



National Council on Teacher Quality



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**EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN LOS ANGELES IN PERIL; REPORT
DEMONSTRATES NEED FOR IMPROVED STATE AND DISTRICT PRACTICES
IN ORDER TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN QUALITY TEACHERS**

The National Council on Teacher Quality, in partnership with the United Way of Greater Los Angeles and a coalition of civil rights groups, including Alliance for a Better Community, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Families in Schools, Los Angeles Urban League, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and Parent Organization Network, Releases Report That Examines LAUSD's Teacher Recruitment, Staffing, Compensation, Tenure and Evaluations

LOS ANGELES, June 7, 2011 – Today, United Way of Greater Los Angeles and its partners released the *Teacher Quality Roadmap: Improving Policies and Practices in LAUSD* study, an in-depth study conducted by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). Designed as a tool to highlight what is and is not working in our local schools, the report compares LAUSD's policies with both surrounding districts and similar districts around the nation. The report also identifies local and state legislative reforms that would facilitate district efforts to attract and retain highly effective teachers. This report follows other NCTQ district spotlights in Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Hartford, CT; Seattle, WA and Kansas City, MO.

“With just over half of the 680,000 students graduating on time in LAUSD, the country's second biggest school district, systemic change is required in order to make way for effective teachers and overall student achievement,” said Elise Buik, president and CEO, United Way of Greater Los Angeles. “What the NCTQ report found is that key policies must be reformed, changes that our teachers and principals have stressed they want and need, in order to drive an effective educational system where our students can learn and thrive.”

Los Angeles Unified School District has seen modest gains in educational achievement over the past ten years, but further reform is needed:

- Only 52 percent of students graduate high-school on time; In contrast, 70 percent of students statewide graduate

- The needs of minority students are lagging even further behind. While Latinos make up 73percent of LAUSD’s students, their graduation rate is only 40 percent
- Only 11percent of LAUSD’s 9th grade students are proficient in Algebra 1, one of the key indicators of high school success

"Many people have looked at what must be done to reform LAUSD, but few have done it as thoroughly and thoughtfully as the National Council on Teacher Quality," said Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. "I look forward to turning their research into reality by continuing to work with the leadership at LAUSD until all students have access to the effective education they deserve."

This data-driven look at the state of teacher policies in the Los Angeles Unified School District explores LAUSD’s contract with its teachers, as well as District practices and state laws that shape the work rules for teachers. Additionally, NCTQ analyzed LAUSD human resource data; conducted a district-wide survey of over 1,500 teachers and principals; and held focus groups with teachers, principals and parents. The analysis is framed around five standards for improving teacher quality. The five standards – staffing, evaluations, tenure, compensation and work schedule – are supported by research and best practices from the field.

Among the report’s findings:

- **Teacher assignment policies are flawed:** Current contractual requirements force principals to hire teachers who may not be a good fit in their buildings, and layoff teachers based on seniority rather than the performance. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of principals surveyed reported that teachers hired from the district “Priority Placement” list are not a good fit for their school (“rarely” or “never”).
- **LAUSD teacher evaluation policies don’t work:** The evaluation instrument focuses too much on teacher behaviors and not how those behaviors impact student learning. Teachers observed by only their principal – and only once every other year, too infrequent to serve as a meaningful factor in shaping student performance.
- **Criteria for teacher tenure must be modified:** Although LAUSD has made tenure a more meaningful designation in recent years by requiring principals to actively approve a teacher for tenure, California law impedes the district's ability to do more on this front.
- **Teacher compensation structure should be reviewed:** LAUSD spends 25 percent of its teacher payroll (\$519 million) to compensate teachers for completing additional coursework, even though such coursework has not been shown to improve student achievement.
- **Standard work schedule must be defined:** The contract sets an expectation of an 8 hour work day, but teachers are not required to be on-site for this entire period, consequently teacher planning time and opportunities for collaboration with colleagues, is given short shrift.

“Teachers and principals alike want and demand the change necessary to improve how student learning,” said Kate Walsh, President, NCTQ. “Like other cities we’ve studied, Los Angeles must work in particular to make the tenure decision meaningful, assign teachers putting student interests first, and take evaluation far more seriously. These themes have been a common thread across the country.”

Recommendations provided in the *NCTQ, Teacher Quality Roadmap* include:

- LAUSD needs to improve their recruiting, pre-screening and staffing practices to attract and keep the strongest teachers in the District
 - Improve applicant recruitment and screenings by HR to ensure candidates sent to schools are of high caliber
 - Eliminate the "priority placement" list (also called the "must place" list), which forces LAUSD to compromise on its commitment to mutual consent staffing
 - Give principals the right to refuse hiring a specific teacher, regardless of whether a teacher is transferring voluntarily or involuntarily
 - Determine who gets laid off by weighing by multiple factors, including teacher effectiveness
- Teacher evaluations must be regular and include multiple measures, including student achievement
 - Make student performance the preponderant factor in teacher evaluations
 - Include multiple measures in teacher evaluations, such as value-added data on teacher performance, classroom observations by principals and content experts
 - Conduct evaluations on an annual basis
- Tenure should be meaningful and offered after more than the current two years of teaching
 - Hold tenure reviews to determine whether teachers are awarded tenure
 - California is one of only eight states that provide tenure after two years; the state legislature should extend the probationary period for teachers to earn tenure from two years to at least four years
 - Award teachers who earn tenure a significant salary increase

The NCTQ report follows the recent United Way Education Summit, keynoted by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the largest-ever event focused on education reform in Los Angeles County.

Funding for this study was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

About United Way of Greater Los Angeles

United Way of Greater Los Angeles is a nonprofit organization that creates pathways out of poverty by helping homeless people move into housing, providing students with the support they need to graduate high school prepared for college and the workforce, and helping hard-working families become financially stable. United Way identifies the root causes of poverty and works strategically to solve them by building alliances across

all sectors, funding targeted programs and advocating for change. For more information, visit www.unitedwayla.org.

About The National Council on Teacher Quality

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. In particular we recognize the absence of much of the evidence necessary to make a compelling case for change and seek to fill that void with a research agenda that has direct and practical implications for policy. We are committed to lending transparency and increasing public awareness about the four sets of institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: states, teacher preparation programs, school districts and teachers unions. For more information, visit www.nctq.org

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