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DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT'S STRONG TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM GOES HAND-IN-HAND WITH IMPROVED TEACHER QUALITY

RECENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TEACHER EVALUATIONS YIELD MULTIPLE BENEFITS, INCLUDING RETAINING MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Washington, D.C. -- Analysis from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) finds tangible evidence that the teacher evaluation system in Dallas Independent School District is coinciding with real and measurable benefits for students and teachers alike.

In [*Making a Difference: Six Places Where Teacher Evaluation Systems are Getting Results*](#), NCTQ examines evidence of the impact of teacher evaluation in six places (four districts and two states) that have stayed the course in developing and implementing improved teacher evaluation systems: **Dallas Independent School District, Denver Public Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools, Newark Public Schools, New Mexico, and Tennessee.**

"Our analysis suggests that moving forward with teacher evaluation systems presents students and teachers with a huge opportunity," commented Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality.

Notable outcomes of Dallas' teacher evaluation system include:

- Dallas reports that it retains 98 percent of its highest-rated teachers, compared to 50 percent of consistently unsatisfactory teachers.
- Dallas teachers' average spot observation and overall evaluation scores are rising, suggesting that teachers may be performing better over time.
- Student proficiency across all subjects and grades in Dallas (already on a modest upswing) increased by 7 percentage points from 2015 to 2017, closing the proficiency gap between Dallas and the state of Texas by 3 points.
- As part of the new evaluation system, Dallas focused resources on a set of schools identified as "Improvement Required" by the state. These resources focus heavily on strategic staffing, including using incentives to attract effective teachers to work in these schools. Dallas credits the drop in the number of designated low-performing schools largely to the evaluation system, although these gains cannot be tied directly to the evaluation system without a controlled study.

Dallas Independent School District's evaluation system, like the other five systems featured in this study, has achieved a more meaningful and realistic measure of the distribution of teacher talent than such systems have done historically, when virtually all teachers received the same rating. Notably, Dallas sets a target distribution for the percentage of teachers earning each rating. This policy forestalls an upward creep in ratings that may not be correlated with achievement and allows the district to budget responsibly for a system that links evaluations and compensation.

Dallas is "able to identify our most effective teachers... [and we see that] retention of our most effective teachers is a strength of the system," said Suzy Smith, Manager of Performance Management for Dallas Independent School District.

To achieve the level of differentiation that these six systems have, a number of factors appear necessary. Each of them annually evaluates *all* teachers using both objective and subjective measures, as opposed to exempting large numbers of teachers from yearly evaluation, only using subjective measures, or not giving significant weight to student learning. Each employs at least three rating categories, with Dallas using seven. Each also ties the professional development a teacher should pursue to her evaluation results, as opposed to giving teachers open-ended choices not directly targeted toward their professional needs.

Perhaps most significantly, each of these six systems to some degree links a teacher's evaluation results to opportunities to earn additional compensation. In addition to attaching consequences to the results of an evaluation, each place has made a genuine commitment on the part of school system leadership to implement the new systems with fidelity, even as five of the featured locales in our study, including Dallas, survived turnovers in leadership.

"The buy-in among school leadership was real and perhaps unique," continued Walsh. "And the commitment to continuous improvement among the districts and states highlighted here stands out. None of these systems were perfect out of the gate; system leaders recognized this and worked continuously to enhance system design, implementation, and use."

These new systems have made a clear impact, which is apparent in the school districts profiled here. They have been able to retain strong teachers while increasing the rate of weaker teachers who choose to leave.

"Dallas Independent School District serves as a powerful testament that effective evaluation policies and practices are likely leading to improvements in the overall quality of a teacher workforce," concluded Walsh.

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Read the report at: <https://www.nctq.org/publications/Making-a-Difference>

To schedule an interview with NCTQ, please contact Nicole Gerber at (202) 393-0020 ext. 712.

About the National Council on Teacher Quality:

The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonpartisan research and policy group committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. We recognize that it is not teachers who bear responsibility for their profession's many challenges, but the institutions with the greatest authority and influence over teachers. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org.