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Ineffective Teacher Staffing, Evaluation and Support Prevent Cincinnati Schools from Building Strong Instructional Teams

CPS and CFT Must Collaborate on a Comprehensive Strategy to Strengthen Teacher Effectiveness and Support

CINCINNATI, OH – A new study finds serious flaws in the ways Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) hires, places, evaluates and supports its teachers. These problems are preventing schools from assembling the strongest possible instructional teams and from providing every student with an effective teacher – the school-based factor that helps students the most. The study recommends that CPS and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers (CFT) work together to reverse a downward trend in student achievement by immediately developing a comprehensive plan to strengthen teacher effectiveness and support.

The study, conducted by The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a national non-profit that works to ensure that all students get excellent teachers, finds that the CPS teacher evaluation system fails to accurately assess teachers' impact on student learning. As a result, 94 percent of all teachers earn one of the top two evaluation ratings for their instruction – even in schools that have failed students for years. CPS also operates under staffing policies that frequently place teachers in schools without the principal's – or even the teacher's – consent, causing widespread dissatisfaction among teachers and school administrators. Furthermore, CPS loses access to many of the best new teacher candidates by waiting until the summer to make most of its hires. The full analysis is available on TNTP's website.

The TNTP study was underwritten by local and national funders, including the Cincinnati Business Committee, Strive, the Haile U.S. Bank Foundation, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, J.P. Morgan Chase, the Woodward Trust, the Walton Family Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It was conducted in collaboration with CPS, CFT and the Cincinnati Association of Administrators and Supervisors. TNTP's researchers surveyed more than 1,000 current CPS teachers and administrators earlier this year, reviewed staffing data and contractual policies, conducted interviews and focus groups with district employees, and analyzed the district's data on teacher hiring, transfer, separation and evaluation. Key findings include:

- **Ineffective evaluations: No teachers received an “unsatisfactory” rating for their instruction on their most recent evaluation**, while 94 percent received one of the top two ratings in that area. As such, the current teacher evaluation system does not differentiate teachers based on their impact on student learning, nor does it give teachers the feedback they need to improve. CPS teachers agree that the evaluation system is flawed: only 36 percent believe it helps them improve their performance, and 67 percent believe it isn’t worth their time or effort.
- **Failure to reward excellence: Nearly two-thirds of CPS teachers say they would support bonuses for outstanding performance**, but under the CPS-CFT collective bargaining agreement, teacher compensation is based almost entirely on seniority and qualifications. This system does little to recognize and help retain the most effective teachers.
- **Placements without interviews: 25 percent of CPS teachers who changed schools last year were placed in their new school without the opportunity to interview**, even though teachers placed without an interview are much less satisfied with their placements than other teachers. Furthermore, 87 percent of administrators have been forced to hire an internal candidate over a more qualified external candidate as a result of the current placement process.
- **Losing the best new teachers: 60 percent of administrators report losing a qualified new teacher candidate as a result of the district’s late hiring timeline.** CPS hires 60 percent of its teachers in July or later, including 25 percent in August, even though it receives most applications by the end of May. This is largely because the CPS-CFT contract prohibits schools from considering external teacher candidates until transfer processes for internal candidates have finished – processes that extend into June.

TNTP stressed the seriousness of these problems at a public meeting on December 1 at CPS central offices. “We all know that teachers have an enormous impact on a child’s education, but like many other districts we have studied, CPS ignores differences in teacher effectiveness almost entirely,” said Dan Weisberg, Vice President of Policy for TNTP. “To raise student achievement in the district, CPS and CFT need to collaborate immediately on a comprehensive plan to boost teacher effectiveness. That means developing a fair, accurate evaluation system and using it to help all teachers improve, reward great teachers, and exit persistently low performers. It also means creating staffing policies that enable schools to build the strongest possible instructional teams.”

The report recommends that CPS and CFT address these issues by working towards five goals, all of which require changes to district policies and practices as well as the CPS-CFT collective bargaining agreement:

- **Strengthen teacher effectiveness** by revamping the Teacher Evaluation System so that all teachers receive a fair, rigorous evaluation each year based on their ability to positively impact student learning, and also receive individualized support to help them

- **Work to retain the most effective teachers** by implementing a performance-based compensation program and creating opportunities for effective teachers to share their knowledge and skills across the district.
- **Swiftly turn around chronically low-performing schools** by adopting strategies to increase the concentration of highly effective teachers in those schools. These strategies include eliminating the placement of teachers without interviews in all schools and requiring that all placements be made by mutual consent between the principal and the teacher.
- **Improve or exit persistently less effective teachers** using a variety of low-stakes strategies and a streamlined dismissal process.
- **Optimize the new teacher supply** by hiring early and from programs with a proven record of producing effective teachers.

An executive summary of TNTP's study and the full analysis are available on the organization's website at www.tntp.org/publications/other_publications.html.

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About The New Teacher Project

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) works to end the injustice of educational inequality by providing excellent teachers to the students who need them most and by advancing policies and practices that ensure effective teaching in every classroom. A national nonprofit organization founded by teachers, TNTP is driven by the knowledge that although great teachers are the best solution to educational inequality, the nation's education systems do not sufficiently prioritize the goal of effective teachers for all. In response, TNTP develops customized programs and policy interventions that enable education leaders to find, develop and keep great teachers and achieve reforms that promote effective teaching in every classroom. Since its inception in 1997, TNTP has recruited or trained approximately 33,000 teachers – mainly through its highly selective Teaching Fellows™ programs – benefiting an estimated 4.8 million students. TNTP has also released a series of acclaimed studies of the policies and practices that affect the quality of the nation's teacher workforce, most recently including *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness* (2009). Today TNTP is active in more than 25 cities, including Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, New Orleans, New York, and Oakland, among others. For more information, please visit www.tntp.org.