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**REPORT ON THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA RECOMMENDS  
IMPROVEMENTS FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS**

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

**PHILADELPHIA, May 22, 2013** – Today the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released a report that examines teacher quality policies and practices in the School District of Philadelphia. The in-depth study, *Teacher Quality Roadmap: Improving Policies and Practices in Philadelphia*, identifies a number of changes which could better support the recruitment, development and retention of effective teachers and provides Philadelphia with a tailored analysis identifying the teacher policy areas most in need of critical attention, as well as areas of strength for the district. Comparisons between Philadelphia, local charters, neighboring districts and similar districts around the state and nation provide context and examples of promising practices.

“The NCTQ report brings issues to light that we have to grapple with if all of our children are to succeed here in Philadelphia,” said Darren A. Spielman, President and CEO of the Philadelphia Education Fund. “It is too important for our children, families, neighborhoods, and our local economy for us to ignore.”

Philadelphia’s primary teacher policy challenges are focused in how it staffs its schools and develops its teachers. The district has been working to improve practice in these two areas, but significant improvements still can and should be made.

“Philadelphia is a district facing many hard choices. As the school system takes on these challenges, it must keep effective teachers and principals front and center—they are, after all, Philadelphia schools’ greatest asset,” said Kate Walsh, President, NCTQ. “Without a system that helps teachers to develop professionally, that appropriately compensates them for their achievements, and most importantly, that allows them to focus on their students’ interests, the system cannot move forward.”

Among the report's findings:

- Philadelphia’s procedures for hiring and assigning teachers to schools 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; assignment of many transferring teachers is done by seniority.
- Philadelphia, like most districts in Pennsylvania, is about to implement a new, state-mandated evaluation system. There is significant room for improvement from the current system which has not served as a tool for driving improvement or accountability, especially for tenured teachers.

- Philadelphia has built in better provisions than most districts for routinely monitoring the progress of its new teachers; however, there is very little identifiable follow-through to ensure that teachers are improving or exiting.
- While many teachers work hours beyond their formal workday, at just over seven hours, Philadelphia's teachers' *official* workday is shorter than neighboring districts and it leaves little time for collaboration.
- The district spends \$70 million each year to compensate teachers for earning additional course credits that do not, on average, make teachers more effective but it does not currently invest in incentives to keep its highly effective teachers in the district.
- District record keeping, a struggle for many urban districts, appears to be a significant problem in Philadelphia. For example, there are a lot of routine data that it does not collect, such as evaluation data on teachers other than those rated unsatisfactory and the dates on which teachers are offered positions.

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 Pennsylvania lawmakers. In total, NCTQ makes 30 recommendations to the district and five recommendations to the state that would improve the policies shaping the quality of the Philadelphia teacher workforce.

The most urgent recommendations are focused on improving teacher staffing policies:

- 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.
- Avoid issuing unnecessary pink slips. While anxiety over finances is understandable, 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.
- Give principals the authority to decide who works in their buildings. The district should negotiate with the teachers union to commit to allowing principals to interview and select candidates for *all* vacancies in every school.

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

- 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. So much of a teacher's work involves interaction with others that the district should support a schedule that allows for teachers to have collaborative planning time in addition to a robust instructional schedule.

This examination of the state of teacher policies in the School District of Philadelphia 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 human resource data and held focus

groups with teachers, principals, community members, parents and students. This report follows other NCTQ district reports in Baltimore, Boston, Hartford, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Seattle, Springfield (MA), Miami, and Oakland.

**Public release event**

An Ed First Compact meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at the Community College of Philadelphia from 8:00-10:00 AM (CCP - Center for Business and Industry - Room C2-28 at 18th and Callowhill Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19130). If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Brian Armstead (BArmstead@Philaedfund.org, 215- 665-1400).

There will be media availability immediately following the meeting.

The full report is available at <http://www.nctq.org/tr3/consulting/philadelphia.jsp>.

**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*.

The study was facilitated by the Philadelphia School Partnership and the Philadelphia Education Fund, which convened educators and other stakeholders during the research process. Local funding for this study was provided by the Philadelphia School Partnership. Additional support was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.