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## **STRONG TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS GO HAND-IN-HAND WITH IMPROVED TEACHER QUALITY**

*RECENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TEACHER EVALUATIONS YIELD MULTIPLE BENEFITS,  
INCLUDING RETAINING MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS  
AND PROMPTING LEAST EFFECTIVE TEACHERS TO LEAVE*

**Washington, D.C.** -- Analysis from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) [finds tangible evidence](#) that teacher evaluation systems, when implemented well, are coinciding with real and measurable benefits for students and teachers alike.

The past decade has been marked by rapid changes in teacher evaluations. While many districts and states announced their intention to install better systems, they faced political and structural challenges. The districts and states highlighted here, however, have surmounted these challenges to implement successful teacher evaluation systems that are yielding substantial benefits.

“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.

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.**

These six evaluation systems have 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. For example, New Mexico’s teachers earn evaluation ratings that are widely-distributed across its evaluation rating categories, with nearly 30 percent of teachers earning ratings below effective in recent years. This enables New Mexico to differentiate the supports that are made available to teachers to improve their practice.

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, D.C. Public Schools teachers who are found to be highly effective, teach in a targeted high-poverty school, and meet other criteria are eligible to earn as much as \$25,000 in bonuses each year.

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.

- **Dallas Independent School District** reports retaining 98 percent of its highest-rated teachers, compared to 50 percent of consistently unsatisfactory teachers.
- **Denver Public Schools** reports retaining 91 percent of its highest-rated teachers, compared with only 20 percent of the district’s lowest-rated teachers.
- **District of Columbia Public Schools** reports retaining 92 percent of the district’s effective and highly effective teachers, while low-performing teachers are now three times more likely to leave the district.
- **Newark Public Schools** reports retaining 96 percent of highly effective teachers in the evaluation system’s fifth year of implementation, compared to 51 percent of its ineffective teachers.

Ultimately, well-designed and well-implemented teacher evaluation systems help all teachers improve. Independent researchers in **Tennessee** have found that teachers in the state are improving at a faster rate, with growth that is “much more rapid and sustained” since the implementation of its new evaluation system.

Some efforts, notably in Dallas, D.C., and New Mexico, can report clear evidence of improvement in student learning upon implementation of the new evaluation systems. For example, students in D.C. Public Schools have made significant gains on the NAEP assessment since 2009, concurrent with its implementation of the new evaluation system. Student proficiency in Dallas increased more steeply from 2015 (when its system was put in place) to 2017 than across the state of Texas. **New Mexico**’s students are demonstrating increased proficiency under implementation of its evaluation system, with 11,000 more students on grade level in math and 13,000 more students reading on grade level in 2018, as compared to 2015.

“These six places serve 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).*