

Through non-partisan, data-driven analysis, The New Teacher Project identifies the policy barriers that prevent poor and minority children from getting fair access to effective teachers. TNTP makes its results public and then strategically advocates for reforms designed to help district and states generate breakthrough gains in student performance.

The Problem: Counterproductive Policy Framework

Improving teacher quality is one of the most powerful ways – if not the most powerful way – to ensure that students learn and succeed. But our nation’s education systems fail to prioritize the goal of an effective teacher in every classroom.

For decades, schools have operated within a policy framework that assumes one teacher is about the same as another. These deeply entrenched policies and practices prevent school districts and states from hiring, developing and retaining effective teachers – or even identifying who they are.

Amidst this institutional indifference to performance, waves of well-intentioned education reforms produce few results, and student achievement in urban areas continues to trail our most basic expectations. In the nation’s largest cities, where poor and minority students are most concentrated, the chance of graduating high school amounts to little more than a coin toss.

As long as education policies continue to ignore the differences between teachers, districts will never be able to build a thriving teacher workforce capable of closing the achievement gap.

The Solution: A Policy Reform Roadmap


TNTP’s policy staff work on the ground with states and districts to identify the root causes of their teacher quality challenges. Drawing upon TNTP’s extensive experience with urban districts, the team provides practical, non-partisan recommendations for reform and builds the case for change.

TNTP’s analyses have earned widespread recognition for catalyzing changes to policies and practices that better serve all involved – especially students.

“If we are to make dramatic gains, we must **move beyond status quo strategies**. We must openly ask and answer fundamental questions: How can we identify, recognize, reward and retain excellent teachers in CPS? How can we attract our best teachers to the schools that need them most?”

These are not questions that typically have been easy for public school systems to answer - and they certainly cannot be well answered without **listening to the voices of our teachers and principals**. That is why I am so enthusiastic about our partnership with the New Teacher Project.”

-- Mary Ronan, Superintendent, Cincinnati Public Schools (*The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 2009)



“These policies were created over the past century to protect the rights of teachers but they have produced an industrial factory model of education that treats all teachers like **interchangeable widgets**.”

“A recent report from The New Teacher Project found that almost all teachers are rated the same. Who in their right mind really believes that? **We need to work together to change this....**”

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Remarks to the National Education Association, July 2009

“TNTP’s analyses offer a nearly perfect illustration of how research can lead directly to reform.”

-- Andrew Rotherham, Education Sector (Achieving Teacher and Principal Excellence, 2008)

TNTP is “addressing stubborn challenges by pursuing familiar notions of good teaching and effective schooling in impressively coherent, disciplined, and strategic ways.”

--Center for American Progress, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and Frederick M. Hess (Leaders & Laggards, 2009)

How It Works: Five Key Strategies

- 1. Define scope with stakeholders.** At its core, TNTP’s policy research is collaborative. TNTP engages with both district and union representatives to identify each study’s focus areas. Gaining broad investment at the outset ensures that all parties are invested in the process and findings.
- 2. Gather robust data.** TNTP collects extensive qualitative and quantitative information. The policy team conducts in-person focus groups with key stakeholders – teachers, administrators, HR staff and union officials – and follows up with detailed, district-wide online surveys of teachers and administrators. In the past year alone, TNTP surveyed more than 20,000 active teachers. TNTP also gathers historical district data on teacher hiring, mobility, evaluation and dismissal.
- 3. Conduct comprehensive analysis.** TNTP uses multiple rigorous methods, including advanced statistical techniques, to analyze the collected data. Leveraging a knowledge base of data from comparable districts across the country, TNTP uses its analysis to create a holistic picture of how policies and practices affect the reality on the ground.
- 4. Recommend pragmatic reforms.** TNTP’s analysis provides a balanced and detailed understanding of critical human capital issues and helps all parties map the way forward. For each major topic examined, TNTP’s final report provides a series of concrete, actionable recommendations.
- 5. Make the case for change.** TNTP shares the findings and recommendations of each report with key local stakeholders, including teachers unions, school boards, business leaders and local media. Through strategic public awareness campaigns, TNTP helps invest the community in the urgent need for reform.

The Results: Policy Improvements

In 2009, TNTP’s policy analyses helped 21 districts focus on building a policy infrastructure that prioritizes teacher effectiveness.

These analyses have formed the basis of district policy priorities, informed collective bargaining conversations, and created benchmarks for measuring future progress. They inspired nearly 40 editorials in the nation’s top newspapers in 2009, helping build momentum for common-sense reforms.

Over the years, TNTP’s analyses have spurred substantive legislation or contract changes around the country, including in New York City, Milwaukee, Washington D.C., and California.

San Francisco Unified School District

In 2008-09, TNTP collaborated with SFUSD and the United Educators of San Francisco to study school staffing. TNTP’s analysis documented how the district’s forced-placement staffing practices and late teacher hiring timeline diminished teacher quality and shortchanged challenged schools.

In response, the district moved up the date when schools can hire external teacher candidates and improved processes for identifying vacancies. Most importantly, it made “mutual consent” staffing permanent in the lowest-performing 20 percent of schools, and implemented the practice for shortage subject areas like math and science.

This gives principals and teachers greater say in school assignments, ensuring a mutual fit and helping provide quality teachers to the students who need them most.

