The New Teacher Project

A SMARTER TEACHER LAYOFF SYSTEM

March 2010

How Quality-Based Layoffs Can Help Schools Keep Great Teachers in Tough Economic Times.

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The current economic downturn has forced school districts across the country to deal with massive budget cuts over the past two years. In some cases, these cuts led districts to make the wrenching decision to lay off teachers. Many other districts averted teacher layoffs only by spending temporary federal stimulus money or by sharply reducing central programs and school support services like food and transportation. If these districts face another round of budget reductions, they will have no choice but to find savings in their personnel costs. Unfortunately, with state government revenues languishing at their lowest levels since the Great Depression, further budget cuts are inevitable for most districts— making teacher layoffs inevitable, too.[1]

Everyone knows teacher layoffs are harmful to schools and students. But when school districts dust off the decades-old rules that govern the layoff process, they will find that the situation is even worse than they feared. That's because most collective bargaining agreements and many state laws prevent school districts from considering the quality or effectiveness of each teacher when deciding whom to lay off. Instead, districts have no choice but to implement "quality-blind" layoffs based exclusively on seniority.[2] The basic principle is "last hired, first fired;" newer teachers are laid off before more veteran teachers, regardless of how well they do their jobs. And that means districts will be forced to fire some of their best teachers, many of whom are unlikely to return.[3]

Though quality-blind layoff rules represent a well-intentioned attempt to solve a difficult problem fairly, they amount to poor policy-making on several levels. A relic of a factory-model approach to labor management relations that treats teachers like widgets, they demean teachers by ignoring substantial differences in performance. In some districts, these rules have forced schools to give layoff notices to "teacher of the year" award winners and nominees;[4] in others, they protect previously displaced teachers

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[1] On average, personnel costs make up 60 to 80 percent of most school districts' budgets, and teacher salaries make up the large majority of those costs. See Marguerite Roza: "*Frozen Assets: Rethinking Teacher Contracts Could Free Billions for School Reform.*" Education Sector Reports, January 2007.

[2] See *Teacher Layoffs: Rethinking "Last-Hired, First-Fired" Policies*, National Council on Teacher Quality, February 2010. This whitepaper notes that 75 percent of the 100 largest districts in NCTQ's database use seniority as the primary determinant in layoffs. Likewise, 15 states, including many of the largest (e.g., California, New York, Illinois and Ohio), mandate that seniority be the predominant factor in layoffs. Available at: http://www.nctq.org/p/docs/nctq_dc_layoffs.pdf.

[3] See "*Strengthening School Staffing in Minneapolis Public Schools.*" The New Teacher Project, May, 2009. Available at: http://www.tntp.org/publications/other_publications.html#Minneapolis.

[4] In 2009, California, Florida, Indiana, and New Hampshire were among those to give layoff notices to "teacher of the year" winners and nominees due to quality-blind layoff policies. (See: Chris Moran, "Schools struggle with method to reduce teaching staffs," The *San Diego Union-Tribune*, April 27, 2009; Vic Ryckaert, "IPS board eliminates 300 teaching jobs," *The Indianapolis Star*, April 29, 2009; Mark Woods, "A travesty unfolds at her school," *The Florida-Times Union*, April 20, 2009; "Hampton school board owes voters explanation," Seacostonline.com, April 17, 2009.)

who have been unable to find new jobs for months or years (but who cannot be dismissed) over those with full-time assignments.[5] They also result in many more teachers being laid off than would be necessary under more nuanced rules.[6] Furthermore, in that high-poverty schools tend to have higher concentrations of more junior teachers, quality-blind layoff rules disproportionately affect the most vulnerable schools and students.

Most importantly, though, quality-blind layoffs hurt students by depriving them of excellent teachers who are forced to leave simply because they have not taught as long as others. Compounding the problem is the fact that layoffs put a heavier burden on the remaining teachers, who face larger classes and more out-of-classroom responsibilities. In these challenging circumstances, it is especially critical that the teachers who remain be highly effective. If such teachers are not protected during layoffs, their jobs may instead fall to teachers who cannot be effective under more difficult circumstances—or who were not as effective even before the layoffs occurred.

Layoffs are not good for anyone, but they are worse when they result in the loss of top teachers. With so many jobs—and so many children's futures—potentially at stake, districts and teachers unions must act now to reform these outdated rules so that schools will be able to hold on to their most effective teachers if layoffs become necessary. This is especially critical for schools serving students who already face severe educational disadvantages.

Some may resist changes to quality-blind layoff rules by claiming that there is no other way to ensure fairness and protect teachers against favoritism by principals or over-reliance on standardized test scores to make decisions. But this is a false choice. Districts and unions can work together to design layoff rules that are

> ## Are More Senior Teachers Better Teachers?
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> Seniority-based layoff policies are frequently defended with the logic that more experienced teachers are better teachers. This is not necessarily true. Numerous studies have demonstrated that teachers improve the most over the course of their first years in the classroom, then level off in effectiveness.* Therefore, an individual teacher will almost certainly be more effective in her fifth year than in her first or second year.
>
> However, teachers vary widely in effectiveness. Just because a teacher is better than she was a year ago does not mean she is as effective as her peers—even those with less experience. An outstanding first-year teacher, for example, can be more effective than another teacher with more years of experience but lesser ability. Not all teachers begin at the same level of performance or rise to the same level of proficiency over time.**
>
> In short, experience has some value as a proxy for teacher effectiveness, but each individual teacher is a different case. So it makes sense that seniority should be *one* factor in layoffs, just not the only one.
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> * Rivkin, Steven G., Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain (2005). "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement." Econometrica 73(2): 417–458.
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> ** Xu, Zeyu: Jane Hannaway, and Colin Taylor (2009). "Making a Difference? The Effects of Teach for America in High School." CALDER Working Paper No. 17. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.

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[5] In New York City, for instance, quality-blind layoff rules mean that novice teachers in full-time positions may be cut before more than 1,000 "excessed" teachers assigned to the Absent Teacher Reserve (ATR), despite the fact that many ATR teachers have been unable to secure full-time jobs in the school system for months or years. For more information, see *Mutual Benefits: New York City's Shift to Mutual Consent in Teacher Hiring*, available at http://www.tntp.org/publications/Mutual_Benefits.html.

[6] Marguerite Roza, (2009). "Seniority-Based Layoffs will Exacerbate Job Loss in Public Education," *Center for Reinventing Public Education*. In this analysis, Roza created a model for the number of layoffs required under "seniority-neutral" and "seniority-based" policies in a typical school district. Roza found that to reduce salary expenditures by 10 percent, a district must cut 14.3 percent of the workforce when time served in the district is the driving factor. In this scenario, seniority-based layoffs result in 262,367 more job losses nationwide than seniority-neutral policies. And since teachers make up 51.2 percent of the school workforce, nearly 134,000 of those extra losses would be teachers.

fair and transparent and value teachers' experience, but also value effectiveness in the classroom and ensure that excellent teachers are protected—regardless of when they signed on.

Teachers Support a Smarter Layoff System

The first step in designing a smarter layoff system is to solicit input from those it will affect most directly: teachers themselves. Last spring, The New Teacher Project did just that by surveying more than 9,000 teachers in two large urban districts about layoff policies.

Teachers in these two districts overwhelmingly rejected quality-blind layoff rules. When asked whether factors other than length of service should be considered in layoff decisions, 74 percent of teachers in District A and 77 percent of teachers in District B said "yes." A majority of teachers at every experience level favored considering factors other than seniority. Even among teachers with 30 or more years of experience, 51 percent of teachers in District A and 57 percent in District B indicated that other factors should be considered (see *Figure 1*).

Furthermore, the survey found strong support for a quality-based approach to layoffs. When asked what factors should be considered in layoff decisions, teachers tended to favor factors that relate to their effectiveness and performance more than time served in the district.

For example, on average, 60 percent of the teachers who want additional factors considered said classroom management should be part of layoff decisions—making it the most popular choice—compared to 42 percent who said district seniority should be a factor.[7] "Instructional performance based upon evaluation rating" was also a popular factor among teachers, a finding that contradicts conventional wisdom (see *Figure 2*). And many teachers in both districts believe layoff decisions should consider teacher attendance, a factor that research has shown has a significant impact on student performance.[8]

FIGURE 1: Teacher responses to the following survey questions:
DISTRICT A: "In [District A], length of service teaching (seniority) in the district determines who should be laid off during a Reduction in Force (RIF). Should additional factors be considered?"
DISTRICT B: "In [District B], length of service teaching (seniority) in the district determines who must lose their teaching position when budget cuts are necessary. Should additional factors be considered?"
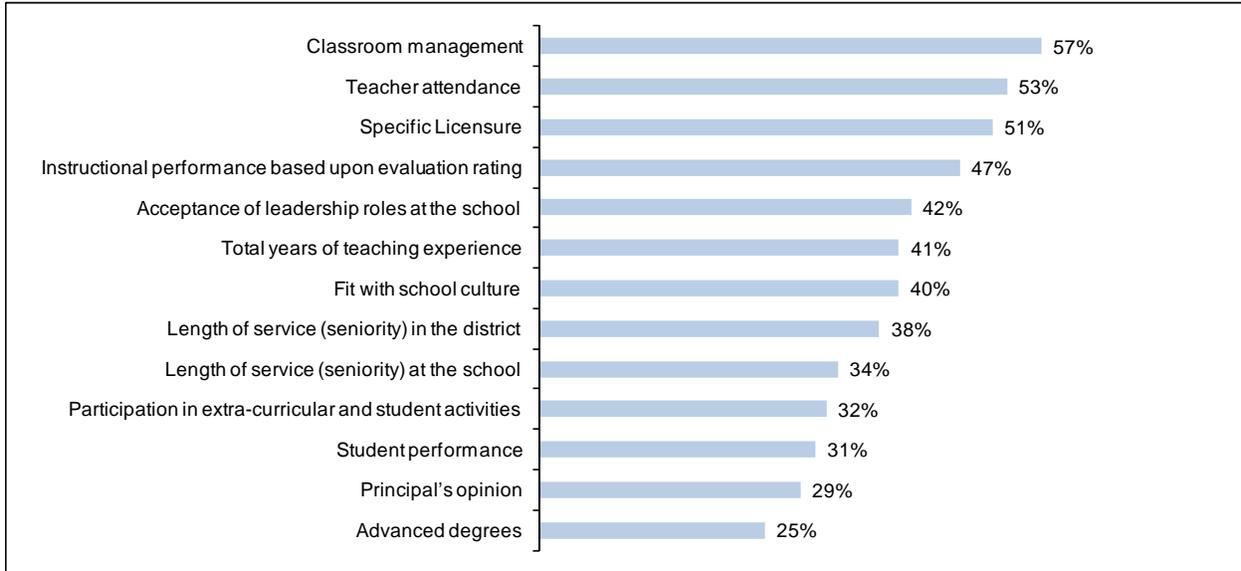
	District A		District B	
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
All Teachers	74%	26%	77%	23%
By Contract Status				
Non-Tenured	91%	9%	91%	9%
Tenured	64%	36%	70%	30%
By Years of Experience in the District- 10 Year Increments				
0-9 yrs	86%	14%	87%	13%
10-19 yrs	67%	33%	70%	30%
20-29 yrs	58%	42%	63%	37%
30+yrs	51%	49%	57%	43%
By Years of Experience in the District- 20 Year binary				
0-19 yrs	80%	20%	81%	19%
20+ yrs	55%	45%	61%	39%
By Free/Reduced Price Lunch Population				
<25%	75%	25%	78%	22%
25-50%	88%	12%	76%	24%
51-75%	77%	23%	76%	24%
76-90%	76%	24%	78%	22%
>91%	72%	28%	78%	22%

[7] When the data are broken down by years of experience, seniority to the district becomes one of the most popular choices among more senior teachers; however, classroom management and teacher attendance also are among the top factors selected by these same teachers.
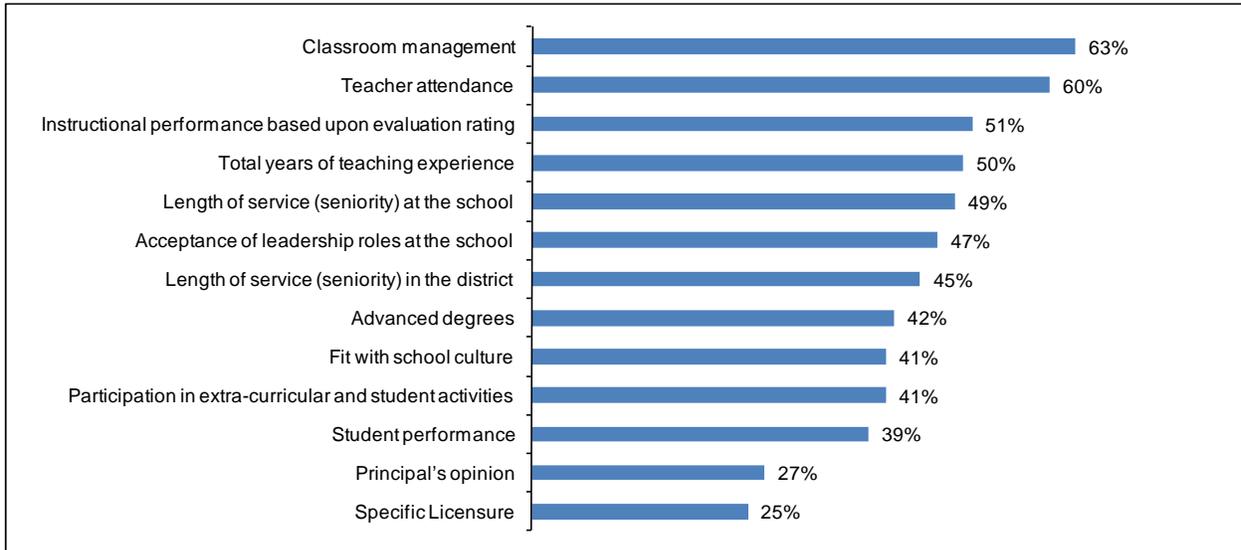[8] Miller, Raegan; Murnane, Richard; and Willett, John (2007). "Do Teacher Absences Impact Student Achievement? Longitudinal Evidence from One Urban School District." Working Paper 13356. National Bureau of Economic Research.

FIGURE 2: Factors that Surveyed Teachers Believe Should Be Considered in Layoff Decisions

District A

Factor	Percentage
Classroom management	57%
Teacher attendance	53%
Specific Licensure	51%
Instructional performance based upon evaluation rating	47%
Acceptance of leadership roles at the school	42%
Total years of teaching experience	41%
Fit with school culture	40%
Length of service (seniority) in the district	38%
Length of service (seniority) at the school	34%
Participation in extra-curricular and student activities	32%
Student performance	31%
Principal's opinion	29%
Advanced degrees	25%

District B

Factor	Percentage
Classroom management	63%
Teacher attendance	60%
Instructional performance based upon evaluation rating	51%
Total years of teaching experience	50%
Length of service (seniority) at the school	49%
Acceptance of leadership roles at the school	47%
Length of service (seniority) in the district	45%
Advanced degrees	42%
Fit with school culture	41%
Participation in extra-curricular and student activities	41%
Student performance	39%
Principal's opinion	27%
Specific Licensure	25%

One teacher summed up her frustration with quality-blind layoff policies in this way:

> "The layoff [process] that will take place this April will not take into account how well I was evaluated or the intense amount of effort I put into my job. Nor does it consider the level of success the students in my classroom have achieved. It does not take into account the relationships I have built with the students, parents, and staff in my school community. It does, however, seem to believe my job is expendable because I have only taught for three years."

Towards Quality-Based Layoffs

The results of this survey provide a roadmap for implementing layoff rules that teachers will support and will allow schools to retain their best teachers. Under a quality-based system, layoffs would be made according to several factors, each weighted in accordance with existing research and teacher input. For example, in the districts TNTP surveyed, teachers strongly supported including these three factors:

- Average **classroom management rating** from the past three years (if it is a component of the overall performance evaluation);[9]
- Average **teacher attendance** over the past three years.
- Average **evaluation rating** from the past three years;[10]

Other factors that may be linked to a teacher's impact and value to the school, such as years of service, attainment of specific certifications, and out-of-classroom responsibilities, should also be factored in, though not weighted as heavily. *Figure 3* provides full details of TNTP's quality-based model.

This system would be a significant improvement over a quality-blind system. It would recognize each teacher's contribution as a professional and give schools—especially high-need schools that are disproportionately affected by quality-blind policies—a far better chance to keep their most effective teachers during layoffs. Under these rules, teachers could predict their likelihood of being laid off just as easily as if seniority were the only factor, but whether or not a teacher is laid off would depend

Are Layoffs the Only Answer?

Although layoffs have become the primary way that districts reduce personnel costs, it is worth considering whether they are the only option. Hiring freezes and leaving vacated positions unfilled can help, but these strategies are generally insufficient because attrition tends to slow during economic downturns.

Wage freezes could also reduce the need for layoffs,* but most labor agreements make them nearly impossible. School districts typically negotiate teacher compensation by creating a salary schedule, which spells out annual raises for teachers over a multi-year period based on years of service and course credits accumulated. These schedules lock in labor costs years in advance.

Implementing wage freezes would require negotiating the delay or cancellation of agreed-upon raises—something teachers unions have resisted. For example, Los Angeles Superintendent Ramon Cortines sought wage freezes as an alternative to layoffs in 2009 but faced opposition from the Los Angeles teachers' union. In one suburban Oregon district, teachers expressed support for wage freezes on a union-sponsored survey, but the union maintained its official opposition to wage freezes and layoffs proceeded.**

In short, despite the availability of other, less extreme options, layoffs remain the most common way that districts in dire financial straits seek to reduce personnel costs.

* See Marguerite Roza, "The Tradeoff Between Teacher Wages and Layoffs to Meet Budget Cuts," *Center for Reinventing Public Education*, July 2009.

** Yim, Su. "North Clackamas teachers ask union for a voice in layoffs." The Oregonian, August 25, 2009.

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[9] If it is not a component of the overall evaluation, the weight of this category could be distributed equally to the remaining two categories.

[10] The New Teacher Project's previous research (*The Widget Effect*, 2009) has shown that most current teacher evaluation systems provide little differentiation of teachers because almost all teachers earn the highest ratings. However, even without evaluation reform, existing ratings are sufficient to serve as the basis for quality-based layoff decisions. For example, the very few teachers who earn "unsatisfactory" ratings will be more likely to be laid off, while teachers who earn the very top rating in districts that use more than two rating categories will be less likely to be laid off. As more districts implement better evaluation systems in response to Race to the Top and other initiatives, evaluation data will become more meaningful. Using evaluation ratings as part of layoff decisions would also give districts an additional incentive to make evaluations as meaningful as possible.

mostly on factors within his or her control. Administrators would not be allowed to manipulate the layoff order to suit personal preferences or biases. Moreover, as in any other industry, teachers would be subject to federal and state employment laws, which would prevent administrators from discriminating on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender or other factors.[11]

Districts should also take additional steps to ensure fairness and transparency as they implement a quality-based system:

- Layoff criteria should be consistent across schools and communicated publicly far in advance of any layoff decisions.

- Laid off teachers with satisfactory past performance should be able to apply for vacancies as new positions become available. When filling open positions, principals should be required to interview a reasonable number of eligible laid-off teachers prior to hiring an external candidate, with those rated highest in quality receiving priority consideration. In keeping with national best practices in school staffing, laid off teachers should never be force-placed into vacancies.

In addition to prioritizing the retention of a district's most effective teachers, a quality-based layoff system is also likely to decrease the total number of teachers affected by layoffs. Last-hired, first-fired layoff rules greatly exacerbate the impact of layoffs on schools and teachers because more junior teachers earn lower salaries; closing a budget gap by laying off the lowest-paid teachers means that more teachers must be laid off to meet the budget target.

One recent study concluded that traditional layoff rules result in significantly more teacher layoffs compared to a system that lays off teachers across all experience levels.[12] Even a system that gave credit to years of experience without making seniority the sole factor would result in greater diversity of experience and salary levels among teachers in the layoff pool, reducing the total number of layoffs required and thereby reducing the burden on the remaining teachers and their students.

It is important to be clear, however, that the layoff structure proposed here would explicitly prevent school districts from seeking to lay off the most senior teachers as a cost-cutting measure; layoff order would be determined strictly by each teacher's point allocation across a range of measures—including years of service—that are difficult to manipulate. This scoring system is illustrated in *Figure 3*.

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[11] Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. Section 2000e, et seq. prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. As an example of state law, the New York State Human Rights Law, NY Executive Law Section 291, 296-a, prohibits discrimination in employment based on age, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability and military status.

[12] Roza, February 2009.

Conclusion

Limited options for cutting personnel costs, combined with a third consecutive year of budget cuts, will unfortunately force more and more districts to lay off teachers in the coming months. Schools nationwide could be forced to fire many of their best teachers and a generation of children will suffer the consequences—all because of outdated rules that the teachers responding to TNTP's surveys appear to overwhelmingly reject. This is especially unacceptable for poor and minority children, who are already less likely than their peers to have effective teachers.

Districts and unions must act now to replace quality-blind layoff rules with fair, transparent policies that put the needs of students first and allow schools to retain their best teachers in times of upheaval. The best solution is to use data from credible teacher evaluations, which will take time for most districts to develop. But districts cannot afford to wait, and they do not have to wait. They can implement quality-based layoff rules using information that is already available to make significant progress toward their goal of retaining their best teachers during layoffs.

In fact, the movement towards quality-based layoffs has already begun. Arizona passed a law last year prohibiting seniority from being used in layoffs. In the District of Columbia, the school district recently used performance as a factor in layoffs, consistent with a law that allows multiple factors to be applied. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina and Montgomery County, Maryland, performance is a factor in layoffs, at least among junior teachers.[13]

This kind of reform should take root across the country. As TNTP's surveys have shown, a majority of teachers are likely to welcome the changes. Quality-based rules will reduce the number of layoffs needed to meet budget reduction goals. They will replace a system that treats teachers as interchangeable parts with one that respects their skills as professionals. Most importantly, they will minimize the impact of layoffs on students--particularly high-need students--who should not be robbed of their best teachers because of a recession.

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[13] National Council on Teacher Quality (2010). *Teacher Layoffs: Rethinking "Last-Hired, First-Fired" Policies*.

FIGURE 3: Sample Scorecard for a Quality-Based Layoff System

This scorecard would be used to determine each teacher's ranking in a quality-based layoff system; teachers with the lowest scores would be the first to be considered for layoffs. The scorecard indicates how many points each teacher should receive in each measured area and each year (e.g., a teacher rated "approaching effective" in classroom management in the current year would receive 9 points towards her total score). The greatest weight is placed on the most recent year and performance evaluation rating.

MEASURE	POINT ALLOCATION						WEIGHT
Classroom Management Rating	Highly Effective	Effective	Approaching Effective	Ineffective	*Total Points*	*Max Points*	
Current School Year	27	18	9	0			*20%*
Previous School Year	18	12	6	0			
Previous School Year	15	10	5	0			
					Total Points	60	
Attendance	**Perfect**	**1-5 Days Absent**	**6-10 Days Absent**	**> 10 Days**	*Total Points*	*Max Points*	
Current School Year	27	18	9	0			*20%*
Previous School Year	18	12	6	0			
Previous School Year	15	10	5	0			
					Total Points	60	
Performance Rating	**Highly Effective**	**Effective**	**Approaching Effective**	**Ineffective**	*Total Points*	*Max Points*	
Current School Year	54	36	18	0			*40%*
Previous School Year	36	24	12	0			
Previous School Year	30	20	10	0			
					Total Points	120	
Length of Service to the District	1 pt for every year served- Max Points 30				*Total Points*	*Max Points*	
Years Served							*10%*
					Total Years	30	
Extra School Responsibilities	**Many**	**Several**	**None**		*Total Points*	*Max Points*	
Current School Year	14	7	0				*10%*
Previous School Year	9	5	0				
Previous School Year	7	3	0				
					Total Points	30	
					BASE TOTAL		
Estimated Performance Coefficients		For teachers with 1 year of data or less, multiply base total by:			1.5		
		For teachers with 2 years of data, multiply base total by:			1.15		
				TOTAL SCORE		**300**	
						Max Points	

Sample Completed Scorecard for an "Effective" Teacher with 15 Years Experience

MEASURE	POINT ALLOCATION						WEIGHT
Classroom Management Rating	**Highly Effective**	**Effective**	**Approaching Effective**	**Ineffective**	***Total Points***	***Max Points***	**20%**
Current School Year	27	18	9	0	18		
Previous School Year	18	12	6	0	18		
Previous School Year	15	10	5	0	10		
				Total Points	**46**	60	
Attendance	**Perfect**	**1-5 Days Absent**	**6-10 Days Absent**	**> 10 Days**	***Total Points***	***Max Points***	**20%**
Current School Year	27	18	9	0	18		
Previous School Year	18	12	6	0	12		
Previous School Year	15	10	5	0	10		
				Total Points	**40**	60	
Performance Rating	**Highly Effective**	**Effective**	**Approaching Effective**	**Ineffective**	***Total Points***	***Max Points***	**40%**
Current School Year	54	36	18	0	36		
Previous School Year	36	24	12	0	24		
Previous School Year	30	20	10	0	20		
				Total Points	**80**	120	
Length of Service to the District	1 pt for every year served- Max Points 30				***Total Points***	***Max Points***	**10%**
Years Served					15		
				Total Years	**15**	30	
Extra School Responsibilities	**Many**	**Several**	**None**		***Total Points***	***Max Points***	**10%**
Current School Year	14	7	0		7		
Previous School Year	9	5	0		5		
Previous School Year	7	3	0		7		
				Total Points	**19**	30	
				BASE TOTAL	***200***		
Estimated Performance Coefficients	For teachers with 1 year of data or less, multiply base total by:				1.5		
	For teachers with 2 years of data, multiply base total by:				1.15		
				TOTAL SCORE	**200**	**300**	
						Max Points	

Sample Scoring Scenarios, by Teacher Profile

Teacher Profile	Classroom Management	Attendance	Performance Rating	Service to the District	Extra School Responsibilities	Total Score
Highly Effective Veteran (10yrs)	60	60	120	10	30	**280**
Highly Effective Novice (3yrs)	60	60	120	3	30	**273**
Effective Veteran (15yrs)	40	40	70	15	15	**180**
Effective Veteran (10yrs)	40	40	70	10	15	**175**
Effective Novice (3yrs)	40	40	70	3	15	**168**
Effective Novice (1yr)*	18	27	36	1	7	**134***
Ineffective Veteran (15yrs)	5	14	10	15	3	**47**
Ineffective Novice (4yrs)	5	14	10	4	3	**36**

* Score for a teacher with 1 year of experience is derived from teacher's base total (89 points) multiplied by an estimated performance coefficient of 1.5.

In creating the scoring scenarios, the following descriptions guided how points were assigned:

- A *highly effective* teacher has received the highest rating in classroom management for the past three years, has had perfect attendance, was rated "Highly Effective" on all of his/her past three performance evaluations and has undertaken many additional responsibilities at the school level over the past three years.

- An *effective* teacher has received strong classroom management ratings over the past three years, was rarely absent, has improved his/her instructional performance, moving from an "Approaching Effective" rating three years prior to an "Effective" rating for the past two years, and has shown consistent participation in several activities outside the classroom.

- An *ineffective* teacher has received poor classroom management ratings over the past three years, has consistently missed six or more school days a year, has shown worsening instructional performance, moving from an "Approaching Effective" rating to an "Ineffective" rating for the past two years, and has rarely taken on any additional school responsibilities.

Scoring Teachers with Less than Three Years of Data: Estimated Performance Coefficients
The scorecard assigns points to teachers based on their most recent three years of performance. This approach means that the scores of teachers without three years of performance data must be adjusted; otherwise, first-, second- and third-year teachers' universally lower point totals would almost always subject them to layoffs, regardless of their effectiveness.

The scorecard makes this adjustment through the use of estimated performance coefficients for teachers with less than three years of data. The coefficients serve to fill in the data gap between these teachers and their more experienced peers, producing an estimated score that is based on the teachers' actual performance to date and scaled to reflect a conservative degree of confidence that performance trends to-date will hold up over time. They have the effect of amplifying the importance of seniority for layoff decisions of early career teachers, whose ultimate effectiveness is less well known.

In implementing this system, school districts can select estimated performance coefficients that are consistent with their confidence that teachers will maintain the same performance trajectory. The figures below illustrate the ranges of possible estimated performance coefficients for teachers with one year or less of data or two years of data (based on the score distribution depicted in *Figure 3*), and the varying degree of confidence represented by the values within each range.
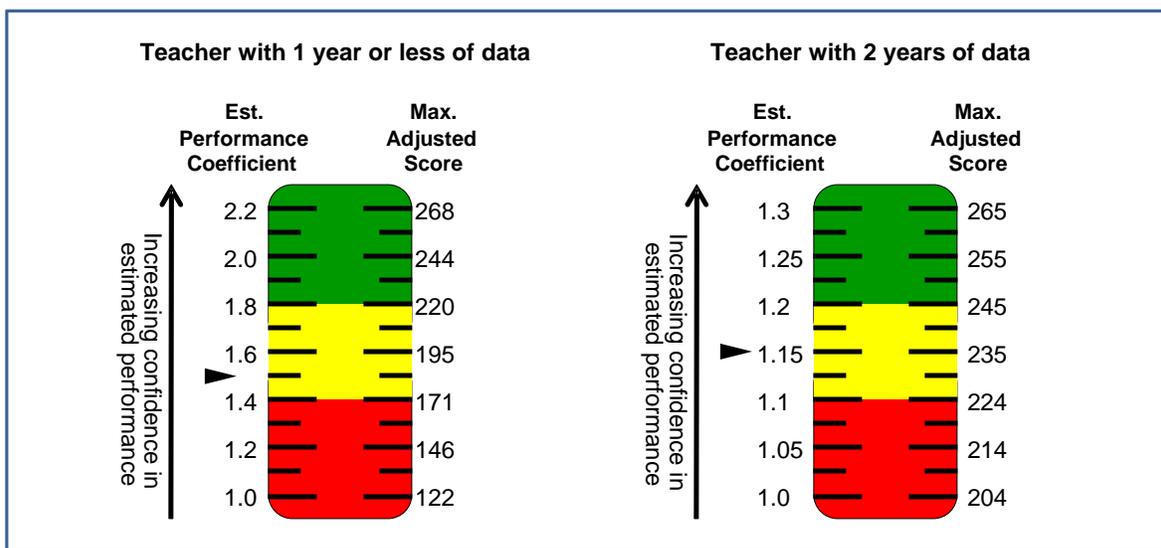
In the sample scorecard in *Figure 3*, TNTP uses estimated performance coefficients at the center of the possible ranges. For teachers with one year or less of data, this translates to an estimated performance coefficient of **1.5** (slightly more conservative than the midpoint of 1.6, reflecting the lower degree of confidence the district might have in an estimate based on only one year of data), and **1.15** for teachers with two years of data.

For example, a teacher with one year of experience who is rated "effective" in classroom management (18 points); is rarely absent (18 points); earned an "effective" performance rating (36 points); and has "several" extra school responsibilities (7 points) would have a base total of 80 points (including 1 for a year of service). Multiplied by an estimated performance coefficient of 1.5, this teacher's adjusted total score would be 120. If the teacher had two years of experience with the same ratings, her base score would be 134, for a total adjusted score of 154 (using a coefficient of 1.15). In contrast, a teacher who consistently earned the same ratings over a period of three years of actual experience would have a total score of 168.

In practice, this approach ensures that the adjusted score of a first-, second- or third-year teacher cannot exceed the score of a more veteran teacher whose ratings are the same but whose score is based on actual rather than estimated data. It is possible, however, that a highly effective novice teacher's score could surpass that of a less effective veteran teacher or one whose performance history has been more variable. In this way, seniority matters, but it does not matter more than effectiveness in the classroom.

Seniority Tie-Breaker
When two teachers being considered for layoff have equal scores, retention priority should go to the more senior teacher.

Adapting the Scorecard
Not all teacher evaluation systems use four summative performance ratings (many use a binary "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" rating system instead), or separate ratings for classroom management, so school districts and teachers unions may need to modify this rubric to fit their local context. Districts that use binary ratings can still institute a quality-based layoff system by adjusting the weight of each factor or considering others that may be appropriate; however, they should work towards more refined evaluation ratings to allow for greater differentiation of teachers for layoff decisions and other purposes.

Methodology

In spring 2009, TNTP conducted surveys of teachers in two large, urban school districts in the Midwest. TNTP surveyed 1,697 teachers in District A and 7,602 in District B—response rates of 75 percent and 34 percent, respectively. Both districts serve a diverse student body with at least 79 percent of students from low-income families, yet vary considerably in size. One district has an enrollment of roughly 34,000 students (District A) while the other has over 100,000 students (District B). Teachers in District A are represented by an affiliate of the National Education Association. Teachers in District B are represented by an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. In one of the study districts, layoffs were planned for the coming school year and had been announced at the time teachers were surveyed. Both districts use quality-blind layoff policies, basing layoff decisions within each license area strictly on seniority - years of teaching experience in the district.

About The New Teacher Project

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) helps school districts and states fulfill the promise of public education by ensuring that all students - especially those from high-need communities - get excellent teachers. 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 37,000 teachers - mainly through its highly selective Teaching Fellows™ programs - benefiting an estimated 5.9 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 40 cities, including Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, New Orleans, New York, and Oakland, among others. For more information, please visit **www.tntp.org**.