	After 13 years	After 7 years	After 9 years	After 13 years	After 12 years	Never
Master’s + 60	After 12 years	After 7 years	After 8 years	After 13 years	After 8 years	After 10 years

*In Tredyffrin and Radnor, teachers only need a bachelor’s degree to earn a \$90,000 salary, the maximum amount a teacher can obtain in Philadelphia. In the other three districts, teachers only need a master’s degree to reach the \$90,000 salary mark. Philadelphia teachers must have a master’s degree plus 60 additional credits and dual certification to earn \$90,000.*

Although theoretically possible, this relatively high income in 10 years appears to have been interpreted by most Philadelphia teachers as impractical to achieve. While we did find an unusually high percentage of teachers in Philadelphia who had a master’s degree, only one in five teachers with 10 years or more of experience are on the maximum salary step.

**Teachers with 10 years or more of experience by salary schedule “lane”**



*In Philadelphia, only one in five teachers with 10 or more years of experience are actually on the maximum salary step, thereby earning over \$90,000.*

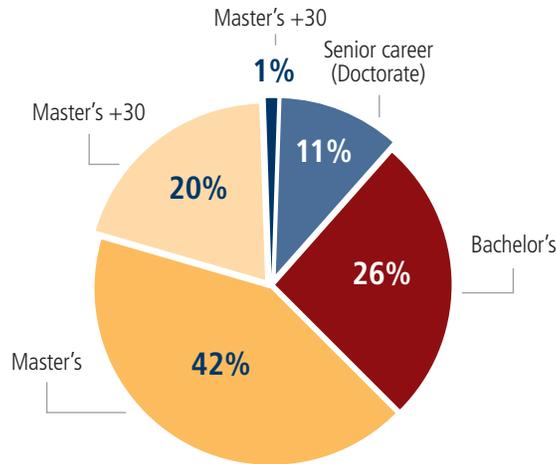
In some districts, it is much easier to earn advanced credits. Teachers in Los Angeles earn credits toward salary increases by taking a trip to a museum or the symphony. In Philadelphia, credits have to be genuine graduate credits, which may explain why it takes teachers in Philadelphia longer than elsewhere to earn the credits needed to advance up the pay ladder.<sup>48</sup>

48 Based on an analysis of graduate coursework qualifying for salary increases provided to NCTQ by the district.

**Finding:** The district spends \$70 million a year to compensate teachers for having earned additional course credits.

In comparison to other districts NCTQ has studied, Philadelphia has one of the highest rates of overall teacher workforce with master’s degrees (or an equivalent number of credits). We see a direct correlation between districts that offer strong incentives for teachers to earn a master’s degree and the percentage of teachers who are likely to have earned the degree.

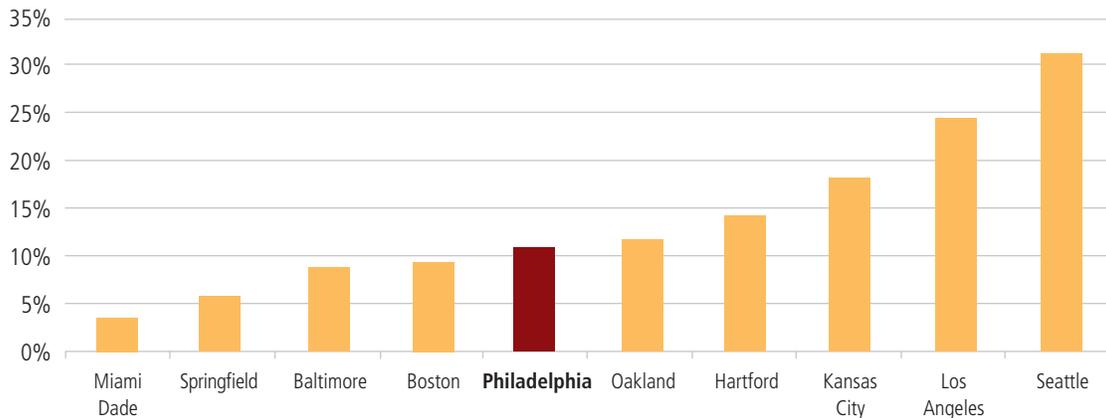
Education level of teacher workforce



*In Philadelphia, over 70 percent of teachers have at least a master’s degree. One out of every eight teachers has the equivalent of a doctorate.*

Accordingly, Philadelphia spends 11 percent of its \$640 million payroll, or \$70 million, to compensate teachers for completing graduate coursework.

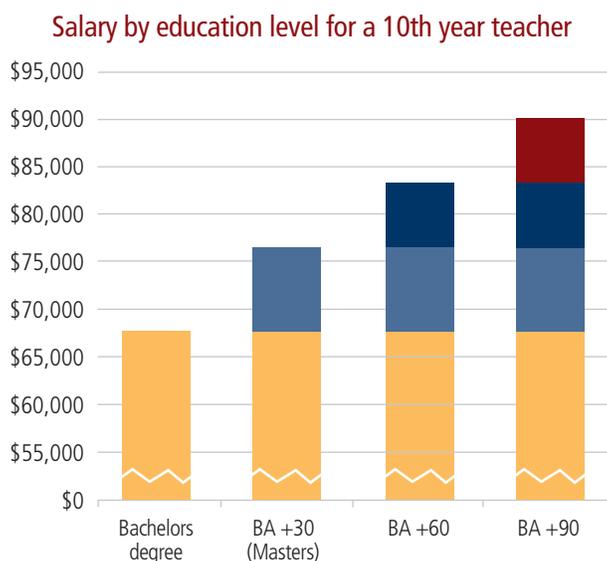
Percentage of payroll spent on graduate coursework



*Of the 10 districts we studied, Philadelphia is right in the middle of the range of payroll spent on degrees. Miami-Dade spends the least on raises associated with earning advanced degrees, just 3.8 percent of its total teacher payroll. At the opposite extreme is Seattle, which spends more than 30 percent of its payroll on these differentials.*



While many professions provide their employees with a pay increase for obtaining a master's degree, it is hard to identify a profession other than teaching where the only way to earn more money is to earn multiple degrees. In Philadelphia, a teacher's salary can increase by over 30 percent by attaining what is the equivalent of three master's degrees (90 credits).

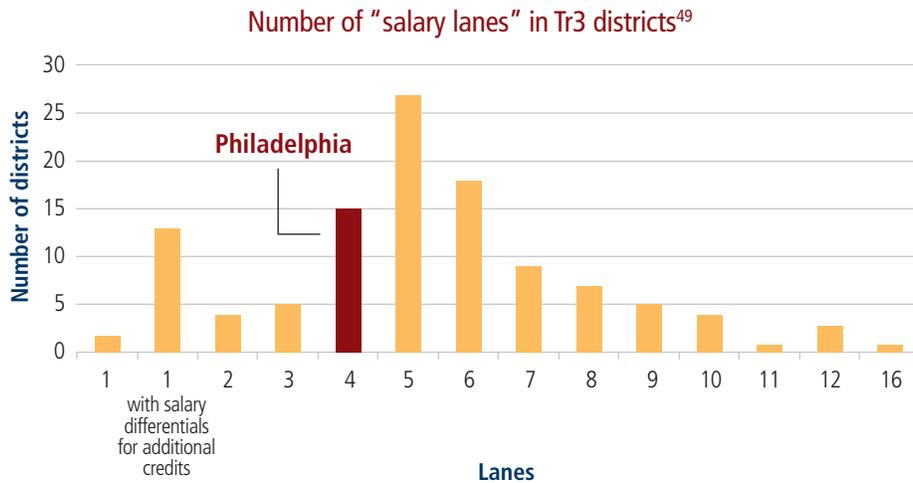


*Philadelphia's salary schedule sends one clear signal to teachers: earn as many credits as you can if you want to earn a higher salary. A teacher who has a master's degree earns 13 percent more than a teacher without one, and a teacher who earns the equivalent of three master's degrees will see a pay boost in the 30 percent range.*

**Finding:** Philadelphia has a relatively straightforward salary schedule, limiting its lanes to only four.

Some districts end up prematurely expanding their payrolls by not only rewarding teachers for earning an advanced degree, but also rewarding teachers for partially earning an advanced degree. For example, districts often dedicate a salary lane for "Master's plus 15" for teachers who have achieved 15 credits beyond a master's degree.

To Philadelphia's credit, it only has four separate pay scales, commonly referred to as "salary lanes" or "columns." Each lane corresponds to the number of credits teachers have earned along with teachers' salaries for each year of experience. Philadelphia has no intermediate lanes, which means it is not providing salary increases for partial progress toward an advanced degree.



*This figure shows how Philadelphia’s salary schedule, with only four salary lanes, is relatively straightforward compared to most TR3 districts. Some have as many as 12 or 16 lanes, due to rewarding varying increments of coursework. Districts should aim to keep the number of salary lanes to a minimum.*

### **4.3 The district offers financial incentives to employ and retain effective teachers in high-needs schools and critical shortage content areas.**

**Finding:** Philadelphia is providing financial incentives for some targeted purposes, but the incentives are not being used to enhance recruitment.

Districts across the country have difficulty recruiting teachers into the lowest-performing schools or recruiting those who have expertise in certain subjects such as math, science, special education and English as a second language. To attract qualified candidates, districts are increasingly offering incentives in these areas. About one-third of the districts in NCTQ’s Tr3 database provide some type of bonus for hard-to-staff subjects.

In 2012-2013, Philadelphia introduced what appears to be a relatively robust financial incentive program available to teachers who are willing to work in the district’s nine most challenging schools, known as Promise Academies. Teachers receive a \$4,000 recruitment bonus and are eligible to receive a retention bonus of \$2,500 after two years, another \$5,000 after four years, and \$7,500 after six years. A teacher who works in a Promise Academy school for six years will have earned \$19,000 over and above the standard salary, an average of about \$3,100 per year. Because the program is new, there is not yet enough data to measure effectiveness in terms of impact on student learning.

Retention data in these schools does show a need for improvement. The average retention rate for the nine Promise Academies in Philadelphia coming into the 2012-2013 school year was 66 percent, far lower than the retention rate for all other schools in Philadelphia, which was an average of 82 percent. Overall, retention rates for Promise Academies ranged from 53 percent to 81 percent.

49 The two districts that have only one salary lane are Newark and Harrison School District Two, both of which do not pay additional salary for credits. There are 13 districts that have only one lane but do pay stipends for earning additional credits.



While the district has offered additional pay for teachers in hard-to-staff subjects for several years, they are missing an opportunity to use the incentives as a recruiting strategy. According to the district, bonuses for hard-to-fill subjects are paid annually to teachers but have not been used as a recruitment tool in recent years because the funding is not authorized until the fall months, after recruitment is completed. Since the funding source is unstable, the district does not determine the amount that will be available per teacher and does not advertise it, which would appear to defeat the very reason to provide such incentives.

**Finding: Philadelphia has a separate, higher salary schedule for special education teachers in their first 10 years of service.**

Nationally, special education teachers are in high demand. While there is a surplus of elementary teachers leaving teacher preparation programs, districts often struggle to staff special education classrooms effectively. Commendably, Philadelphia offers special education teachers a dedicated pay scale that starts off higher than the salary schedule for regular education teachers. The differential for special education teachers starts with \$834 in the first year, rising to \$1,200 in the second through seventh years, and then dipping to a low of \$329 in the eighth year before it merges with the general education salary schedule on step 11.

While many districts offer bonuses to special education teachers when they enter the district, a separate pay scale is not common practice. Of the 114 districts NCTQ tracks, only three others maintain a separate salary schedule for special education teachers.<sup>50</sup> It is a sensible way to encourage special education teachers to enter and remain in the district. Because this differential is on the salary schedule rather than paid as a bonus, it also increases other salary-driven benefits for teachers such as contributions to retirement.

**Salary differentials for special education teachers**

Year	BA Salary Differential
1	\$834
2	\$1,249
3	\$1,249
4	\$1,251
5	\$1,250
6	\$1,250
7	\$1,253
8	\$953
9	\$648
10	\$ 329
11	\$-

*The salary differential for a Philadelphia special education teacher ranges from \$329 to over \$1,200 depending on the teacher's level of experience. Special education teachers can make over \$10,000 in additional pay in a 10- year period, a sizable sum compared to one-time bonuses that some districts offer.*

50 Prince George's County, Maryland, Guilford County, North Carolina, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, all have separate salary schedules for special education teachers.

“ We don’t have a way to reward hard work, and we need to reward our best teachers.”

– Philadelphia teacher

**Finding: Philadelphia does not provide its highly effective teachers financial incentives to stay in the district.**

Some districts have developed career ladders in schools that allow qualified teachers to receive increased compensation for additional responsibility and leadership. Rewarding teachers in this way is often an easier route to differentiated compensation for districts than articulating rewards for individual performance. While district leadership has voiced an interest in pursuing a career ladder structure for teachers, Philadelphia currently does not provide highly effective teachers with specific incentives.

Baltimore City, Maryland, has identified four pathways for teachers ranging from “standard” to “lead.” In the standard pathway, teachers focus on instruction and receive professional development. As teachers move from one pathway to another, they earn additional responsibilities and compensation. Lead teachers are considered school-wide academic leaders. They collaborate with the principal in strategies to improve student academic performance.

Perhaps the most promising performance pay system we have seen is in Harrison School District Two in Colorado Springs, now in its third year of full implementation. After the first year, teachers are assigned to one of eight categories, all based on performance. The maximum salary went from \$68,000 (for a teacher with a Ph.D. and 27 years of experience) to \$90,000 for any teacher who is at the highest level of performance.

Performance Level	Compensation
Novice	\$35,000
Progressing (Level 1)	\$38,000
Progressing (Level 2)	\$44,000
Proficient (Level 1)	\$48,000
Proficient (Level 2)	\$54,000
Proficient (Level 3)	\$60,000
Exemplary (Level 1)	\$70,000
Exemplary (Level 2)	\$80,000
Master	\$90,000

One example for fourth- and fifth-grade teachers illustrates how Harrison School District Two considers the student-achievement component of teacher performance. Rather than relying exclusively on a single assessment, the district uses multiple measures to ascertain student achievement. (See the recommendations section to see how a model similar to Harrison could provide real benefits to Philadelphia’s teachers.)



Weight	Type	Tested Subjects
25%	Classroom score on state assessment	Reading, writing, math
25%	District assessments (summative, administered twice yearly)	Reading, writing, math, science
25%	District assessments (progress monitoring and timed constructed response)	Reading, writing, math
12.5%	School-wide score on state assessments	Reading, writing, math
12.5%	Teacher's own selection of a goal for student achievement	

## Recommendations

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**1. Communicate the value of teachers' health care benefits, including rapidly increasing costs.** Commendably, the district is offering a generous health care benefit that many other surrounding districts do not offer. The district should use these benefits as a recruitment and retention strategy so that teachers have a clearer view of their overall compensation system.
- 

**2. Link the largest raises to significant accomplishments, including the year in which a teacher earns tenure, provided tenure becomes a real milestone in a teacher's career and not an automatic decision (see Standard 3).** When teachers earn tenure in Philadelphia after three years, there is little—if any—recognition. Moving tenure from three to five years and making it a real milestone in a teacher's career should be accompanied by a significant pay increase.
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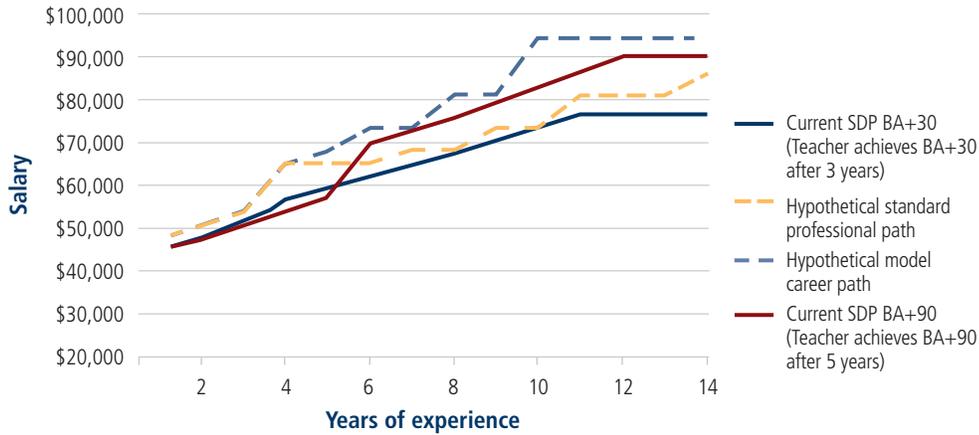
**3. Develop career ladder positions that allow qualified teachers to receive increased compensation for more responsibility and leadership while continuing to teach students.** These positions can provide needed coaching and feedback for peers while giving high-performing teachers an opportunity for career growth and higher pay without leaving the classroom.
- 

**4. Offer higher salaries to the top teachers, teacher "chairs" who consistently produce the greatest learning gains.** Even a district that faces tremendous financial constraints can move toward a system of recognizing outstanding teachers and placing them on a higher level of pay. Recognized "chairs" could be located in high-need schools, which could benefit greatly from the expertise these teachers bring with them.
- 

**5. Phase out salary differentials for earning course credit and consider alternatives to the traditional teacher pay scale.** This policy can be automatic for incoming Philadelphia teachers and optional for veteran instructors. Redirect funds previously used to pay for additional courses to increase starting salaries and begin to award teachers substantive bonuses for their effectiveness.

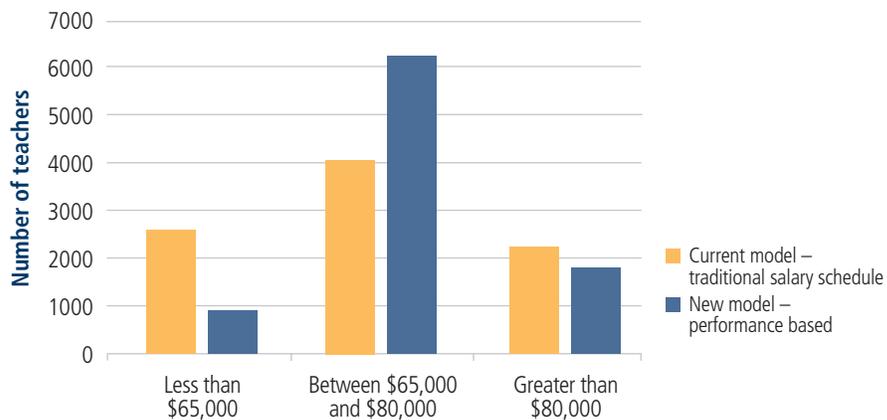
On the next page we model an alternative teacher pay scale to illustrate how Philadelphia could revise its salary schedule to better reflect the core principals of these recommendations. This pay scale is based on promising practices from districts where teachers are assigned to categories based on their performance.

NCTQ takes a modified approach to Harrison School District Two where teachers who earn tenure would be awarded a sizable bonus at the tenure mark. After earning tenure, teachers would be placed in six “bands” of salaries based on their impact on student learning, maxing out at \$94,000 for a “master” teacher. There would be no automatic raises, aside from cost-of-living adjustments.



Estimating that 20 percent of teachers in the district qualified for the three highest performance-based salary bands in a given year (thereby making \$81,000 or more), the total amount spent would be comparable to what the district spends on payroll now.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the number of teachers who currently earn below \$65,000 could decrease by 40 percent as these teachers are distributed to higher pay brackets. Given that over 20 percent of teachers in Philadelphia currently earn less than \$65,000, this is an important implication to consider.

Teacher salaries – Traditional salary schedule vs. new salary schedule



51 Based on salary schedules provided to NCTQ by the district, current payroll results in the district spending approximately \$640 million dollars on about 9,000 teachers. In the new model, if 15 percent of teachers were in bands 4-6 of a performance pay model, the district would be spending about the same as it does now.





## Standard 5

# Work Schedule

**Policies encourage a professional and collaborative culture.**

**Indicators on which this standard is assessed:**

- 5.1 Teachers' on-site work schedule is 8 hours and includes substantial time beyond the instructional day for individual and common planning.
- 5.2 Teachers receive 12 days a year for general leave (sick and personal).
- 5.3 The district provides the technology and support to help principals monitor attendance, preventing abuse of leave policies.
- 5.4 Principals' job descriptions include coaching and developing teachers.

### **5.1 Teachers' on-site work schedule is 8 hours and includes substantial time beyond the instructional day for individual and common planning.**

**Finding:** The length and structure of the workday for Philadelphia teachers, just over 7 hours, is insufficient for meeting the needs of today's classrooms.

In focus groups, both teachers and school leaders voiced frustration with the lack of time available for collaborative planning — and for good reason. Philadelphia teachers have little time in their workday set aside for individual planning and even less time for common planning.

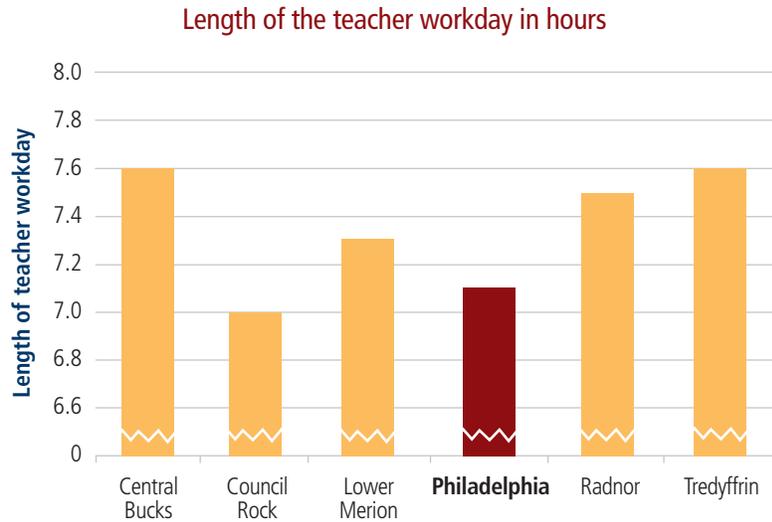
This is a problem in most American schools. The typical American public school day model is much shorter than those in other nations, e.g., Singapore and Japan — countries that are often lauded for their students' academic performance. These nations have also recognized that good instruction requires ample time for planning and collaborating with other teachers. For example, teachers in Japan are with students only 60 percent of the day.<sup>52</sup> Because the school day in Philadelphia (and most American school districts) is considerably shorter than that of our global counterparts, teachers are with students approximately 80 percent of the day, with roughly only an hour set aside each day for planning and addressing student needs outside the classroom.

52 Stevenson, H., & J. Stigler. (1992). *The Learning gap: Why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education*. New York: Touchstone.

“ There is no collaborative time. Hardly do we ever get time to meet with our subject.”

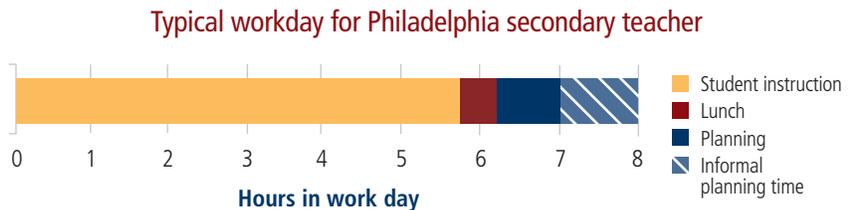
– Philadelphia teacher

The length of the school day in Philadelphia is 7 hours, 4 minutes for both elementary and secondary teachers, officially shorter than the average of 7 hours, 30 minutes, and is shorter than most surrounding districts.<sup>53</sup> In reality, many teachers already work well beyond this time, most respondents to an NCTQ survey stated that they were at their school site at least 8 hours a day. Districts should be encouraged to formalize this 8-hour, on-site workday to set a standard expectation for the job.



*At 7 hours, 4 minutes, Philadelphia’s teacher workday is shorter than most of the other surrounding districts.*

Both elementary and secondary teachers in Philadelphia receive fewer than 4 hours (225 minutes) in planning time per week, along with a 30-minute lunch for secondary teachers and a 45-minute lunch for elementary teachers. This translates to teachers having about 45 minutes a day for planning. In Philadelphia, only teachers in Promise Academies (Philadelphia’s highest need schools) or teachers in schools where principals have purchased extra time to pay teachers for a longer on-site workday have additional planning time.



*While teachers report working at least 8 hours a days, their official day is 7 hours and 4 minutes. Less than one hour a day is available for dedicated planning.*

53 Of the 114 school districts in NCTQ’s Tr3 database, the national average is 7 hours and 30 minutes.



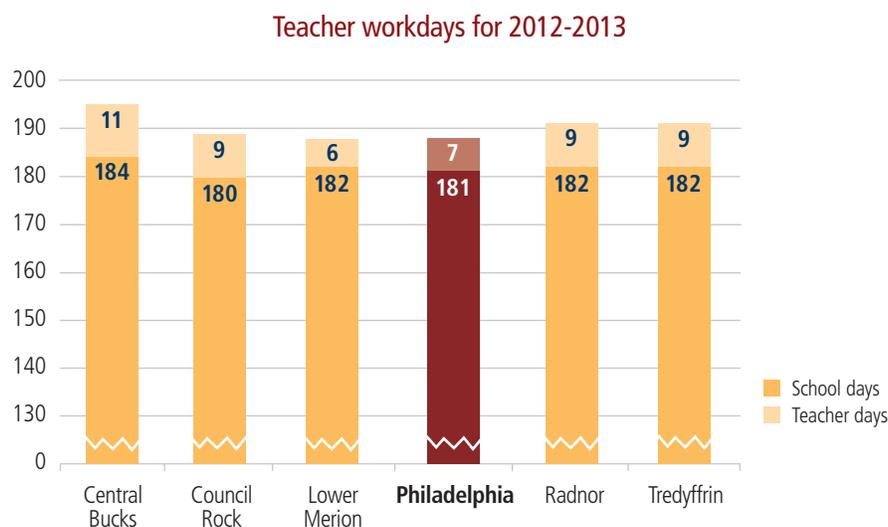
The number of districts recognizing the importance of collaborative time is growing based on our tracking of such districts. About a third of the districts in NCTQ's Tr3 database provide collaborative planning time either every day or a few times a week. To do this, districts have gotten more creative with scheduling. Some extend the workday once a week, whereas others guarantee a daily team planning period in addition to individual planning time.

### Where it's been done

Kansas City, Missouri, sets aside 40 minutes out of their workday of 7 hours and 45 minutes for common planning time each day. DC Public Schools provides teachers daily 30-minute "morning blocks" for collaboration out of their 7 hour and 30 minute workday.

### Finding: Philadelphia invests \$25 million a year on its professional development days with little or no evidence of a return from that investment.

In addition to daily preparation time, non-instructional workdays — when well designed — can often serve as opportunities for more sustained collaboration and professional development. Philadelphia teachers have fewer days than other districts across the nation as well as neighboring districts. Teachers are on-site for 188 days, 181 of which are spent with students, leaving seven workdays for professional development. While the average school year in the 114 districts in NCTQ's database is 178 student days, three fewer than in Philadelphia, teachers have nine non-student workdays on average. When compared to surrounding districts, Philadelphia also has fewer teacher days than most of its neighbors.



*Teachers have fewer workdays in Philadelphia than in most nearby districts. In fact, Central Bucks has 11 additional days for teachers in addition to a longer 184-day student school year.*

Each professional development day carries a hefty price tag, and the district needs to determine whether or not it is getting the appropriate return on its investment. In Philadelphia, each day of professional development carries a cost

“ The best PD has been accidental.”

– Philadelphia district official

of approximately \$3.5 million for teacher time,<sup>54</sup> even before adding in the cost of professional development providers and materials. For the seven days, that comes to a total of \$25 million and 441,000 hours of teacher time.

Given both the financial cost and use of teacher time, the district should make every effort to ensure the professional development days are used effectively. The scheduling of these days in the 2011-2012 school year suggests they likely were not. It is important that days are interspersed throughout the school year to allow principals to address instructional practice themes as they arise, as well as to help teachers adjust practice immediately after a helpful PD session. Yet two of Philadelphia’s seven days fall at the beginning of the year and three were the last days of school. While time is necessary in the beginning and end of the year for teachers to prepare for and wrap up the school year, there is likely little professional development occurring at this time. The professional development calendar for 2012-2013 did a better job of distributing the seven days, front-loading professional development days earlier in the school year, but there is still one day planned for late May when the school year is nearly over.

**2012-2013 school year professional development calendar**

<b>Date of professional development</b>	<b>Remaining school days for students</b>
September 4, 2012	181
September 5, 2012	181
September 6, 2012	181
November 6, 2012	143
February 6, 2013	89
May 21, 2013	22
June 24, 2013 (presumably classroom cleanup)	0

*The professional development calendar for 2012-2013 does a better job of front-loading professional development days earlier in the school year than in previous years.*

Some of the most productive professional development is simply providing time and space for teams of teachers to work together on a regular basis rather than bringing in high-priced consultants to speak to teachers. For example, the district could consider repurposing 35 hours of its professional development time each year to give teams of teachers opportunities to work together for 2 hours every

54 This number reflects the daily salary of Philadelphia teachers but does not include salary-driven benefits, including employment taxes paid by the district and contributions to retirement.



two weeks. To shorten the workday so that teachers are not too tired to plan, the school day could start an hour later or end an hour earlier once every two weeks (as some Philadelphia schools do now). Another option is to stagger the starting or ending times for the student school day so that some portion of the faculty is freed up for planning.

**Finding:** While teachers are contractually required to engage in at least 28 hours of professional development annually, principals report difficulty in scheduling professional development unless it is mandated by the central office.

The teachers' contract requires teachers to participate in at least 28 hours of professional development annually, but that requirement appears hard to enforce. In focus groups, principals noted that it was difficult to provide additional structured professional development for teachers outside the workday because at some sites attendance has been low. Some principals have gotten around poor attendance by paying for additional planning time in their school budgets during which they hold paid professional development sessions with teachers. Others mentioned holding voluntary sessions during lunchtime.

The district does maintain a professional development tracking system, where teachers can sign up for courses and the district can monitor attendance. Unfortunately, the data in this system is not complete and therefore is not used to measure the effectiveness of professional development sessions or to connect to needs identified in teacher evaluations. Most professional development done at the school site is not tracked at the district, making it difficult to know how much takes place and what types of sessions are offered. The district has informally surveyed principals about the amount of professional development provided at the school level and found that it varied widely, based on the availability of funding, among other reasons. On average, principals provided at least 1.5 hours of professional development per teacher per month, adding up to 15 hours in a 10-month school year.<sup>55</sup>

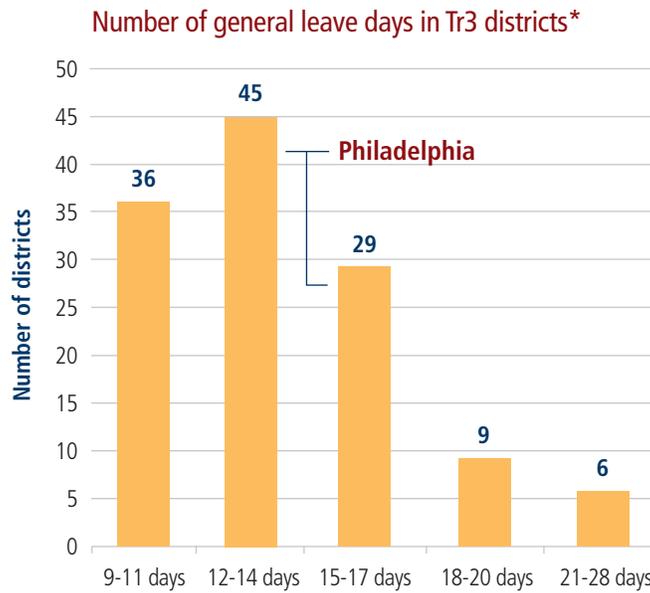
## 5.2 Sick leave is commensurate with the number of months a teacher works per year (e.g., 10-month contract provides 10 days of sick leave).

**Finding:** Philadelphia's basic policy on sick leave is sensible, but it provides an unnecessary incentive for veteran teachers to use leave.

Philadelphia's leave allotment is only slightly higher than NCTQ's recommendation for public school teachers. Philadelphia teachers receive 13 days for sick and personal leave, which NCTQ refers to as "general leave." They accrue 10 days of leave on a standard 10-month contract, along with three additional leave days, which teachers can use for "urgent personal business."<sup>56</sup> The median leave package for the 114 Tr3 districts is 12 days per year. Philadelphia only questionable leave benefit is one reserved for veteran teachers. Once teachers accumulate 30 days of leave, they become eligible for an additional two personal leave days each year. As a result, a teacher with more than 10 years of experience has 15 days of sick and personal leave available, up from 13, and can be absent once every 12 days with pay.

55 Interviews with district academic staff

56 The teachers' contract defines "urgent personal business" as leave that cannot be conveniently scheduled on days other than work-days and for personal emergencies.



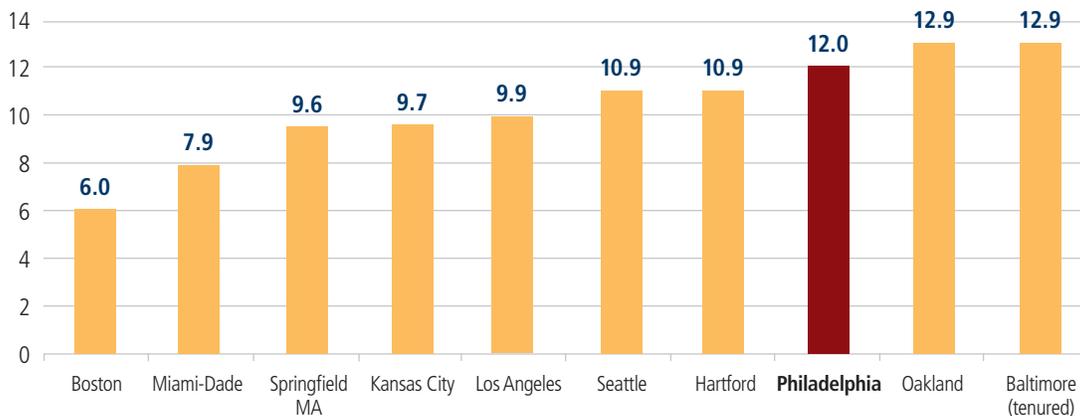
*Philadelphia teachers get 10 days of sick leave and three days of personal leave annually until they accumulate 30 days. At that point, they are given an additional two days of personal leave per year.*

*Note: Districts in which leave varies by years of experience are listed twice in this graph. For example, a district that gives 12 general leave days to tenured teachers and 10 to non-tenured teachers are counted twice.*

### 5.3 The district provides the technology and support to help principals monitor attendance, preventing abuse of leave policies.

**Finding:** In the last school year, Philadelphia teachers were absent, on average, one out of every 15 school days.<sup>57</sup>

In the 2011-2012 school year, Philadelphia teachers used most of their available leave. Compared to other districts NCTQ has studied, Philadelphia’s absentee rate is high.



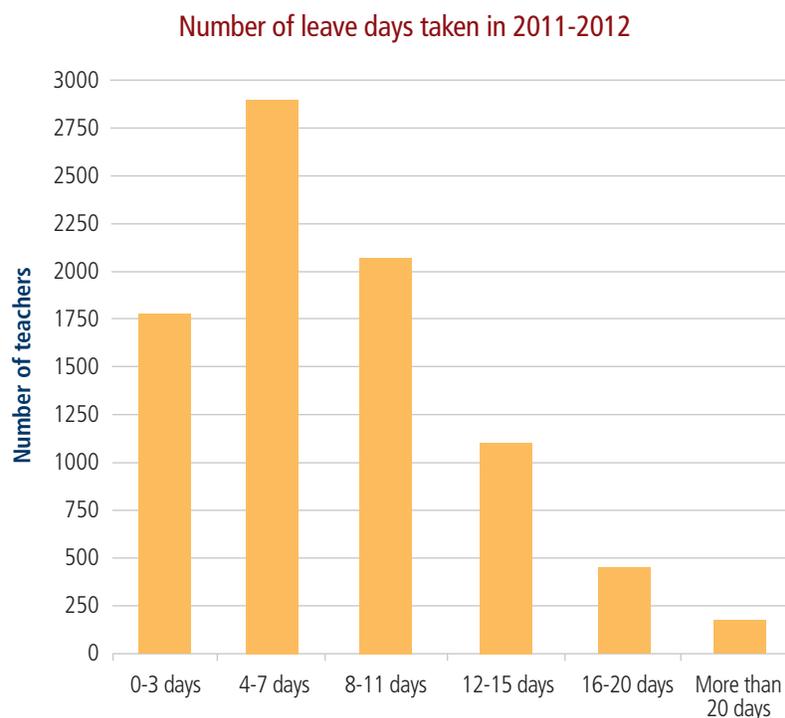
*Teachers in Philadelphia take almost all of the sick and personal days available to them. This places them third highest in terms of leave taken compared to nine other districts NCTQ has studied.*

<sup>57</sup> This number was provided by the district as an overall teacher attendance rate of 93.6 percent in the 2011-2012 school year.



**Finding:** With urgency, the district needs to confront chronic absenteeism.

Not counting teachers out for long-term leave,<sup>58</sup> more than 600 teachers in Philadelphia are absent 16 or more days, almost once every two weeks. When teachers are chronically absent, the school principal is obligated to make it clear that high absenteeism, no matter what the reason, is detrimental to student learning. Philadelphia's policy on absenteeism is relatively lax. While there is nothing in contract language that prohibits a principal from setting higher expectations, principals are currently directed to conference with teachers only when a teacher has been absent without reasons for three separate instances on nonconsecutive days. Technically, three separate occasions, each involving five days of leave, only constitutes "three absences" for purposes of this policy. Principals may be waiting until the policy kicks in rather than conferencing with the teacher after one occurrence.



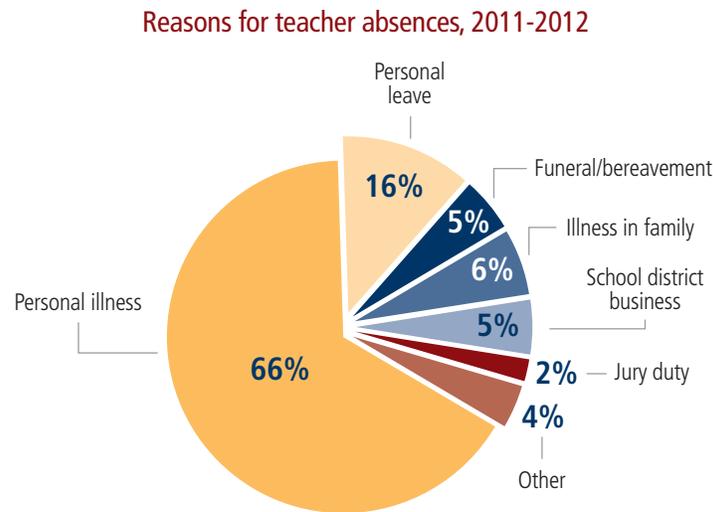
*In 2011-2012, almost 20 percent of Philadelphia's teachers had good rates of attendance (fewer than 3 days), but just as many teachers were absent 12 or more days.*

When we look at absentee days for illness and personal leave, a pattern emerges (though one that is similar for almost all absences in any job sector). Data obtained from 2011-2012 indicate that the greatest number of absences due to illness or leave occurred on Fridays. Wednesday had the fewest absences. These higher than normal absences on Fridays may be the catalyst for more monitoring to track absences. While principals do have the technology to track the overall absences of teachers, they may not have the resources to identify irregularities that occur throughout the year and address them with individual staff members.

58 NCTQ defines teachers out on long-term leave as those who were out using wage continuation or worker's compensation, or teachers out for more than 15 days continuously.

The formal procedure for reporting a teacher absence and requesting a substitute appears to be sound. Philadelphia teachers must call their direct supervisor if they are going to be out, as well as the general substitute system. The district also provides attendance data to school leaders via a dashboard where principals can compare teachers' attendance with other schools' across the district. In general, principals voiced confidence that they have the tools needed to monitor attendance at their individual schools. Given that these procedures are in place, it would appear that a tolerance for high rates of absenteeism has permeated the district culture.

When NCTQ analyzed the reasons that teachers were absent, "school district business usage" factored in as a significant reason. This category is defined as teachers being directed to another worksite away from their school for an entire day, e.g., to pursue professional development. Districts need to limit such days. Teachers may need to be out of the classroom from time to time to improve their instructional craft, but when a teacher is out of the classroom, students miss out on learning.



*Personal illness is the most common reason for teacher absences, followed by personal leave and family member illness.*

There is some encouraging news in the pattern of substitute usage in Philadelphia. The number of substitute days used in 2011-2012 was significantly lower than the previous two school years. District officials noted that additional controls have been added to monitor substitute usage.

If the district were able to further reduce teacher absences, additional savings could be realized. Reducing teacher absences by 10 percent by rescheduling professional development and continuing to closely monitor days missed could result in almost \$2 million in savings for the district per year.



	Current substitute usage	Results with 10 percent reduction
Number of substitute days worked in the district <sup>59</sup>	145,806	131,225
Average cost per substitute per day	\$119	\$119
Line item expense for substitutes (yearly)	\$17,412,403	\$15,671,163
<b>Potential Savings</b>		<b>\$1,741,240</b>

*The cost of a substitute: It costs the district anywhere from \$75 to \$160 per substitute per day (with subs earning a higher daily rate for working more days during the school year). Long-term substitutes who work 20 consecutive days can apply to for a yearly salary ranging from \$29,000 to \$56,000.*

**Finding:** Philadelphia’s sick leave reimbursement policy does little to promote good attendance for teachers in the district, and it is extremely costly.

Most districts engage in incentive systems to encourage teachers to avoid absences; some are more effective than others. Many systems involve paying teachers some fraction of their daily pay rate for unused leave, either at the end of the school year, upon retirement or a combination of both. Annual incentives are more likely to influence attendance, whereas end-of-career buyback provides an additional benefit to supplement salary at the end of a teacher’s career.

Under Philadelphia’s current scheme, a teacher who taught for 30 years in the district and took no sick leave or personal days could receive more than \$80,000 upon retirement. Philadelphia’s sick leave reimbursement policy allows any teacher who resigns or retires to get 25 percent of accumulated sick leave paid out and 100 percent of accumulated personal leave. Both sick and personal leave can accumulate without limit. In the 2012 fiscal year, this payout cost the district \$25 million for teachers (not including payouts to counselors and other staff in the teachers union). A large percentage of this cost was due to the personal leave portion, which accounted for 75 percent of the total expenditure.

**Sample teacher sick and personal leave payout**

Years of service	25
Final salary	\$90,051
Days of sick leave taken each year	5
Sick days remaining	125
Days of personal leave taken each year	2
Personal days remaining (includes 17 extra days as specified in the contract for teachers hired before 1996)	42
Sick leave payout (final salary/200) x (remaining sick days x 0.25)	\$14,070
Personal leave payout (final salary/200) x (remaining personal days x 1)	\$18,911
<b>Grand total payout</b>	<b>\$32,981</b>

*In this example, a teacher takes half of her sick days each year (5 days) and two personal days and retires after 25 years. She still has enough accumulated leave days to receive a payout of over \$30,000.*

59 This includes days that belong to teachers who are out long-term and are therefore using long-term subs.

Using an end-of-career payout provides Philadelphia teachers with a nice bonus as they leave the system, but it does nothing to provide incentives for better attendance or reward good attendance among teachers on a yearly basis. It also represents yet another benefit that is not strategically targeted at improving performance.

#### 5.4 Principals' job descriptions include coaching and developing teachers.

**Finding:** There is little coaching support available to teachers beyond their first year of service unless they are identified as unsatisfactory.

Given the constraints of school leaders to provide ongoing feedback, many school districts are offering induction programs and/or coaches to provide additional support teachers need. Research has indicated that such support can reduce teacher attrition and improve quality of teacher practice.<sup>60</sup> The Peer Assistance and Review program in Philadelphia provides coaches (called consulting teachers) for first year and struggling tenured teachers. Other support is given by The Children's Literacy Initiative, a national nonprofit based in Philadelphia, which partners with schools in the district to offer training and support on model literacy teaching to teachers in early grades. This program was lauded by teachers and principals alike as a supportive framework for teachers. Apart from these two instances, however, there is no district-wide coaching and feedback model for teachers.

##### Where it's been done

The Menifee School District in California offers a model for teacher coaching that benefits all teachers in the district. Coaches work for six weeks with a team of teachers, either by grade level or subject, focusing on goals or objectives identified by the group. The coaches also are available to offer advice or assistance after the six-week sessions are finished. The curriculum coach's role includes demonstrating new lessons, helping teachers with new materials or observing teachers' classes and offering feedback. The coaches are not formal evaluators of teachers and discussions about concerns are confidential.

### Recommendations

-  **1. Use professional development days strategically.** Pay careful attention to scheduling and use of professional development time to maximize the impact on student learning. For example, avoid clustering professional development days at the end of the school year.
-  **2. Consider opportunities for all teachers to receive ongoing coaching and support.** Reallocating funding in a way that allows all teachers (or at least non-tenured teachers) to receive coaching can be instrumental in improving teacher quality in the district.

60 Wong, H. (2004). *Induction programs that keep new teachers teaching and improving*. NASSP Bulletin, 88(638), 41-58.



-  **3. Revise the absence intervention process.** Provide guidance to principals about monitoring absences, identifying causes of excessive absences, creating attendance improvement plans, and, in extreme cases, taking disciplinary action.
-  **4. Move toward an 8-hour contractual workday that is performed on-site.** In an era of school accountability when so much of a teacher's work involves interaction with others, teachers need to be at work on-site for a standard 8-hour day. If the district were to move toward an 8-hour day, additional collaborative planning time could be built in for teachers to plan together.
-  **5. Consider eliminating the additional two personal leave days that teachers with 30 days in the leave bank can take.** Fifteen days of sick and personal leave is excessive. Instead, consider reducing the number of days and taking the approach used by Montgomery County, Maryland, where if no other leave is available, the superintendent can give teachers additional paid leave "for unusual or imperative reasons."
-  **6. Reward teachers for good attendance annually rather than at the end of their careers.** Providing annual rewards rather than payouts at the end of a teacher's career is more likely to result in improved attendance. Consider the examples of Broward County, Florida, Providence, Rhode Island, and Denver, Colorado, all of whom give annual rewards for unused sick days.



# Appendix A

## Is Philadelphia using data to drive decisions?

The table below lists data requested from the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) for this study. All data were tagged with a unique identifier; no teacher names were requested or provided. For incomplete or inconsistent data, NCTQ staff sought clarification from district officials and standardized the data as much as possible. If there were questions of accuracy, conclusions in this report are based on multiple sources.

Requested data	Notes	Was the data complete?	Was the data reliable and consistent?	Is this data the district normally collects and uses to make decisions?
School-level data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ID number and grade levels</li> <li>■ Poverty rate</li> <li>■ Student enrollment</li> <li>■ Student attendance</li> </ul>	The district provided general descriptive information for each school.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Undergraduate institution</li> </ul>	SDP maintains data on the last institution a teacher attended. In some cases it is the undergraduate institution; in others it is not.	Partial	No	Partial
Teacher staff list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Current school</li> <li>■ Subject area</li> </ul>	The teacher staff list included teachers with extensive long-term absences (who are essentially inactive) and did not sync to other lists of teachers provided.	Yes	No	Yes
Teacher seniority dates	Some seniority dates were missing and some conflicted with other data points.	Partial	No	Yes
Teacher performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evaluation ratings</li> <li>■ Value-added data</li> </ul>	The district was able to provide data on teachers who received unsatisfactory ratings. SDP does not maintain data on evaluation ratings for teachers who do not receive unsatisfactory ratings and it does not currently have value-added data on teachers. (This data will be available with the new evaluation system.)	Partial	Yes	No
Teacher attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Type of absence</li> <li>■ Date/day of week of absence</li> <li>■ Long-term leave identified</li> </ul>	The district provided the type of absence and the date, but teachers on long-term leave were not identified.	Partial	Yes	Yes

Requested data	Notes	Was the data complete?	Was the data reliable and consistent?	Is this data the district normally collects and uses to make decisions?
Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of professional development (PD) hours by teacher by type</li> </ul>	The district provided the number of credits earned by each teacher, but it did not provide specific information about the PD (e.g., whether it was mandatory or voluntary, and the name of the course).	Partial	No	No
Teacher recruitment and placement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Forced transfers</li> <li>■ Voluntary transfers</li> <li>■ New hires</li> <li>■ Philadelphia Teaching Fellows/ Teach For America (TFA)</li> </ul>	The district provided a list of forced and voluntary transfers and the placement methods, but it does not keep track of teachers who enter the system through specific recruitment programs.	Partial	Yes	No
Applicant pool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of teacher vacancies each month (including those hard to fill)</li> <li>■ Number of teacher applications received each month</li> <li>■ Number of teacher vacancies filled each month</li> </ul>	The district provided data on the number and type of vacancies, but applications and positions filled were not provided by type of vacancy.	Yes	No	No
Teacher offers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer dates</li> <li>■ Start dates</li> </ul>	The district does not keep track of dates jobs are offered to teachers. Teachers' start dates in the school system are maintained.	Partial	No	No
Retirements and resignations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Notification dates of teachers who resigned or retired</li> <li>■ Effective dates of resignation/retirement</li> </ul>	SDP maintains the notification dates for resignations and retirements. Because teachers who resign without providing a 60-day notice are put in the "termination" group, resignations are likely under-represented. The district does not track the reason for teacher resignation.	Partial	No	Yes
Support for teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of teachers who entered intervention (teachers entering Peer Assistance and Review)</li> </ul>	The district did not provide this data.	No	No	No
Teacher dismissal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of tenured teachers dismissed as a result of poor performance</li> <li>■ Number of contracts of non-tenured teachers not renewed as a result of poor performance</li> </ul>	SDP keeps track of teachers terminated "for cause," but the reason is not entered into the personnel system. NCTQ determined this manually by cataloging dismissal letters.	Partial	Yes	No
Teacher retention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Retention percentage, by school</li> </ul>	The district provided this data.	Yes	Yes	No



Requested data	Notes	Was the data complete?	Was the data reliable and consistent?	Is this data the district normally collects and uses to make decisions?
Salary schedule distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of teachers on each step of each lane of the salary schedule</li> <li>■ List of coursework and other activities submitted for advancement on the salary schedule</li> </ul>	SDP does not maintain data on coursework for raises in their data systems.	Partial	Yes	Yes
End-of-career payouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Payout for each teacher with unused sick leave or other leave, by type of leave</li> <li>■ Total number of teachers who qualified for payouts for unused leave, by type of leave</li> </ul>	The district provided this data.	Yes	Yes	No
Bonus pay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ List of bonus/incentive pay awards for each teacher</li> </ul>	The district provided records of additional pay for teachers in specific schools and teachers who received specific awards.	Yes	Yes	No
Substitutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Line item expense for substitutes</li> <li>■ Number of substitute days worked in the district</li> <li>■ Number of long-term and full-time status subs and their assignments</li> </ul>	The district provided the line-item cost of substitutes and the number of substitute days worked; however, it did not provide information on long-term and full-time status substitutes or assignments.	Partial	Yes	Yes
Grievances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of grievances by category</li> </ul>	The district provided a record of grievances requiring a central office hearing. No record of lower-level grievances was provided.	Partial	Yes	No
Staffing timeline	The district provided the staffing timeline.	Yes	Yes	Yes

**This report is available online at  
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*The National Council on Teacher Quality advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers.*

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