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**REPORT ON OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOMMENDS
IMPROVEMENTS FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS**

Study examines teacher staffing, compensation, tenure, work schedules and evaluation policies

OAKLAND, March 20, 2013 – Today the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released a report that examines teacher quality policies and practices in the Oakland Unified School District. The in-depth study, “Teacher Quality Roadmap: Improving Policies and Practices in Oakland,” was commissioned by the Effective Teaching Coalition of Oakland, a diverse group of community organizations committed to helping local students achieve and supporting Oakland teachers in the classroom.

The report identifies a number of changes which could increase the effectiveness of the teaching force and provides Oakland with a tailored analysis of the teacher policy areas most in need of critical attention, as well as areas of strength for the district. Comparisons between Oakland and neighboring districts, as well as similar districts around the state and nation, provide context and examples of promising practices.

“The Effective Teaching Coalition, of which we are a proud member, hopes the NCTQ study serves as a call to action for the community to work in support of effective teaching in Oakland and to actively play a role in helping our students succeed,” said Jonathan Klein, Executive Director for Great Oakland Public Schools Leadership Center. “Improving schools by supporting teachers will improve our communities, increase opportunities for residents, make our neighborhoods safer and help our economy thrive.”

This examination of the state of teacher policies in the Oakland Unified School District explores the district’s contract with its teachers, as well as district practices and state laws that shape the work rules for teachers. Additionally, NCTQ analyzed OUSD human resource data and held focus groups with teachers, principals and community members.

“Teachers and principals alike want the change necessary to improve student learning,” said Kate Walsh, President of NCTQ. “Just like other cities we’ve studied, Oakland needs to find ways to consider the best interests of students when deciding where to assign its teachers and also work to enact more meaningful evaluation systems that help all teachers -- those who are great, those who are average and those who are weak -- improve their craft. Oakland is not alone in this need for transformation. These themes have been a common thread across the country.”

Oakland’s primary challenges are focused on how it staffs its schools and on the evaluation process for its teachers. The district has been working to improve practices in these two areas, but significant improvements still can and should be made.

Among the report's findings:

- Oakland's procedures for hiring and assigning teachers delays the hiring of new teachers until late into the summer months, when many potential candidates have already found other jobs. Most problematic, however, is that principals do not have final say over who works in their buildings, and assignment of most transferring teachers is done by seniority.
- While Oakland principals should be commended for recommending more evaluation for nearly a quarter of the teachers they evaluate annually, the evaluation system is confusing, fails to provide an overall sense of a teacher's effectiveness and has no concrete actions that follow ratings.
- Given its teacher workforce of over 2,200 teachers, OUSD's dismissal rate suggests that teachers are not being held accountable for their performance. According to OUSD records, only five tenured teachers were dismissed between 2002 and 2011 for performance reasons. This is the lowest rate of dismissal NCTQ has seen in the districts it has studied.
- District record keeping, often a struggle for many urban districts, appears to be a particular problem in Oakland. For example, the district does not collect data on the breakdown of teacher ratings in the annual evaluation instrument or on the academic background of its teachers.
- While many teachers work hours beyond their formal workday, at 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours to 7 hours, Oakland's teachers' *official* workday is among the shortest in the state.

The NCTQ analysis is meant to serve a practical purpose, offering clear steps for the district to make alone and jointly with the teachers union, and for California lawmakers. In total, NCTQ makes 25 recommendations to the district and 7 recommendations to the state that would improve the policies shaping the quality of the Oakland teacher workforce.

The most urgent recommendations are focused on improving teacher evaluations:

- Make student performance the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated. Standardized test results provide one source of evidence that students are learning, but there are others that districts can and must use since standardized testing does not occur in all grades and subjects.
- Develop a team of independent evaluators 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.
- Incorporate student voice into teacher evaluations. Carefully created student surveys have been found to correlate strongly with student outcomes and can be used as another measure of teacher effectiveness.
- Track what happens to teachers viewed by principals as ineffective, essential data for any district to use to hold its principals and itself accountable for good personnel management.

Reforms in other areas of Oakland's labor policies are needed too, including:

- Give principals, with school community input, full authority to decide who works in their building.
- 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.
- Develop career ladder positions to allow qualified teachers to receive increased compensation for increased 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.

- Offer higher salaries to the top teachers who consistently produce the greatest learning gains.
- Move toward an eight-hour contractual workday that is performed on-site. In the 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 eight-hour day.

“The NCTQ study is important because it provides us with an outside, third-party perspective that analyzes how Oakland is supporting its teachers and preparing its students for success,” said Lisa Haynes, Director of Career and Education for Youth Uprising, which is also part of the Effective Teaching Coalition. “At the same time, we understand that it will now be up to Oakland to determine which recommendations can be implemented here and how we can help improve the student and teacher experience locally.”

This report follows other NCTQ district reports in Baltimore, Boston, Hartford, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Seattle, Springfield (MA) and Miami.

Public release events

Two public release events will be held on Wednesday, March 20: at 7:30 – 9:00 AM at the Water Front Hotel 10 Washington Street, Oakland and at 6:00 PM at Think College Now at 2825 International Blvd Oakland, CA 94601.

The full report is available: <http://www.nctq.org/tr3/districtStudies/viewStudy.jsp?id=10>

About the Oakland Effective Teaching Coalition

The Effective Teaching Coalition is made up of a group of like-minded community-based organizations including Great Oakland Public Schools Leadership Center, the Oakland Community Organization, Youth Together, Youth Uprising, Education Trust West, SEIU Local 1021, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. The coalition's mission is to increase the quality of teaching for children in Oakland through collaboration with the community and by providing support for teachers.

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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