Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

Abstract

The development of a concise, beneficial policy concerning education reform is a critical issue facing our nation today. Several troubling issues are prevalent in our current education system. We, as a nation, are recruiting a majority of our teachers from the bottom third of their graduating class. Additionally, traditionally established methods of evaluating teacher effectiveness have proven to be, themselves, ineffective. These assessments provide generic "pass/fail" scores with no truly useful feedback. Another issue facing education reform is the issue of teacher tenure, and its tendency to encourage complacency through job security, as well as the lack of a cost-effective, efficient way of terminating ineffective tenured teachers. To combat this, we're attempting to implement a cultural shift by utilizing what we believe to be a more effective, less widely known systems of recruitment and evaluation that have proven to be more efficient. A good portion of our policy has been inspired by the IMPACT system, implemented in Washington, D.C. by former Chancellor Michelle Rhee. Our policy utilizes a new method of evaluation that provides more insight into a teacher's effectiveness, rather than just appraising his or her students' test scores, which then translates into a scoring system to determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Our policy also tackles the issues of teacher tenure and salary, utilizing a system with two options for teachers to choose from; a performance track where the teachers are subject to merit pay, and a tenure track with less monetary reward but a higher sense of job security. Our ultimate hope is to better conditions for both students and teachers, inspiring a cultural change resulting in a more effective and productive educational system for students, teachers, and all others involved.

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

American schools are currently undergoing a tumultuous period. There are many good teachers throughout the country's classrooms doing good work every day educating and inspiring our country's youth. At the same time, there are unfortunately many other teachers who are simply ineffective in the classroom and who should not be teaching. There are a number of policies, such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top that are trying to bring changes into the classroom, but they are not targeting the most important variable in education – the teachers themselves. In order to achieve academic excellence in our nation's public schools, it is imperative that we recruit and retain the best teachers in the country.

Before the solution is examined, it's critical to understand how widespread and serious the current problem is. Currently, the most talented graduating students aren't entering the education profession. A mere 23% of new teachers are recruited from the top one-third of their classes, and an abysmal 47% of teachers come from the bottom one-third. In countries with highly successful education outcomes, 100% of incoming teachers are recruited from the top one-third of their classes (Auguste 5-9). The difference is staggering, eye opening and illustrates the point most clearly: we must recruit the best teachers to achieve the best outcomes for students in the United States.

In order to recruit and retain the best teachers, we need to make the profession attractive by offering teachers more competitive salaries that they find in the business world. We can offer them these salaries if we strip tenure, infamously known as the mechanism that ensures teachers have a "job for life," and instead measure them based on their job performance. Under our policy, better teachers who give up tenure will get

paid more competitively. New teachers will have the option to enter the profession under the tenure track or merit pay track. Eventually, we will end up having 100% of teachers enter into the merit pay scale.

Current evaluations that are used to judge a teachers performance have proven to be largely ineffective. Before current reforms, Washington, D.C. Public Schools teacher evaluations were held once a year and gave evaluators less than an inch of room on the assessments for actual comments. This school district was spending nearly $13,000 a year per student, more than many others, yet they scored near the bottom on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Despite the large sums of money Washington, D.C. Public Schools was funneling in, they rated 95% of its teachers as performing "satisfactory" or above (Headden 4).

The shocking disconnects between teacher ratings and student achievement is not confined to Washington, D.C. These types of perfunctory evaluations that give little useful feedback are widespread across the country. Often, teachers are only observed and graded once per year. Even more shockingly, many teachers are graded on a generic pass/fail system, resulting in no way to recognize a marginally superior teacher from an average teacher. Additionally, nearly three-quarters of evaluated teachers were not given any areas for development in their latest evaluation. Out of the few that were given areas for improvement, less than half said they received any meaningful support from the district (Weisberg 4).

The most frustrating part of the current educational system is the inability to get rid of the clearly ineffective teachers. In a nutshell, tenure equates to a "job for life" for many. After teachers complete a probationary period, they are granted tenure that

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

prevents their firing unless a tedious and lengthy termination process is conducted.

Theoretically, schools have the opportunity to weed out teachers during a probationary

period, which conventionally spans the first three years, before teachers join the union.

While that system is in place, *Forbes* estimates that less than one percent of

probationary teachers are fired per year, and the percentage of tenured teachers who

are fired is essentially the same. In essence, tenure is granted to teachers as long as

they don't do anything outlandish (McGuinn 15). In the majority of states, a teacher only

has to go through three years of teaching before they are granted tenure (McGuinn 8).

A 2009 study conducted by The New Teacher Project found that 81% of

administrators and 57% of teachers said a tenured teacher should be let go due to

abysmal performance. Despite teachers being recognized as poor performers, no

teachers were fired in half of the schools included in the study (Weisberg 4). In New

York City, firing a teacher is so difficult that even dangerous teachers cannot be outright

fired. Until 2010, poor and dangerous teachers were assigned to "rubber rooms" where

they literally sat and did nothing all day while still receiving a full paycheck. Due to

tenure granted to many teachers, they could not be fired without going through a

lengthy removal process that could take months or years (Richman). These "Rubber

rooms" have since been done away with, but little has been done to speed up the

process to fire incompetent teachers (Medina).

The lengthy process and cost to fire an incompetent teacher is so great that

many schools decide not to fire a teacher at all. In Illinois, research found that 94% of

Illinois schools did not attempt to fire a tenured teacher in more than 18 years. Of the

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

few school districts that did, it cost them an average of $219,000 to fire one tenured

teacher (Winters).

The cost of getting rid of a poor teacher can be lower, but sometimes even a

lower cost is unacceptable. A teacher in Los Angeles is accused of 23 counts of lewd

acts upon children between the ages of six to ten. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's

Department was conducting an investigation into teacher Mark Berndt and his alleged

lewd acts when the district let him go in 2011 (Blume). Since the teacher's arrest,

investigators have uncovered nearly 600 photos from Berndt committing lewd acts with

children ("More Photos Found"). Despite the investigation into these acts, the Los

Angeles Unified School District had to pay Berndt $40,000 to drop his dismissal

challenge. The district paid four months of back salary plus reimbursement for the cost

of health benefits to the teacher, all because they didn't have enough evidence during

the early stages of the sheriff's investigation (Blume). Because such strong

documentation is needed to fire a teacher, the school district had to pay this teacher to

not challenge his firing. This clearly illustrates why we want education to look and act

more like the business world. In this model, if a school district has a teacher they think is

hurting students, they would have the right to fire them because they would not be

protected by tenure.

While that may be an isolated incident, it goes to show how difficult it is to get rid

of a teacher who clearly shouldn't be in the classroom. Under the policy we're

proposing, we plan to eliminate the tenure system that protects inept and poor teachers

and start creating a fair, comprehensive evaluation system. With this comprehensive

evaluation system will come merit pay – teachers will be paid according to their work

performance, much like it is in the corporate world. By treating teachers like professionals, we hope to recruit and retain better educators who are from the top one-third of their classes. In order to accomplish this ambitious goal, we put Washington, D.C. Public Schools under the microscope to analyze what they have found and the results they're already seeing from putting their teachers up to a higher standard.

These traditionally established methods of teacher evaluation have only recently begun to come into question in the public light. When Michelle Rhee first took office as the chancellor of the Washington D.C. school districts in 2007, major changes were made that rocked the world of many parents, politicians, students, and especially teachers. Many of these changes were implemented in direct response to the aforementioned established criticisms of teacher employment and evaluation. One of the most influential alterations was the use of the IMPACT Teacher Evaluation, which was formally introduced in 2009. One of the biggest problems seen by the educational leaders of Washington was that the evaluation of the teachers wasn't helping to improve the students' test scores, which were among the lowest test scores recorded in the entire country. Rhee's solution to this problem was essentially to overhaul that system.

The IMPACT system is based on the "Nine Commandments of Good Teaching" (Headden). Based on what D.C. felt to be the ideal teacher, they created these nine rules to reference when creating the rubric for evaluation. These commandments are:

"1. Lead well-organized, objective-driven lessons.

2. Explain content clearly.

3. Engage students at all learning levels in rigorous work.

4. Provide students with multiple ways to engage with content.

5. Check for student understanding.

6. Respond to student misunderstandings.

7. Develop higher-level understanding through effective questioning.

8. Maximize instructional time.

9. Build a supportive, learning-focused classroom community" (Headden).

Using these attributes of good teaching, two rubrics were created to fit two different situations. The first rubric was for "Teachers in Testing Grades" and "Teachers Not in Testing Grades" (Headden). The rubric consisted of four parts that were broken into different percentages to fit either of the situations. The Washington D.C. Public Schools are implementing these rubrics in the reading and math courses of grades four through eight. There are currently 2 kinds of graphs being used: one representing grades in which students are tested and one in which students are not tested. For testing grades, the breakdown is as follows: 5% is school value added data, 10% is school community involvement, 50% is student test scores, and 35% is classroom performance. For non-testing grades, the percentages are changed to more appropriate levels. 5% and 10% are still school value added data and school community involvement. However, the test scores account for only 10% of the evaluation and the classroom performances accounts for 75% (Headden).

Once the teacher has been evaluated using these standards, they will receive a score ranging between 100 and 400. Depending on that score, the teacher will be either deemed "'highly effective,' ' effective,' 'minimally effective,' or 'ineffective'" (Headden). For example, if a teacher receives a rating in the ineffective range, they will then be
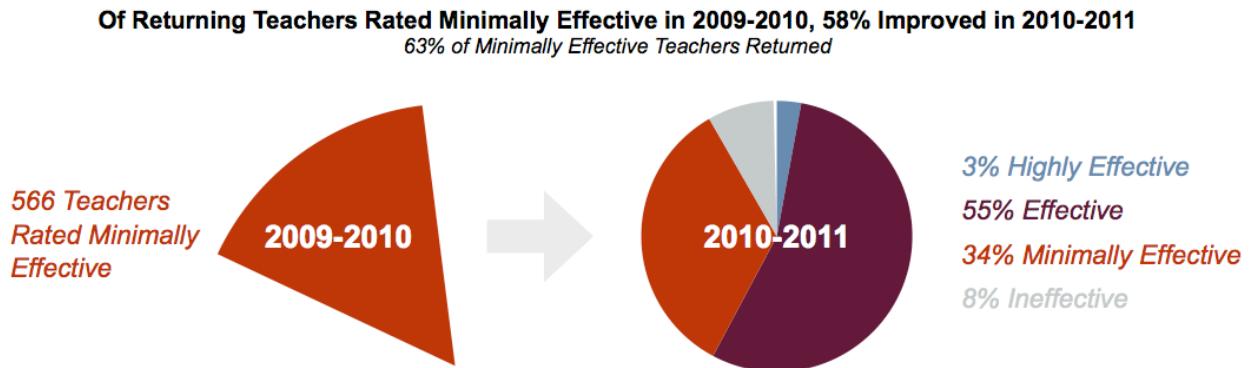
reviewed for termination. These observations occur five times a year from two different kinds of people: a school administrator and another person trained in that subject who is viewed as an unbiased, outside party. All but one of these visits are unannounced which makes it so that people are unable to prepare ahead of time. Each of the four ratings has a separate outcome, whether or not it is positive or negative. According to the article "In Washington, Large Rewards in Teacher Pay", the D.C. school districts "gave sizable bonuses to 476 of its 3,600 educators, with 235 of the getting unusually large pay raises" (Dillon). If the teacher passes the ineffective mark but remains within the "minimally effective" area, they will be given one year to improve and no raise in salary. A rating of "effective" allows a teacher to continue teaching as normal as well as granting them a contract raise. If a teacher receives a rating of "highly effective", then they will be able to keep teaching as well as obtain monetary bonuses along with the previously mentioned contractual raise. If a teacher receives at rating of "ineffective" then they will be immediately reviewed for termination.

Another aspect of evaluation that the IMPACT System improves upon is the feedback given to the teachers. An interview with Eric Bethel told people that under another system "'exceeds expectations'... showed only how modest the expectation were". Following the observation, there is a conference in which the evaluator will explain the scores that the teacher got and how to improve upon them. This immediate feedback will help even the best teachers improve in the classroom. There are three key points that the IMPACT wishes to get across: "to outline clear performance expectations; provide clear feedback; and ensure that every teacher has a plan for getting better and receives guidance on how to do so" (Headden). In the paper "*Impact*

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

in Washington D.C.: Lessons from the First Years" research showed that of the

teachers who were rated "minimally effective", 58% improved on the next evaluation

(Martinez).

Of Returning Teachers Rated Minimally Effective in 2009-2010, 58% Improved in 2010-2011
63% of Minimally Effective Teachers Returned

566 Teachers Rated Minimally Effective

2009-2010 → 2010-2011

3% Highly Effective
55% Effective
34% Minimally Effective
8% Ineffective

Based on this, we can see that the feedback implemented under the IMPACT System is

an important factor when trying to help teachers improve.

As it is with any new idea, there are many criticisms that we have come across

against the IMPACT Evaluation System. An article in the Washington Post says that the

Value-Added model doesn't work and that it focuses too much on testing. The article,

"Firing of D.C. teacher reveals flaws in value-added evaluation", says that standardized

testing is only "a narrow band of student achievement". They also claimed that

evaluating based on a students test scores "are prone to so much error as to make

them unreliable" (Strauss, Valerie). On the contrary, the system was created to reward

and teachers and to help them improve their methods of education. Also, in 2011, 206

teachers were fired in the Washington D.C. school district. This is a mere 5% of the total

teachers in D.C. so clearly it was not created with the intent to fire teachers.

The Value-Added data assessment system has already been adapted in some

states. The purpose of this system is to evaluate a teacher without strictly focusing on

one portion of the teacher's scores. This means that simply because a teacher does not produce high scoring students does not mean that they will necessarily receive a low score. One of the first states to adapt this method of evaluation was Tennessee. They began implementing this system in the early 1980's and still use it today. It is now known as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS).

The TVAAS reports include many different variables that allow the test to be more accurate and predict different trends and projected grades for students, teachers and schools. In order to estimate these trends, schools gather about five years' worth of data from grades 2-8 and grade 10. For example, when information on a particular subject of data is collected, such as science, the TVAAS will allow grade predictions for the student on future (lowercase S) science exams. The data collected from students can also be looked at to evaluate an entire school or even school district. This assessment allows the state to see how effective the school district is and if its students are reaching their full potential.

The current TVAAS database includes over 3.3 million students' academic records. It's these records that allow for this type of grade prediction to be possible. Along with the student's regular exam scores, a large part of the evaluation is the TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program). This test is an exam that is given to all students of Tennessee in order to gauge where a student falls compared to the rest of the state and the rest of the nation as well. This information allows the state to see what schools are being effective and what schools need to put in more work.

The TVAAS has covered a large range of variables in order for it to be the most effective test possible, especially to judge teachers. Since 1992 teachers have been

required to document what subjects they are teaching and how long they are spending with each student, in order to ensure that, for one, they are capable of teaching that subject and two, to ensure that they are spending an ample amount of time with their students to guarantee a good education.

The way that the final score for each student is computed is quite complex. The equation is: $y = XB + ZU + e.$ Each of these variables represents a different area of the assessment. When all of the scores are plugged into this equation, the state is able to see how the student is doing. The basic idea that you need to understand from this equation is that it is very statistical and accounts for randomness (DeLacey).

A really good thing about the system is that because it has so much data already stored and the data itself accounts for so many different areas of a student's career, the missing data such as absences, missed exams and things of the sort do not affect the outcome of the results.

Though the TVAAS seems like a great system that has covered all of its bases, there are many critics that believe it has many variables left out that greatly affect a child's education. The TVAAS does not include the teacher's effect on a student, meaning, if the teacher has a bad attitude or the student simply does not like her. It also does not include parental influences. Many people believe that if your parents take education seriously, it will allow you to strive to make larger strides in your education. Another factor that is hard to judge but still is not factored in is genetic endowment. In no way does the TVAAS consider the parent's education and how their genes may, or may not, have played a role in their son or daughter's learning capabilities. Another huge influence that the TVAAS fails to consider is the influence of surrounding students.

If a student is happy and gets along with his/her peers, many believe that they are more likely to do better in school compared to those that get bullied and are not well liked in school. One of the biggest controversies that the test does not take into consideration is a student's availability to academic materials. It is hard to assume that if two students take the same test and one student has a bunch of computers and books at his or her fingertips and the other doesn't even have a text book, it is hard to assume that they are on the same playing field as far as grades are concerned.

There are also many controversial findings from the TVAAS analysis. Through this studying and research they have found out that teachers are the most important factor in student success (Sanders 299-311). The TVAAS definitely has the research to back up this statement but due to the adverse thoughts about some of the findings, they have been deemed taboo.

All in all the TVAAS does a great job in assessing the students and their academic futures. It has been able to determine how well teachers teach, what is and is not effective and how one is able to not only learn but also learn better. The only problem is that there are so many very important variables that are not taken into account that it really does make the test seem not as legitimate as previously thought. Many believe that the root of the TVAAS and the system is great and should be used but they also understand that there needs to be a lot of changes to allow it to assist in evaluating teachers effectively and fairly (Sanders, and Horn 299-311).

Utilizing these forms of evaluation will blaze a trail for additional changes to take place in our education system, particularly when it comes to teacher salary. Throughout most of America today, teachers' salaries are based on experience and level of

educational degree, with nearly no accountability for their performance in the classroom. The merit pay system is based on the idea that teachers should be paid based on the results they produce in the classroom. As Americans, we value results through hard work, and our capitalist system depends on acknowledging and rewarding these results. In most professions employees are offered bonuses and salary increases for excellent performance, so why should teaching be an exception? Currently there is little motivation for teachers to go above and beyond the basic requirements. The possibility of earning some extra cash would most likely provide teachers a strong incentive to strive for improvement and better results for students. In addition, the merit pay system could help attract and retain America's top-third college grads. This increase in annual income would inspire students to consider teaching as a viable, profitable career option, as opposed to a personal sacrifice for the greater good. By connecting teacher salary to performance, teaching as a profession would become more modern and creditable and thus attract more competent, top-third percentile students.

The concept of merit pay has been long drawn out over the last century with signs of interest, but markedly little permanent change. In the early 1900's, education certification requirements developed soon followed by plans for merit pay after the First World War. During the depression these plans lost their appeal and so for the greater half of the 20th century teachers were paid based on their gender, race and level of instruction. By the 1950's most of America had implemented a single salary schedule, which provides higher salaries for teachers who had attained either a bachelor's or master's degree, for coaching sports teams or advising an academic club and for those with the most experience. Most schools still use this same reward system that was

created almost sixty years ago. But in 1957, academic America became more open to the idea of merit pay following a surge in concern with science education surrounding Russia's launch of Sputnik, the first satellite, into orbit. In the early 1960s more than 10 percent of school systems began experimenting with some form of merit pay. By 1972, a lack of interest and funds lead decreased this experimentation to 5% (McCollum 22).

About ten years went by before the issue resurfaced at the national level. The catalyst for this education reform was the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which "recommended that teacher salaries be professionally, competitive, market-sensitive and performance-based" (McCollum 22). Since then, educators have tried a variety of different merit pay systems; the current trend is to reward teachers for good evaluations and student performance. The most successful programs to date help to identify the schools goals, consider working conditions, develop accurate measuring systems and give meaningful rewards. Unfortunately measuring the success of merit pay systems is not easy because most last no more than six years. These innovative systems are typically discontinued for a variety of reasons; supporting legislators leave office, educators unfairly execute the program, teachers unions refuse to acknowledge them, competitive polices create poor teacher collaboration, or the programs are simply too costly to implement (Fuller).

McKinsey & Company published a research paper in the fall of 2010 addressing the idea that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (Auguste 5). McKinsey investigated the world for the best performing school systems to see what they do differently from the United States that allows them to produce the best results for their students. In Singapore, Finland and South Korea most

teachers, if not all, are from the top-third of their respective classes. In America, 91 percent of top-third college students who are not going into teaching say that the most important job attributes include prestige and peer group appeal, but the compensation is the biggest gap between teaching and other professions (Auguste 6). Engineers, Lawyers and Doctors, some of the most respected and prestigious jobs in America, get paid between 1.5 to 3 times more than teachers (See Exhibit 1 below). With compensation comes prestige and group appeal thus if teachers had the opportunity to get paid more this would raise the number of top-third new hires who enter into teaching. Specifically, Mckinsey's market research suggests that to raise the number of top-third teachers in "high-needs schools from 14% to 68% would mean paying new teachers around $65,000 with a maximum career compensation of $150,000 (Auguste 7). In fact, roughly 55% of today's teachers will be eligible to retire within the next decade providing massive window of opportunity to bring in top-third students (Auguste 11).

Exhibit 1: US teacher salaries as a percent of GDP per capita over time and compared to other professions
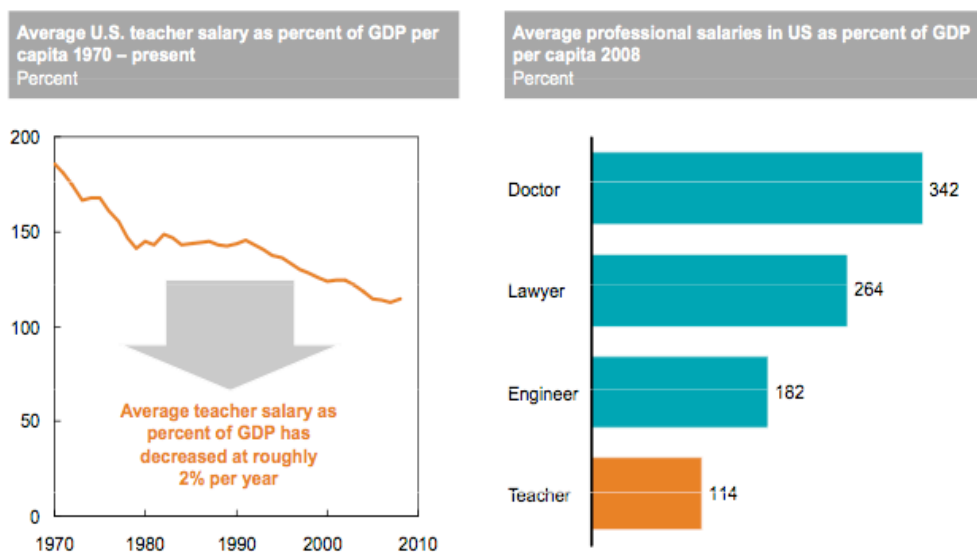
In Singapore, promotions and rewards are given out based on annual evaluations Under an intense performance management system, a continual process that reviews results, the teacher's aptitude, individual training and development and contributions to innovative school improvement. Teachers see this process as a template for self-improvement and believe that it helps them become better teachers. In Finland there is no performance pay or bonuses for a good evaluation. Teachers are expected to seek out help for themselves and be the main drive of their own improvement. What allows this to happen, though, is the completely different culture surrounding teaching. Teaching in Finland is considered to be the most elite of all professions and the requirements to become a teacher only allow the smartest and most motivated to make it into the classroom. South Korea's large class sizes allow the government to generously pay their teachers more than other top performing countries. Korean teachers' pay sale falls between that of an engineer and a doctor, resulting in a purchasing power of about 250% more than American teachers. Around the world foreign teachers are being paid far more than their American counterparts (Auguste 6).

Recently in America, many experimental policies involving merit pay have been implemented. The latest and arguably the most successful is incorporated in Washington D.C.'s aforementioned IMPACT reform policy. Under IMPACT's policy teachers can opt out of receiving tenure and be placed in a merit pay system, essentially trading job security for more money. If a teacher is rated highly effective in a high need school district they are eligible for performance bonuses of up to $25,000. In

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

the more affluent areas of the school district, teachers can earn bonuses up to $12,500.

With a repeated highly effective rating teachers are eligible for a base salary increase of

on average $20,000, along with the annual contractual bonuses (Martinez 7). Last year,

660 Washington Teachers Union (WTU) members of 4,000 were eligible for these

bonuses ranging from $3,000 to $25,000 dollars. In addition, 290 WTU members

received base salary increases of up to $27,000 for being highly effective two years in a

row. In the previous contract the maximum teacher salary was $87,584, but now

through IMPACT that max is up to 131,540 (Martinez 5). In an educational documentary

called "Waiting for Superman," Eric Hanushek, an education researcher at Stanford

University said that if we were to eliminate the bottom 6-10% of teachers and replace

them with an average teacher we could bring the average American student up to the

level of Finland (Guggenheim). The IMPACT system allows for this to happen. Last

year, resulted in the termination of six percent of WTU members who were rated either

ineffective or minimally effective for two years in a row(Martinez 5). Financially, this

system costs $150 per student, but before the IMPACT system was implemented in

2007 the district spent a much larger $13,000 per student (Martinez 7).

This pay scheme has encouraged many teachers to stay in the profession and

improve their standard of living. For example Tiffany Johnson, a special-education

teacher in Washington D.C., got a series of raises over her first six years that brought

her yearly salary from $50,000 to $63,000. This past year, her seventh, under

IMPACT she earned 87,000 as a result of being rated "highly effective" two years

in a row. Tiffany said, "Lots of teachers leave the profession, but this has kept me

invested to stay, I know they value me" (Dillon 1). This is the feeling that IMPACT

advocates hope to give all they best teachers within the system. "We want to make

great teachers rich" in a profession where many of the best and brightest are lost

within the first few years to more financially rewarding opportunities" (Dillon 1).

Washington reformers believe that giving permanent increases to outstanding

teachers, who might otherwise leave within their first few years, will help to make

the teaching profession more appealing. Ideally to attract and retain America's

top talent annual salaries and working conditions should be increased across the

board. Until we can do that though settling with a system that only rewards the best

teachers is something we have to experiment with, otherwise America will continue in

the same dangerous direction it's been heading for over the last thirty years under

tenure.

As previously stated, in our pursuit of academic excellence in America's public

school systems, it is evident that we need to find better ways of recruiting and retaining

good teachers. This need is particularly evident in currently established, ineffective

evaluation systems. In order to implement a more efficient form of evaluation, we must

exact a clear definition of teacher effectiveness. Current evaluations are not completely

accurate because, simply put, they fail to separate the poor teachers from the proficient

teachers. Therefore, effective teachers who are doing their job are often mistakenly

classified as ineffective, and vice versa. Distinguishing between those that are helping

our students and those that are hindering them is an imperative.

Our policy will be based off of Washington D.C's evaluation system, IMPACT,

which was launched by Chancellor Michelle Rhee,however we will not be using the

IMPACT system. IMPACT evaluates teachers based off of their student's growth on

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

standardized exams and frequent observations (Teacher Evaluation 2.0). We will use this system, albeit we will be making some adjustments to it. For our policy, we want to create cultural change in the K-12 public education system, by recruiting and retaining good teachers. We hope to attract excellent teachers over time by giving them the option of performance pay or tenure.

During a teacher's first year, expected standards are lower. They will be evaluated during their first year, but they will be held to lower standards which will allow them to become adjusted to the teaching profession. The first five years that they are working they will be expected to increase their performance by 20% each year, which means that their evaluation score will have to increase by five points each year. First year teachers will be put into these categories, based off of the scores they receive. Highly effective teachers will range from 330-400, effective 230-329, minimally effective 155-229 and ineffective 80-154. After their first five years highly effective teachers will be classified as receiving 350-400, effective 250-349, minimally effective 175-249, and ineffective 100-174.

Our policy will be implemented to recruit and retain the best teachers by using an evaluation system consisting of four components currently present in K-12 public schools that incorporate standardized testing; commitment to school community (15%), school wide evaluation average (5%), student achievement data (20%) and teaching and learning framework (60%). Each of these four assessments will be in place to judge our teachers on our established 400 point scale. If teachers fail to meet their requirements, then specific actions will be taken. Like IMPACT, we will reward effective teachers and consider termination for ineffective ones. Highly effective teachers will be

able to keep teaching and they will receive monetary benefits. Effective teachers will keep teaching also, however they will get a contract raise. Minimally effective teachers are given a year to improve and receive no raise. Ineffective teachers are reviewed for termination.

Under IMPACT, we will be following Michelle Rhee's system in which teachers will give up tenure in exchange for higher performance pay. "… Tenure was designed to protect professionals from undue political interference in the work of education" (Greenwald). However, today it seems to serve as more of a shield to protect ineffective, complacent teachers from getting fired. Tenure is awarded, not on basis of recognizable achievement, but because of absence of a criminal behavior (Greenwald). Currently under the IMPACT system teachers start off making about $42, 370 a year and can make a maximum salary of up to $131, 000 a year(Martinez 5)With tenure teachers start with $42, 370, however their maximum salary only goes up to $87, 000. (Martinez 5) .Teachers will have the option of being compensated on a performance tract or a tenure tract. The performance tract is basically a merit pay system in which teachers will be awarded a bonus of $25,000 if they are teaching in high-needs areas (Headden 16). However, if the teacher works in a middle to upper class neighborhood, their salary jump will only be $12,500 for being a highly effective performer. If they enter under the tenure track, they will not be compensated for their performance. However, they will have job security. After a teacher has taught for five years he or she will be eligible for tenure opposed to the three-year requirement before teachers usually receive tenure (McGuinn).

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

Ideally we would want to increase salaries of teachers across the board, but in this current political climate we realize that drastically increasing educational funding is not in the cards. Politicians are reluctant to invest more in our educational system, even though it very well could bring down correctional spending in the country. A 2009 study showed that "one in every 10 young male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention, compared with one in 35 young male high school graduates" ("Study Finds").

In our ideal system, we'd like to give all teachers a large base jump in salary with even higher merit pay potential. In order to recruit and retain the best teachers, we need to start paying them that way. Also, with increased educational spending, we can offer teachers tuition reimbursement if they decide to dedicate three or four years to the profession. According to Penn State Associate Professor Ed Fuller, giving teachers tuition reimbursement for years of service will attract better teachers (Fuller).

He also thinks that improving teachers' working conditions is critical to retaining the best teachers. Right now, there is a large disparity in the quality of school between rural and urban and suburban areas. Spending more in lower-income rural and urban areas to improve the materials the school provides such as textbooks and computers, as well as renovate the schools to include common workplace conveniences such as air-conditioning will help the working conditions significantly, which in turn will help keep the best teachers in front of the classroom (Fuller).

Unfortunately, finding the money for such an effort will be hard to find, which is why we have come up with our current plan. We think our plan is moving in the right direction for true education reform. The truth, though, is that none of these systems have enough data behind them to be conclusive. The IMPACT system may work well in

Washington, D.C. but not well in other areas. The critical concept in implementing our policy is to know that it needs to be rolled out on a small scale first instead of on the large scale. Education initiatives like No Child Left Behind or Race to the Top were rolled out to the entire country before we knew if they worked, and many agree years later that there has been little to no positive results from those initiatives (Slekar).

Our ultimate goal is for merit pay to be implemented for all K-12 public schools in the United States. By increasing the financial benefits for those who perform well, it may attract more top performing college graduates to the field of teaching. We want to create cultural change. If high performing teachers are attracted to merit pay then we plan on creating incentives to examine and change the educational capital system. In order to recruit and retain high performing teachers we must have an highly effective evaluation system.

Value- added evaluations of teachers, which are based off of test scores, are necessary, however they are controversial and they inadequately represent teachers (Greenwald). For this reason we will use a smaller percentage of value-added observations in our overall evaluation of teachers. We will only incorporate 20% (opposed to the 50% that is used with the IMPACT system) of value-added data into our overall evaluation. We need to consider the consequences for teachers as opposed to those for students for misrepresenting teacher's performance. Teachers will benefit from evaluations if all the best information is incorporated (The Brookings Brown Center Task Group). However, value –added evaluations are not that reliable because the information received from the average test scores may be misleading. For example, high test scores do not necessarily mean that the teacher is doing their job to their

fullest potential. Test grades, can simply be a measure of the types of students that are in the class. Value-added evaluations are not that reliable unless one set of values is compared to another set of values.

When value-added evaluations are compared to other evaluation systems, it appears to be the most credible way of judging teacher's performance. However, when it is used alone it is unclear and unreliable. There is a need for an evaluation system that includes a wide scope of different kinds of evaluations (The Brookings Brown Center for Task Group for Teacher Equality).

Students' achievement as it pertains to grades is the outcome. So, therefore that is what teachers are evaluated on. We do not want this to be the case, so by reducing the amount of student achievement data that is taken into account we may be able to change this. We will start focusing on the teaching and learning framework component of evaluations, which is the measur of a teachers instructional expertise, by reducing the amount of student achievement data used in the formal evaluation process. This being said teachers will be evaluated via in class observations five times a year for about 30 minutes each time (Headden 5). This kind of evaluation will account for 60% of the overall evaluation. They will be evaluated three times by a building administrator and two times by someone who is in an expert in the given field (Headden 5). In order to ensure that all evaluators are the same, evaluators will follow the guidelines of the same rubric. Teachers will receive a recommended growth and development plan to follow. At the end of the school year, the teachers will be evaluated again and their score will be transferred onto our 400 point scale.

Education: Tenure Reform and Teacher Evaluation

Under our policy teachers will be required to be involved with their school community. The IMPACT system only denotes 10% of the overall evaluation for commitment to school community. We, on the other hand, feel that it should account for a little more (Headden 5). This includes attending professional development meetings and interacting with their coworkers. They must also achieve client involvement by increasing parental and community involvement with the school (McCollum). Commitment to school community will count for 15% of the overall evaluation.

We will also be evaluating schools on the amount of influence that they have had on students over the year through a school evaluation average. We believe that education is a team effort, so therefore a school evaluation average should be taken into consideration. We will be evaluating schools on their overall influence, which will depend on everyone's performance. This will account for 5% of the entire evaluation.

We want to include Student Ratings of Teacher Effectiveness into our evaluations of teachers, however the ratings will not be actually considered into the evaluation percentages. The Student Ratings of Teacher Effectiveness (SRTEs) will assist with feedback. The SRTEs will just serve as something extra to look at. According to Kamras, in the *Inside IMPACT* article, new research funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has shown that students are good judges of effective instruction. SRTEs are effective because they are proof from the students that their teacher is or is not doing their job.

To ensure that our policy is possible to be achieved we will check in with unions to make sure that they are all right with our policy. We acknowledge the difficulty of navigating through unions and getting them to ultimately agree with our evaluation

system. We will wait until their contract is up for renewal before pursuing further action.

We will not be able to change their views, however we will show them that our policy is

in the best interest of teachers. As a result of our policy, teachers will be treated more

like professionals and less like interchangeable widgets. We must make sure that what

we aim to do will effectively retain and recruit good teachers and ensure that both

teacher and students will no longer have to suffer at the hands of a bad school system.

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