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## DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS' 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 Denver Public Schools 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 Denver's teacher evaluation system include:**

- Denver reports retaining 91 percent of its highest-rated teachers, compared with only 20 percent of the district's lowest-rated teachers.
- Since the implementation of the new system in Denver, newly hired teachers were on average more effective than exiting teachers in mathematics and English language arts.
- Teachers show signs of improving under the evaluation system. Between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, 92 percent of Denver teachers with evaluation ratings received either the same rating or improved one rating category. Many teachers who received the same rating showed improvement in the underlying components of the evaluation framework.
- In the years since Denver has implemented the evaluation system, the district has experienced consistent student growth as measured by state assessments. While this growth cannot be attributed directly to the evaluation system without a controlled study, Denver Public Schools' students have consistently outpaced their classmates statewide in academic growth in math and ELA.

The teacher evaluation system in Denver is "now integrated into how we think about growth and development, how we look at and leverage renewal decisions, and how we provide support for new teachers and make promotion decisions for leadership positions," said Nicole Wolden, Director of Growth and Performance for Denver Public Schools.

Denver Public Schools' 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.

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 some using as many as five to 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. For example, teachers in Denver who earn effective ratings are eligible to apply for a range of teacher leadership positions, which allows them to take on a leadership role in their school (and earn up to \$5,000 on top of their salaries) without leaving the classroom.

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 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.

"Denver Public Schools 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](http://www.nctq.org).*