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Miami-Dade Teacher Evaluations Insufficient, Report Says

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Teachers protest budget cuts in Miami last year.

Miami-Dade schools do not do enough to weed out poor-performing teachers, according to a new study by the National Council on Teacher Quality.

The nation's fourth-largest school district fired just 10 of more than 20,000 teachers last year for poor performance, according to the report. In comparison,

Springfield, Illinois fired 10 of 2,144 teachers while the Los Angeles Unified School District fired 280 of roughly 29,000 teachers.

“When you're dealing with 20,000 adults, you would expect a lot more teachers to be dismissed for not being very good teachers,” said Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. “You'd expect a much higher rate of dismissal.”

Walsh said she's not advocating for large-scale firings, but culling poor-performing teachers is important for the professional well-being of other teachers.

“You can't fire your way to having a great teacher force,” she said “On the other hand, there is nothing more unfair to good teachers than to ask them to teach next to really horrible teachers. Its important for the morale of good teachers to act on teacher who are not performing. And the district is clearly not doing that.

The Washington, D.C.-based NCTQ is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other charitable sources. The Miami study was in conjunction with the Urban League of Greater Miami.

The NCTQ study lays out some recommendations for the district:

More evaluations from other teachers — This is a model Hillsborough County is using, funded by a \$100 million Gates Foundation grant. The report also recommends including student feedback in teacher evaluations.

Better training for principals — Better guidance for evaluators will mean better evaluations.

Give raises sooner — Teacher raises typically come with more experience. The district should give teachers raises earlier in their career with a big bump sometime between their third and fifth year of teaching.

Make perks more affordable — Miami-Dade teachers use fewer sick days than elsewhere, but the district could still make changes that would save on substitute costs. The report also recommends changes to the retirement benefits.

Read the full report here.

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