



BUILDING TEACHER QUALITY

in the Kansas City, Missouri School District



National Council on Teacher Quality

THIS STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN ON BEHALF OF THE 17,400 CHILDREN WHO ATTEND THE KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT.

ABOUT NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a non-partisan research and policy organization working to ensure that every child has an effective teacher.

PARTNER AND FUNDERS

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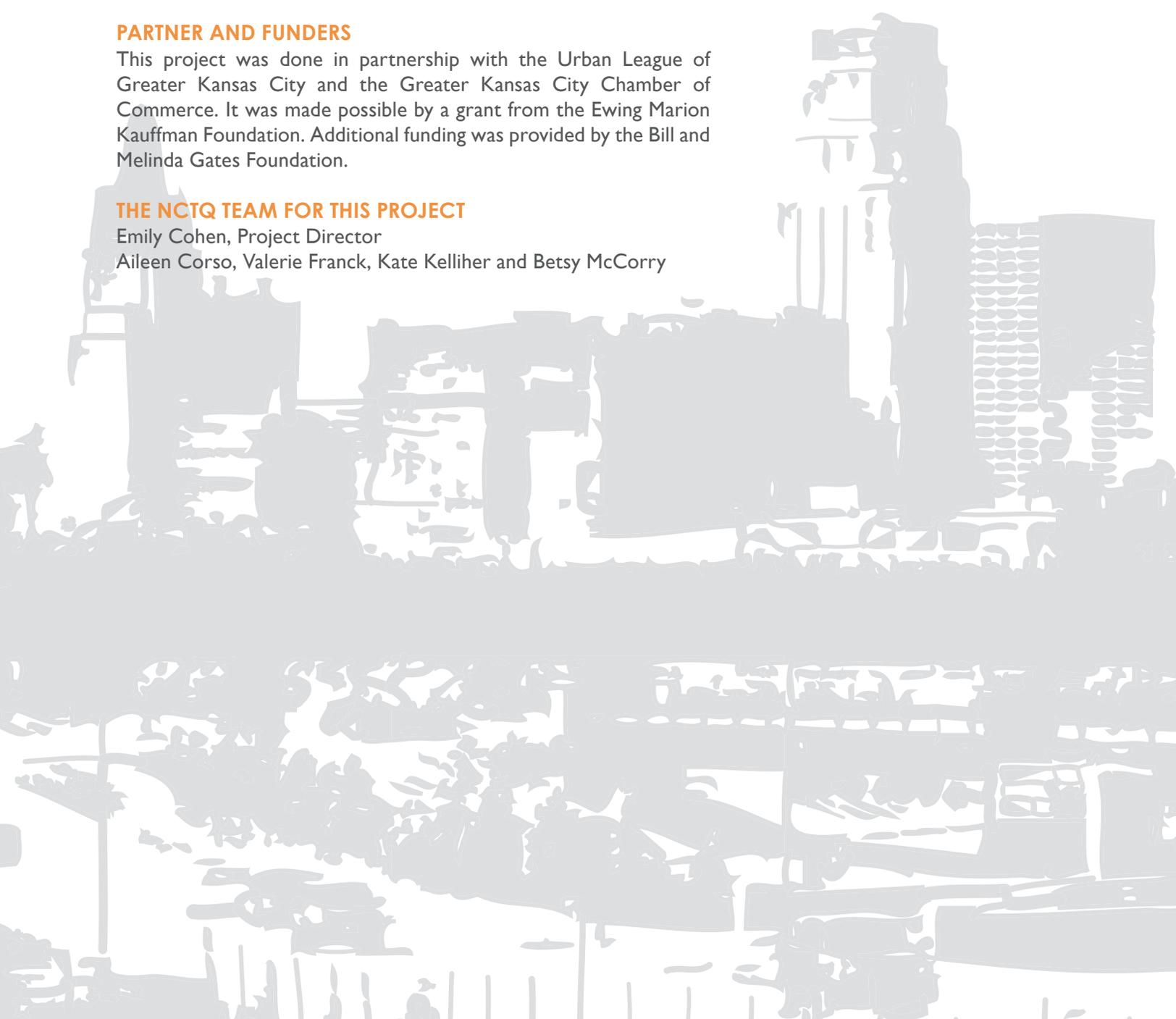
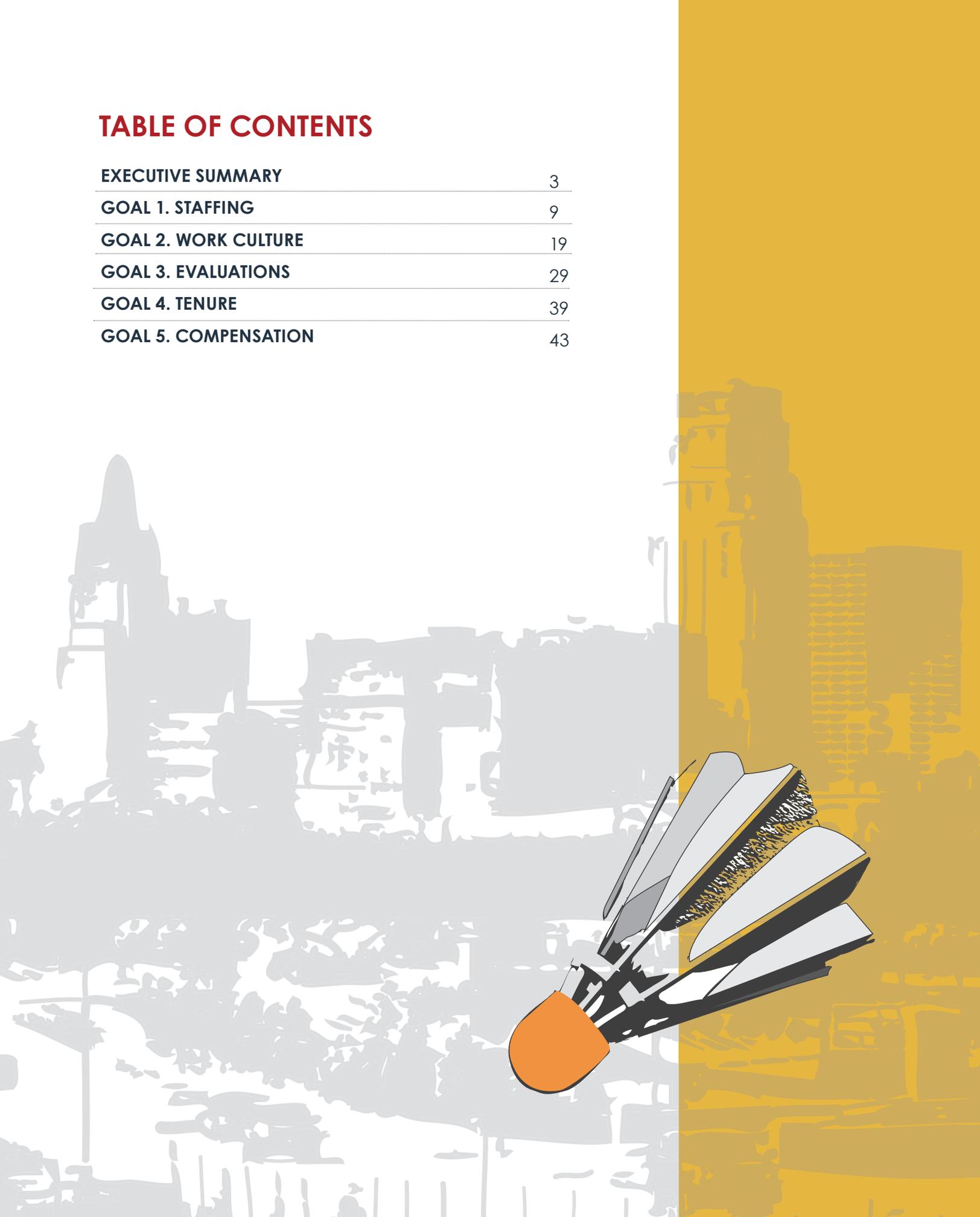


TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
GOAL 1. STAFFING	9
GOAL 2. WORK CULTURE	19
GOAL 3. EVALUATIONS	29
GOAL 4. TENURE	39
GOAL 5. COMPENSATION	43





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study looks at the policies and practices shaping teacher quality in the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD). It is part of a series of analyses by the National Council on Teacher Quality in school districts across the nation.

Framing this analysis are five policy goals for improving teacher quality:

1. **Staffing.** Teacher assignment is based on the mutual consent of principals and teachers, with district policies facilitating the access of schools to top teacher talent.
2. **Work culture.** Policies encourage a professional and collaborative culture, including a work schedule that allows for sufficient planning time.
3. **Evaluations.** Teachers' performance evaluations play a critical role in advancing teacher effectiveness.
4. **Tenure.** Tenure is a meaningful milestone in a teacher's career and advances the district's goal of building a corps of effective teachers.
5. **Compensation.** Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and reward high quality teachers, especially those in hard-to-staff positions.

For this analysis we explored the policies (found in both the collective bargaining agreement and state law) that shape teacher quality. We collected personnel data from the district and met with teachers, principals, union leaders and district administrators to get a better understanding of how these policies play out in practice. We also compared the policies in KCMSD with those of surrounding districts and the 100-plus districts found in the NCTQ's TR³ database, www.nctq.org/tr3. Lastly, we laid out a blueprint of suggested improvements and highlighted possible solutions that have been successful elsewhere.

Many of the recommendations in this document require changes in state law or in contract language. Since collective bargaining is not mandatory in the state of Missouri, the teachers' contract should not be seen as an obstacle to reform. Most of our recommendations simply require that the district make significant improvements to how it conducts its daily business. Though all school districts struggle with efficiency, the degree to which Kansas City struggles is cause for concern. The district's poor record-keeping and lack of data systems were alarming. KCMSD was often unable to provide us with the most basic information on its workforce and much of the data it did provide was unusable.

**THE MAJORITY
OF NCTQ'S
RECOMMENDATIONS
CAN BE ENACTED BY
IMPROVING DISTRICT
AND SCHOOL
MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES.**

These data problems prevented us from exploring key issues that we were able to review in other districts. **Improving the district's technology and data systems should be a key goal of KCMSD.** Failure to make these changes will hinder the district's efforts to make other improvements.

For a complete list of the workforce data KCMSD should collect and review on view NCTQ's Teacher Quality Checklist at: http://www.nctq.org/tr3/docs/nctq_teacher_quality_checklist.pdf

Summary of findings and recommendations

I. STAFFING

Principals' authority to staff their schools is limited, undermined by centralized, seniority-based assignment practices. In KCMSD, teachers are assigned to schools by the central office, often without an opportunity for school officials to interview candidates or to voice preferences. When the district closed 26 schools at the end of the 2009-2010 school year, KCMSD missed a key opportunity to allow principals to build new school teams, instead reassigning displaced teachers in order of seniority and without attention to their effectiveness. Many teachers were laid off because they lacked seniority in the district, without any regard to their classroom performance.

Teacher retention is higher in KCMSD than in other urban districts NCTQ has studied. Despite a number of transitions in recent years, such as a new superintendent and school closures, three out of four teachers who were teaching in the 2007-2008 school year were still working in the district in the 2009-2010 school year.

Primary Recommendations

- Permit principals and their school hiring teams to determine which teachers work in their schools.
- Use performance as a factor in determining teacher assignments, whether when staffing schools for vacant positions or when deciding which teachers go when positions must be cut.
- Change state law to permit districts to dismiss a displaced teacher who remains without an assignment after one year.

2. WORK CULTURE

KCMSD provides the longest instructional day among surrounding districts, but has one of the shortest school years in the nation. The short school year is attributable to an unusual state law setting the minimum number of schools days to 174 days, comparing unfavorably to a 180-day national average.

In spite of a sensible sick and personal leave package of 12.5 days a year, attendance patterns of KCMSD teachers merit attention. Teachers use almost all of their allotted sick leave, missing an average of 9.6 days of the 10.5 allowable days in the 2009–2010 school year. Sick leave is taken disproportionately on Mondays and Fridays. Absences increase as teachers gain more seniority. Tenured teachers have one third more absences than their nontenured peers, and elementary teachers have one third more absences than high school teachers.

Primary Recommendations

- Adjust teacher work schedule to an eight-hour day to facilitate collaborative planning with other teachers, individualized assistance for students and outreach to parents.
- Lengthen the student school year to a minimum of 180 days to be consistent with the national average.
- Improve tracking of attendance and provide principals with regular attendance reports.
- Make teacher attendance a component of teacher evaluations.

3. EVALUATIONS

KCMSD teachers can receive a satisfactory evaluation rating without evidence that they are increasing student learning. The district does a poor job of identifying ineffective teachers even relative to the underreporting by most U.S. school districts: Only six teachers were identified as “not meeting standards” last school year.

Primary Recommendations

- Make student performance the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated.
- Develop a team of independent evaluators to validate principal evaluations and provide content-specific feedback on teacher instruction.
- Collect and examine student feedback on teacher instruction.
- Change state law to allow teachers only one opportunity to appeal a dismissal decision.

4. TENURE

KCMSD does little to make tenure meaningful. The district does not have a process whereby teachers and the principals in whose schools they serve must present evidence of teacher effectiveness.

KCMSD does not keep records on the number of teachers who qualify for tenure each year, nor the number of teachers on a provisional contract who were dismissed.

Primary Recommendations

- Develop a tenure tool kit to assist principals in making informed and deliberate tenure decisions.
- Hold a tenure review that factors in value-added data on teacher effectiveness to decide whether to award tenure.
- Reward teachers who earn tenure with a significant increase in pay, the largest structural pay increase in their careers.
- Aim to dismiss the bottom-performing 25 percent of nontenured teachers each year.

5. COMPENSATION

KCMSD's pay structure for teachers is misaligned with district needs and teacher quality goals. Although KCMSD deserves credit for exploring performance pay through various grant programs, it has done little to address underlying structural problems in teacher compensation.

KCMSD spends 17 percent of its teacher payroll, \$8 million a year, to compensate teachers for obtaining advanced degrees. While many assume advanced degrees (generally master's degrees) make teachers more effective, research concludes decidedly otherwise, particularly for degrees not related to the subject matter taught.

KCMSD teachers have the lowest starting salary of the surrounding school districts. While salaries ultimately recoup some of their competitiveness as teachers gain experience, lifetime earnings never recover from the initial setback of low starting pay in KCMSD.

KCMSD reserves the largest raises for teachers with the most experience. Raises for teachers in their 19th year are nearly three times larger than for teachers in their first two years of teaching.

Until KCMSD relieves significant wage compression, whereby the top performing teachers earn the same as less effective peers, its compensation structure will remain inherently unfair to talented teachers.

Primary Recommendations

- Redirect pay tied to degree-based compensation to a pay structure predominantly premised on a teacher's effectiveness, a demand for a teacher's skill and a teacher's willingness to teach in challenging environments.
- Raise the starting salary of KCMSD's teachers so that KCMSD compensation is competitive with surrounding districts.
- Redistribute raises associated with experience to earlier in a teacher's career, awarding the largest raise at the tenure mark.
- Attend to the details of the district's performance pay program, funded by a federal grant from the Teacher Incentive Fund, to ensure that the bonuses go primarily toward teacher effectiveness, teachers with high-demand skills and placement of effective teachers in high-needs schools.

BUILDING TEACHER QUALITY IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT

This analysis reviews the KCMSD teacher policies linked most directly to teacher effectiveness. NCTQ frames this analysis around five policy goals for improving teacher quality:

1. **Staffing.** Teacher assignment is based on the mutual consent of principals and teachers, with district policies facilitating the access of schools to top teacher talent.
2. **Work culture.** Policies encourage a professional and collaborative culture, including a work schedule that allows for sufficient planning time.
3. **Evaluations.** Teachers' performance evaluations play a critical role in advancing teacher effectiveness.
4. **Tenure.** Tenure is a meaningful milestone in a teacher's career and advances the district's goal of building a corps of effective teachers.
5. **Compensation.** Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and reward high quality teachers, especially those in hard-to-staff positions.

Methodology

- First, a team of NCTQ analysts reviewed the district's current teachers' collective bargaining agreement,¹ school board policies and district circulars. We also looked at any state laws that might affect local policy.
- We compared the laws and policies in KCMSD and the state of Missouri with the 100-plus school districts found in our TR³ database (www.nctq.org/tr3). This exercise allowed us to determine where the school district falls along the spectrum of teacher quality policies and to identify practices that KCMSD might emulate. In a number of areas, we also collected data from school districts that surround KCMSD, which are its biggest competitors for teacher talent.
- We spoke with teachers, principals, parents, community leaders, district administrators and union leaders to understand how policies play out in practice.
- We looked at a range of teacher personnel data to give us a better understanding of the outcomes of teacher hiring, transfer, evaluation, attendance and compensation policies.
- We sent drafts of our analysis to both the district and the union to verify its accuracy.

¹ Collective Bargaining Agreement for Teachers, Counselors and Librarians, Kansas City, Missouri School District 2008-2011.

STAFFING

Guiding principles behind the goal

- With no exceptions, principals and/or school committees select those applicants they wish to interview and have the final say over who is hired.
- Teachers who have lost their current assignment and who prove unsuccessful in a year's time in obtaining a new assignment are either terminated or placed on unpaid leave.
- When positions must be cut due either to a surplus (also called excessing) or layoffs, teacher performance is a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.
- Policies require retiring and resigning teachers to provide notice before the transfer season begins.
- School assignments for both teachers new to the district and those transferring within the district are decided no later than the end of the current school year.
- The district supports principal hiring by recruiting candidates with the personal and professional characteristics found to correlate with teacher effectiveness.

Framing the KCMSD staffing this past year was a “right-sizing” process, which resulted in the closure of 26 schools and the relocation of a large portion of the district’s workforce. Students and staff were merged into the remaining schools, leading to the layoffs of approximately 9 percent of the teacher corps (110 teachers) and early retirement buyouts for an additional 18 percent of the workforce (221 teachers).

I. Mutual consent staffing

PRINCIPALS’ AUTHORITY TO STAFF THEIR SCHOOLS IS LIMITED, UNDERMINED BY CENTRALIZED, SENIORITY-BASED ASSIGNMENT PRACTICES.

Principals in KCMSD have little authority over the staffing of their schools. Although the contract states that each school should have a “transfer selection committee” to interview candidates for vacant positions and make recommendations to the principal, we found little evidence that these committees are active or even exist. Rather, teachers are assigned to schools by the central office, often without giving schools an opportunity to interview candidates or to voice preferences. Principals interviewed by NCTQ could identify only a

GOAL #1

**TEACHER
ASSIGNMENT IS
BASED ON THE
MUTUAL CONSENT
OF PRINCIPALS AND
TEACHERS, WITH
DISTRICT POLICIES
FACILITATING
THE ACCESS OF
SCHOOLS TO TOP
TEACHER TALENT.**

The last time I
hired a teacher
of my choosing
was in 1997.

– KCMSD principal

All of the staffing decisions have been made for me.

– KCMSD principal

handful of times they were able to hire teachers of their choice. One reason this committee structure may be ignored is that the rules under which the committees are supposed to operate are inherently flawed. The district requires the committees to interview each teacher who applies for a position, regardless of how suitable a committee may judge a particular candidate. Hiring committees and principals should be able to screen candidates first and interview only those they deem the most promising.

For the 2010-2011 school year, the district’s five “turnaround” schools enjoyed a waiver from the district’s centralized approach. These five schools were permitted to interview and select a portion of their teaching staffs.

WHAT IS THE HIRING AUTHORITY OF KCMSD PRINCIPALS?			
	...regarding teachers who are seeking a position in their school who are transferring voluntarily?	...regarding teachers seeking a position in their school who are transferring involuntarily?	Can HR assign a teacher to a school without the principal's consent?
According to the teachers' contract	Teachers voluntarily transferring schools may apply for up to three vacancies. School-based committees must interview each candidate and make a recommendation to the principal.	Principals may not recruit and hire teachers other than the pre-screened recruits who have a contract with the district.	Yes
What happens in practice	HR places teachers.	HR places teachers.	Yes

Although KCMSD’s staffing policies are not unusual among large urban districts, a few forward thinking districts, notably Washington, D.C., New York City, Baltimore and Chicago (all, like KCMSD, have AFT-affiliated unions) have moved away from a centralized approach to staffing and now give schools full authority over teacher hiring and assignment.

AFTER KCMSD “RIGHT SIZED” AT THE END OF THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR IT MISSED A KEY OPPORTUNITY TO STAFF SCHOOLS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF STUDENTS.

Transfers during reorganization

The KCMSD school district missed an opportunity at the end of the 2009-2010 school year to strategically build new school staffs and allow principals to select their teams. With the right-sizing process, nearly one-half of the workforce was forced to find new positions, as their prior assignments were in closed schools. According to interviews with senior leaders in the district and union, the initial plan was to allow principals at merging schools to interview and select their new teachers. However, the process of reorganization was cumbersome and lengthy, and the district did not allow enough time for site-based hiring to take place.

With so much uncertainty and time running out before the start of school, KCMSD (with help from the union) was forced to fill assignments in the fastest way possible, resorting to placing teachers in order of seniority. Had the process started sooner, the right sizing of the district would have meant much more than school closures: it would have been an opportunity for principals to build new teams and for teachers to actively apply for new positions. Implementing a mutual consent approach during the reorganization would have signaled a new beginning for KCMSD schools and put the district on the forefront of staffing models nationally.

Layoffs

KCMSD’s contract with the Kansas City Federation of Teachers requires teachers with the least amount of seniority to be the first to go when there are layoffs. While certification and professional development are also listed as factors, seniority is effectively the prevailing determinant. As a result, teacher performance was not factored into these decisions, a frustration that was emphasized by both teachers and principals in NCTQ-led focus groups. Understandably so. Research shows that experience bears little correlation to a teacher’s impact on student performance after a few years in the classroom.²

Notably, *state* statute does permit performance to factor into district layoff decisions, but only for tenured teachers. As KCMSD laid off mostly, if not all, nontenured teachers, this policy was not able to save the jobs of high-performing, more junior teachers.

I’ve seen outstanding teachers lose their jobs, while senior teachers keep theirs. I’m 40 and the youngest person in my school. Why would young teachers go into this profession if they are going to lose their jobs because of seniority?

– KCMSD teacher

² Rice, J.K. (August 2010). *The impact of teacher experience: examining the evidence and policy implications*. CALDER Institute.

II. Equitable distribution

TEACHER RETENTION IN KCMSD IS HIGHER THAN IN OTHER URBAN DISTRICTS NCTQ HAS STUDIED.

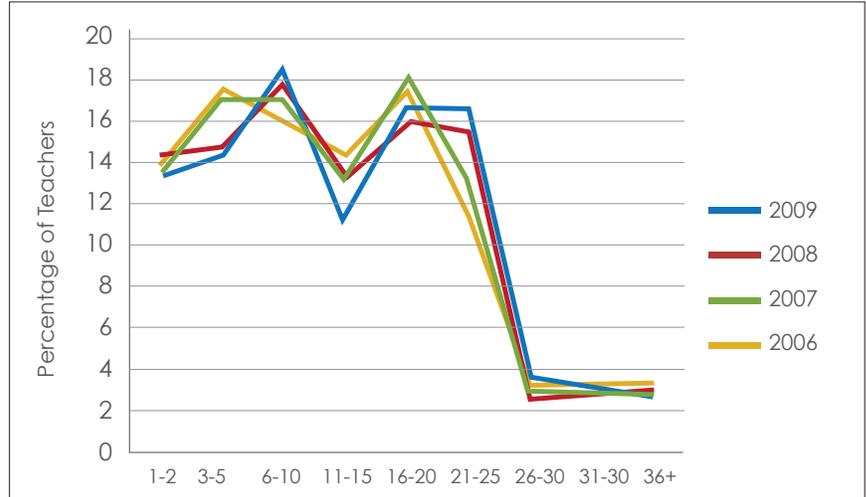
Retention

Despite a number of transitions in recent years, such as a new superintendent and school closures, three out of four teachers who were teaching in the 2007-2008 school year were still working in the district in the 2009-2010 school year. This three-year retention rate is better than that of other districts NCTQ has reviewed (Baltimore's rate stands at 65 percent and Boston's at 47 percent).

Distribution of experience

In the past four years, the distribution of teachers with various levels of experience was fairly consistent within KCMSD. For example, in both the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years, about 13 percent of teachers were in their first two years of teaching. Commendably, the district's inexperienced teachers do not appear to be clustered in the district's poorest schools, a pattern seen in many other school districts. On average, the percentage of inexperienced teachers was the same for the district as a whole as it was for KCMSD's poorest schools.

Figure I. Distribution of teacher experience, 2006-2009



Source: KCMSD personnel data

In the past four years, the distribution of teachers with various levels of experience was fairly consistent.

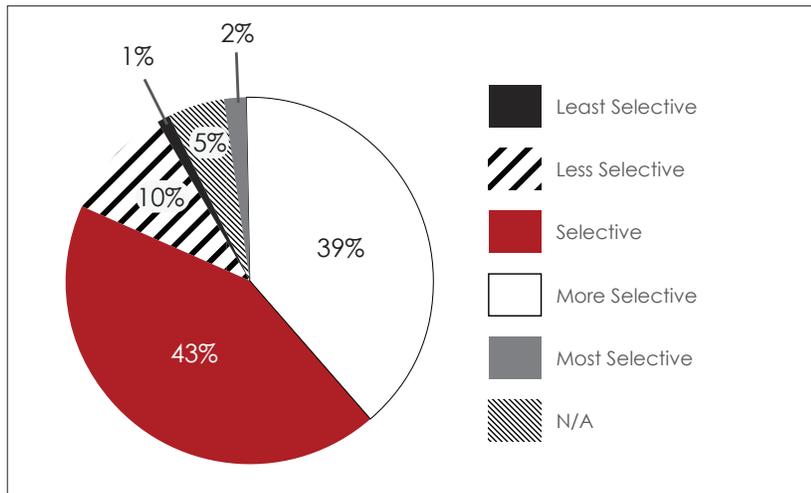
III. Attracting top talent

LESS THAN HALF OF KCMSD'S TEACHERS GRADUATED FROM STRONG COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

One important indicator of promising teacher talent is a teacher's academic background. There have been many studies over the years showing that teachers with higher scores on tests of verbal ability, such as the SAT or ACT, or teachers who have graduated from more selective colleges, are more likely to be effective.³ For example, a study by the Illinois Education Research Council found the following measures to be linked to a teacher's ability to produce academic gains among students: the selectivity of a teacher's undergraduate institution, a teacher's SAT or ACT scores, and a teacher's pass rate on state licensure exams.⁴ In sum, teachers who were themselves good students tend to be good teachers.

Unfortunately, most school districts, including KCMSD, do not collect data on most of these indicators, with the exception of a teacher's undergraduate institution. To explore this measure of a teacher's academic capital, NCTQ reviewed the undergraduate institutions of all teachers working in KCMSD for the 2009-2010 school year. Based on rankings compiled by *U.S. News & World Report*, 41 percent of teachers graduated from a school ranked either "most" or "more" selective. KCMSD is recruiting most of its teachers from schools with relatively low admissions standards.

Figure 2. Selectivity of KCMSD teachers' undergraduate institutions



Source: KCMSD and *U.S. News & World Report*

*These rankings should serve as only a proxy for the academic caliber of teachers. The labels are broad and capture a range of schools. For example, all students that graduate from a Kansas high school are guaranteed admission into Kansas State University, although *U.S. News & World Report* ranks the institution as "more selective." Schools ranked as selective generally accept students who fall well below the mean on college entrance exams.*

³ Boyd, D., Lankford, H. Loeb, S., Rockoff, J., & Wyckoff, J. (2007). *The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its Implications for student achievement in high poverty schools*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

⁴ White, B., Presley, J. & DeAngelis, K. (2008). *Leveling up: Narrowing the teacher academic capital gap in Illinois*. *Illinois Education Research Council (IERC), 2008-1.*

THE 10 LARGEST PRODUCERS OF TEACHERS WORKING IN KCMUSD

COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY	US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT RANKING
1 University of Missouri-Kansas City	More Selective
2 University of Central Missouri	Selective
3 Northwest Missouri State University	Selective
4 Park University	Selective
5 University of Missouri	More Selective
6 University of Kansas	More Selective
7 Missouri State University	Selective
8 Lincoln University	Less Selective
9 Avila University	Selective
10 Missouri Western State University	Less Selective

The caliber of a teacher’s undergraduate institution is just one piece of information KCMUSD’s Human Resources (HR) office and school principals should consider when hiring teachers. Other features of the hiring process should include:

- Presentation of a brief sample lesson or video submission of lesson
- Résumé that includes a summary of qualifications and experience
- Transcripts from colleges and universities attended
- Assessment of a teacher’s history of perseverance, life satisfaction and track records of past success—academic or otherwise—since these character traits have proven to be strong predictors of future success in the classroom. Examples of such assessments include Gallup’s “TeacherInsight” or Haberman “Star Teacher Interview.”
- For currently employed teachers transferring from another school, student performance data, portfolios of teacher and student work and teacher evaluation records.

IV. Incomplete data

DUE TO POOR RECORD KEEPING BY KCMSD, NCTQ WAS UNABLE TO EXPLORE A NUMBER OF ISSUES UNDER THIS GOAL.

An efficient hiring timeline begins early in the spring and ensures that the bulk of hiring and assignment takes place before the end of the school year. This kind of timeline facilitates good hiring practices that minimize disruptions to schools. Moreover, early hiring timelines are necessary for schools and teachers to find mutually acceptable placements.

KCMSD was unable to produce three critical pieces of staffing information that are essential to understanding the hiring timeline: 1) offer dates of employment for teachers new to the district; 2) placement dates for teachers transferring schools in the district; and 3) dates teachers notified the district of their resignation or retirement. Such information, which we have routinely obtained from other districts, would provide more insight into KCMSD's staffing timeline and its ability to attract top talent, screen applicants and select those who are the best fit.

Recommendations for KCMSD

I. Implement mutual consent hiring in all schools for all positions. Principals and their school hiring teams should be allowed to determine which teachers work in their schools. Given that approximately one quarter of a teacher's effectiveness may be attributed to his or her "fit" in a school,⁵ it follows that principals should be able to choose teachers whom they view as a good match. KCMSD allows some mutual consent hiring to take place in its turnaround schools, but it should extend this privilege to all schools and for all staffing decisions.

Principals and school hiring teams should be trained in good hiring practices, including interviewing techniques that identify the qualities most predictive of a teacher's future success and that determine whether that teacher's teaching style makes her a good fit for the school. The best model we have observed is the hiring protocol used by Teach For America (TFA), well worth emulating in KCMSD.

TFA looks for a history of perseverance among its candidates, for people who are satisfied with their lives, and for candidates with track records of past success—academic and otherwise--since these traits have proven to be the best predictors of future success in the classroom.

Where it's been done:

New York City's 2005 contract with the teachers' union instituted major reforms requiring both teachers and principals to mutually agree on a teacher's placement. In other words, schools have the right

⁵C. Kirabo (2010). *Match Quality, Worker Productivity and Worker Mobility: Direct Evidence from Teachers*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

to choose which teachers they want to hire, regardless of a teacher's seniority, and teachers have to apply to vacancies, rather than being assigned to schools by HR. To make these reforms possible, the district created a centralized system through which teachers can view vacancies. According to a report by The New Teacher Project (TNTP), the reforms have brought about many benefits, including greater job satisfaction among teachers. **Washington, D.C.**, and **Chicago** have also negotiated mutual consent hiring policies in their contracts.

2. Shift application and screening to the school level. Teachers should be able to apply for positions directly to the school(s) of their choice, and school hiring teams and principals should screen candidates. Schools then would select only the most promising teachers to interview.

3. Use performance as a factor in determining which teachers will be laid off when jobs must be cut. Research shows that experience is a poor proxy for effectiveness after the sharp learning curve of the first three years. Therefore, it should not be the deciding factor in determining teacher assignment, whether for teachers transferring schools within the district or when the district faces layoffs. State law permits performance to factor into teacher layoffs for tenured teachers, and the district's contract should take this same approach for nontenured instructors as well. Performance-based layoffs, done with the proper supports and data, not only are more cost-effective (because fewer positions must be cut), but they also best serve the interests of schools and students by enabling schools to retain high-performing teachers, even if the teachers have not been in the system for a long time.

4. Recruit top candidates early. The HR office should have the capacity to offer contracts to promising candidates in high-needs areas and other promising candidates in the spring. Offering general contracts in the spring, particularly in shortage subject areas, to top candidates is a strategy that benefits both the employer and employee: The new teacher has the guarantee of a job, and the district has the guarantee of a stellar applicant working in their district. Under such a model, new teachers would interview directly with individual principals to secure their actual assignments. Targeting these early recruitment efforts for teachers in math, science and special education is a wise strategy; in that way, when vacancies occur in these shortage areas, a crop of high-quality candidates is available.

Recommendation for Missouri

Change state law to permit districts to dismiss a displaced teacher who remains without an assignment after one year. Currently, Missouri law does not allow school boards to terminate a teacher's contract for failure to find a position. Several other states, however,

do afford districts this authority. This reason for dismissal, a so-called “exit strategy,” is critical if districts are to fully implement mutual consent hiring.

If districts are not permitted to terminate unassigned teachers after a certain period of time, they ultimately are left with little choice but to compromise their commitment to mutual consent hiring by force-placing teachers into assignments without a teacher’s or principal’s mutual consent. In addition, in the absence of such an exit strategy, districts are left to pay the salaries of unassigned teachers who remain on the district payroll until they are hired by a principal, an unattractive proposition and a considerable waste of public money.

Where it’s been done:

In Nevada, state law permits a teacher’s termination to be the result of “a justifiable decrease in the number of positions due to decreased enrollment or district reorganization.” In Colorado, teachers who do not find assignments within two years may not be terminated, but they may be placed on unpaid leave.



WORK CULTURE

Guiding principles behind this goal

- Teachers' on-site work schedule is eight hours, incorporating blocks of time for individual and common planning.
- Sick leave is commensurate with the number of months a teacher works per year (e.g., 10-month contract provides 10 days of sick leave); sick and personal leave include bereavement, religious, emergency, and family illness.
- Attendance policies foster a professional culture: Teachers notify administrators directly of their absence, and principals can request documentation for habitual leave; attendance is a factor in teacher evaluations and tenure decisions.

"What makes a good teacher? Teaching is not just standing in front of the classroom. It is working as part of a team, sharing responsibility for the school and students." – KCMSD teacher

I. Work schedule

THE DAILY WORK SCHEDULE FOR KCMSD TEACHERS, THOUGH TYPICAL AMONG MOST AMERICAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS, FAILS TO MEET THE MODERN DEMANDS OF THE PROFESSION.

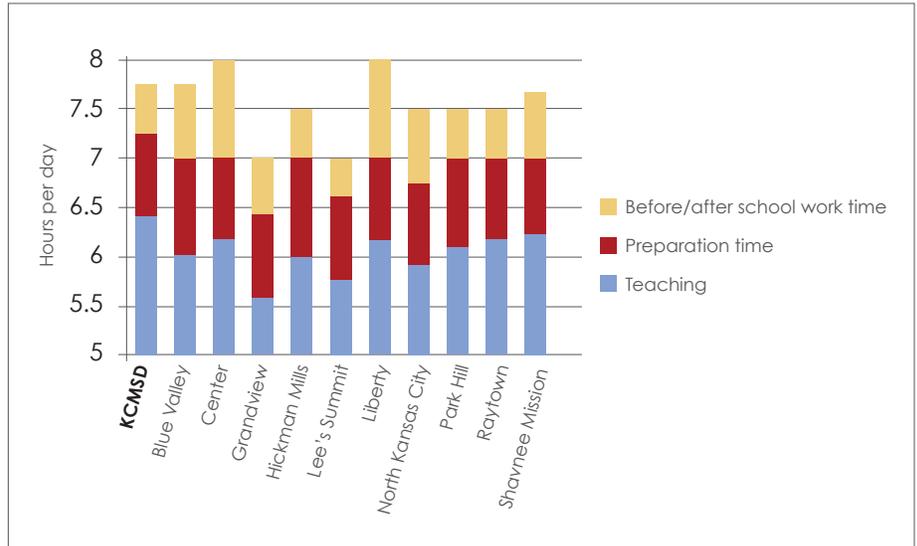
While KCMSD has an impressively long school day compared to other districts, teachers may have too much time in front of students and not enough time to plan. The work of an effective teacher goes far beyond direct contact with students in class. Good teaching involves planning lessons, evaluating student work, collaborating with colleagues, meeting with parents and working with students individually. The current structure of the workday in most American school districts does not accommodate these needs. In the more than 100 American school districts tracked in NCTQ's TR³ database, the average workday for elementary teachers is 7 hours, 25 minutes, but only includes an average of 44 minutes of planning time.

GOAL #2

**POLICIES
ENCOURAGE A
PROFESSIONAL AND
COLLABORATIVE
CULTURE WITH A
WORK SCHEDULE
THAT ALLOWS
FOR SUFFICIENT
PLANNING TIME.**

Last year, the KCMSD school district and teachers union agreed to increase the teacher workday to 7 hours, 45 minutes, a necessary move to reconcile an extension in the student instructional day that would have resulted in time students were on site without adult supervision.

Figure 3. Work schedule for teachers in KCMSD and surrounding districts



Source: KCMSD and surrounding districts' contracts and policies

Two districts in the region stand out for their work schedules for teachers: Center and Liberty. They each have an on-site workday of eight hours with 55 minutes each day for a planning period and another hour split before and after school in which to plan or meet with students. Consequently, they are with children approximately 75 percent of the day, as opposed to 83 percent of the day in KCMSD, and comparing more favorably to high achieving nations (see below).

The typical American school day model differs radically from those in highly successful schools, such as the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) charter schools, and in high-performing nations, such as Singapore and Japan. For example, teachers in Japan are with students only 60 percent of the day; the remaining time is spent mostly planning lessons, collaborating with other teachers and meeting with students.⁶

Compensation is often a major obstacle to increasing teacher work time. Teachers want to be paid more for working more. Should a 3 percent (15 minute) increase in the teacher workday be rewarded with a 3 percent raise? Such a raise would be quite costly to the district and would result in only a modest raise for teachers.

The basic structure of the salary schedule (see Goal 5) is a far more important factor in determining the competitiveness of hourly pay than are minor adjustments mirroring increases in teacher work time. A 3 percent adjustment results in an average increase of less than one dollar per hour and approximately \$1,500 annually. For

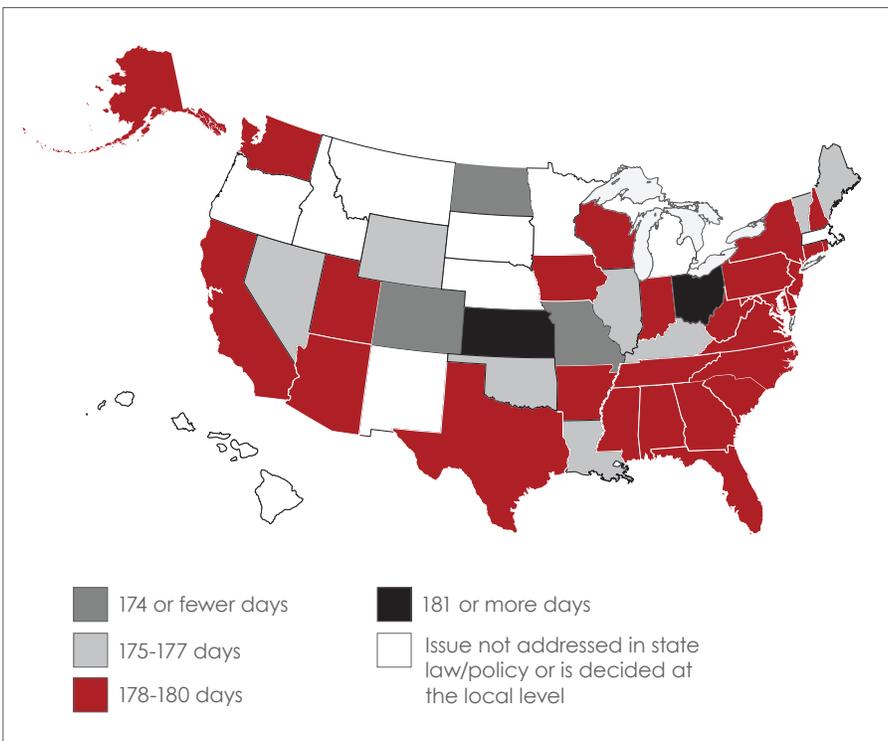
⁶Stevenson, H., & J. Stigler, J. (1992). *The learning gap: Why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education*. New York: Touchstone.

successful teachers, an eight-hour day is no more than a codification of the reality. In other words, top teachers are already working this schedule. Mandating this for all teachers would be a step toward a more professional environment in all KCMSD schools.

KCMSD STUDENTS ARE SHORTCHANGED BY ONE OF THE SHORTEST SCHOOL YEARS IN THE COUNTRY.

While the instructional year in KCMSD is comparable to the surrounding districts, it is shorter than most of the districts in NCTQ’s TR³ database. The shortfall appears largely to be attributable to an unusual state law setting the minimum number of school days to only 174, one of the lowest state requirements nationally. Most states mandate a minimum of a 180-day student instructional year, a minimum that some argue is still insufficient.⁸

Figure 4. State instructional time requirements



Source: NCTQ TR³ database.

Nationally, students attend an average of one more week of school a year than students in Missouri.

Laudably, the work calendar in KCMSD includes 10 professional workdays when students are not present. These 10 days are dispersed appropriately throughout the year: five days before the start of school, four days throughout the year (largely corresponding to end of grading periods) and one day at the end of the instructional calendar.

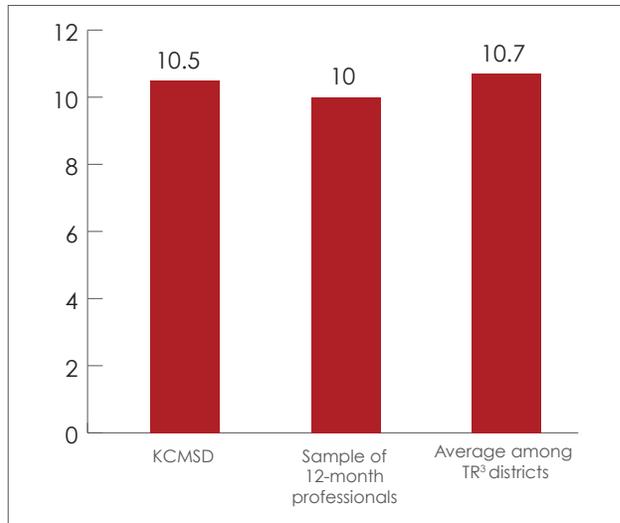
⁷ Figures were calculated based on the average salary for a teacher with a master’s degree.

⁸ Obama, B. (March 10, 2009). President Obama’s Remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on a Complete and Competitive Education. Washington Marriott Metro Center, Washington, DC.

II. Teacher attendance

ALTHOUGH KCMUSD'S LEAVE PACKAGE IS APPROPRIATELY DESIGNED, PROVIDING ADEQUATE LEAVE WITH PROVISIONS TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY ABSENCES, THE DISTRICT DOES A POOR JOB TRACKING TEACHER ABSENCES.

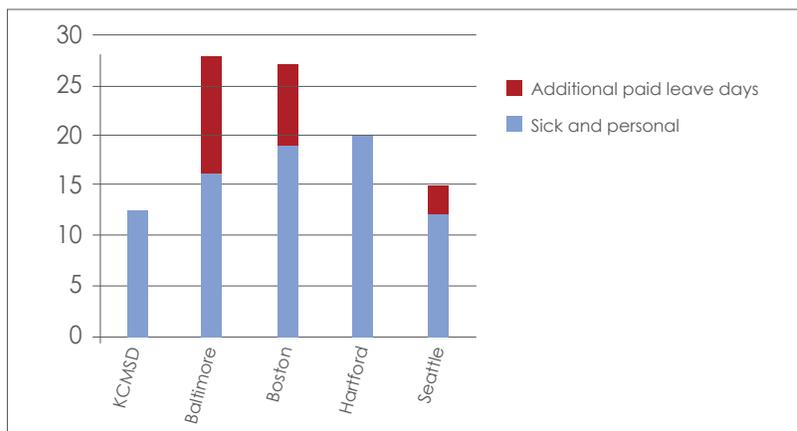
Figure 5. Sick leave granted in comparative samples



Source: 2008-2011 Kansas City, Missouri School District Collective Bargaining Agreement, Bureau of Labor Statistics and TR³ database

KCMUSD's leave package is in line with schools nationally and with what other professions provide 12-month employees.

Figure 6. Leave policies in KCMUSD and other districts NCTQ has studied



Source: 2008-2011 Kansas City, Missouri School District Collective Bargaining Agreement; 2007-2012 Baltimore City Public Schools Collective Bargaining Agreement; 2006-2010 Boston Public Schools Collective Bargaining Agreement; 2008-2011 Hartford Public Schools Collective Bargaining Agreement; 2010-2013 Seattle Public Schools Collective Bargaining Agreement.

KCMUSD's leave package is appropriately structured, without excessive allotments or unnecessary leave categories frequently seen in other school districts.

Retirement buyback. KCMSD, like many districts, reimburses teachers for some portion of accumulated unused sick leave at retirement. Teachers are reimbursed at 75 percent of their daily pay rate at the time of retirement for any unused days, up to a maximum of 175 days.⁹

Such buyback policies were often negotiated when teacher salaries were not keeping pace with the market and districts and unions reached compromises on benefits packages to sweeten deals. Teacher salaries have largely improved over the past decade, but such buyback policies have remained in place. These policies should also serve as an attendance incentive, but as KCMSD teachers use 90 percent of their allotted sick leave, it does not appear this policy has much of an impact.

Attendance Patterns. In spite of a sensible sick and personal leave package of 12.5 days a year, the frequency and occasions with which KC teachers are absent merits attention.

- Teachers in KCMSD use almost all of their allotted sick leave, missing an average of 9.6 days of the 10.5 allowable days in 2009–2010.¹⁰
- Nearly 50 percent of all sick leave absences in KCMSD occur either on Mondays or Fridays, while absences mid-week are significantly lower.
- Absences increase as teachers gain more seniority. Tenured teachers have one third more absences than their nontenured peers, and elementary teachers have more absences than their colleagues teaching high school.

⁹ Buyback rate is calculated based on 3 percent per year of employment, up to 25 years.

¹⁰ Figures include all absences, including extended leaves.

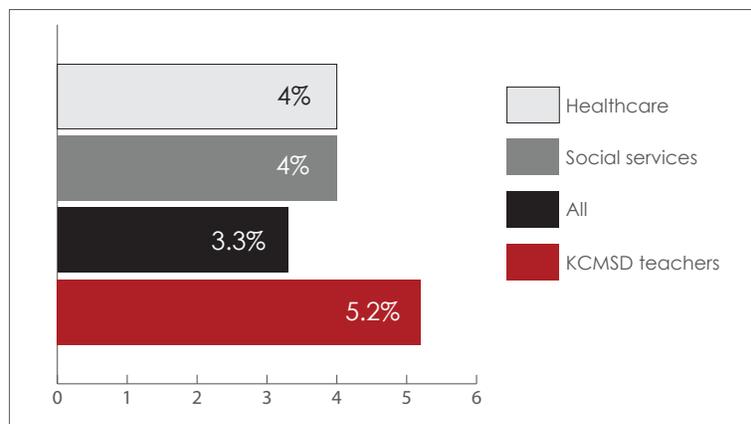
OTHER ATTENDANCE POLICIES IN KCMSD

- Up to five days of a teacher's sick leave may be used for family illness.
- Teachers' two personal days are noncumulative and cannot be used on the first and last days of school, before or after a holiday or when absence would result in a "hardship" for the district.
- As is standard practice in many districts, 10 days' notice is required for personal leave unless the leave is an emergency.
- Appropriately, a doctor's certificate is required after five consecutive days of absence or when misuse of leave is suspected. This gives principals some ability to monitor leave for excessive use.

As has been the case in other districts we have studied, we found no correlation between high teacher absenteeism and the challenging nature of a school environment as indicated by its poverty rate. Surprisingly, we also did not find that schools in KCMSD with high teacher absenteeism had any higher student absenteeism.

While teachers' two days of personal leave may be used at their own discretion, sick leave is designated only for legitimate personal or family illness. However, attendance records of KCMSD teachers suggest that teachers appear to be using some of their sick leave for other purposes.

Figure 7. National statistics for absences due to sick leave, by occupation

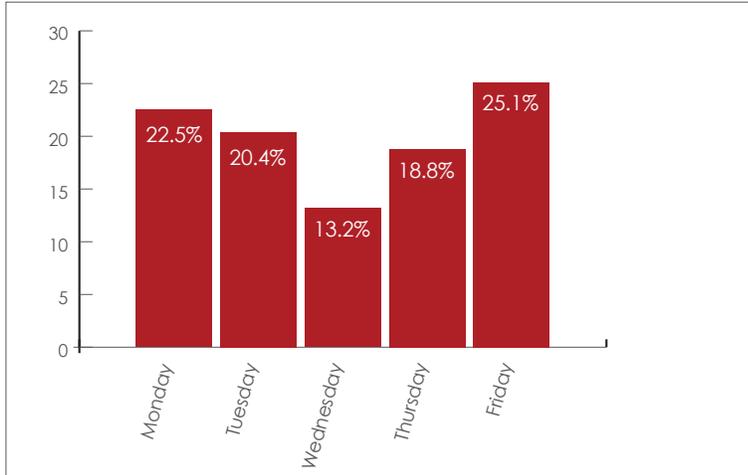


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Labor force statistics from the current population surveys 2003-2008, Table 47, 2009-21010 KCMSD attendance records.

When comparing sick leave usage among professionals, specifically including those who interact with sick people, such as nurses or doctors, KCMSD teachers still appear to use more days.

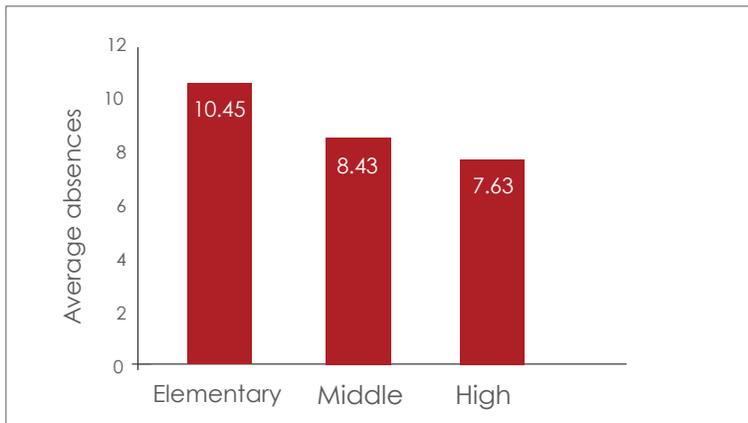
The following graphs explore varying trends seen in teacher attendance patterns.

Figure 8. Sick leave incidences by day of the week



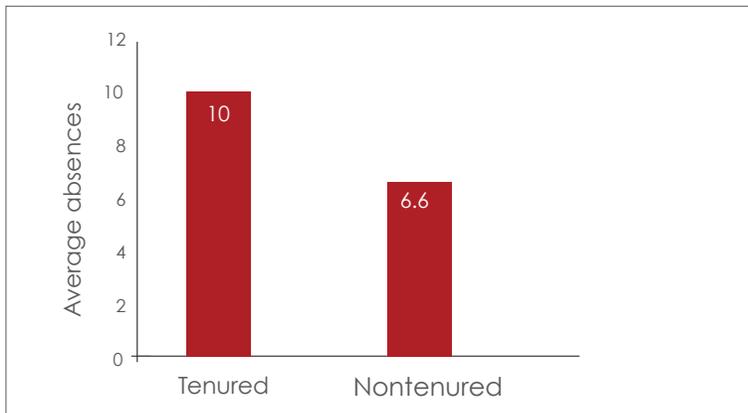
Source: 2009–2010 KCMSD attendance records
Most absences occur on Mondays and Fridays.

Figure 9. Average absences by grade level



Source: 2009–2010 KCMSD attendance records
Elementary teachers missed 30 percent more days than their colleagues teaching high school.

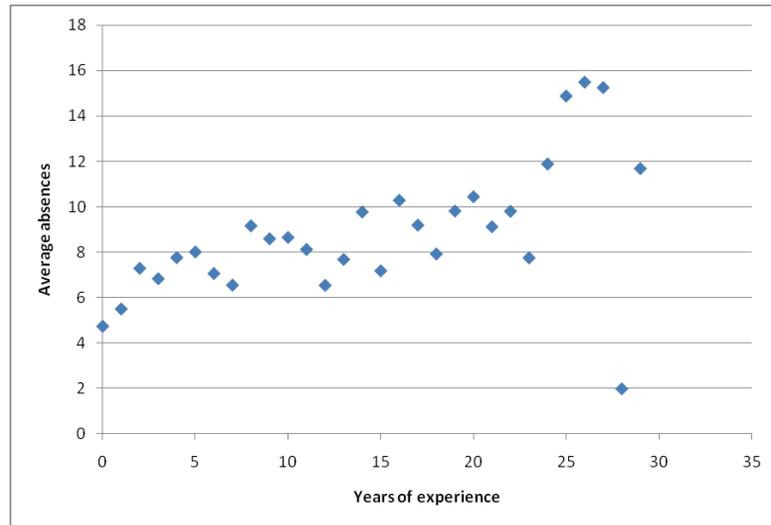
Figure 10. Average absences by tenure status



Source: 2009–2010 KCMSD attendance records
Tenured teachers in KCMSD used 35 percent more leave days than their nontenured colleagues, mirroring a trend noted by researchers that suggests increased job security correlates with reduced effort, as measured by attendance.¹¹

¹¹ Jacob, B. (January 2010). *The effect of employment protection on worker effort: Evidence from public schooling*. Washington, DC: National Research Council.

Figure II. Average absences for teachers with zero to 30 years experience in KCMSD



Source: 2009–2010 KCMSD attendance records

Teachers' average absences climb steadily as teachers' years of experience increase.

The trend of increasing absences as teachers gain experience in the system may be partly explained by a policy that allows teachers to accumulate unused sick leave each year. Accumulation is capped at 175 days, perhaps providing an incentive for veteran teachers to take more absences. Some may argue that the increased absences for older teachers may be due to increased health problems. However, national data suggest that women ages 55 and over have a slightly lower absence rate than women ages 25 to 54 (4.2 percent vs. 4.4 percent), perhaps because younger women are primarily responsible for caring for their children when they are sick.¹²

Poor record keeping. Data collected from the district reveal significant recording errors, including over 20 percent of all absences occurring on Saturdays, with additional absences on Sundays as well. NCTQ excluded these data from our analysis, but it certainly indicates that KCMSD record keeping is far from accurate. In addition, records reveal frequent adjustments to individuals' leave balances, which the district explains are due to absences recorded in error.

NCTQ could only analyze attendance records from the 2009-2010 school year, as records from 2006–2008 failed to properly document teacher absences.

Recommendations for KCMSD

KCMSD's policies are largely in the right place to foster professionalism, given an almost eight-hour workday and reasonable leave allotment. However, the policies, particularly those related to teacher attendance, are not enforced.

¹² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Labor force statistics from the current population surveys 2003-2008, Table 46.

Ultimately, it falls to the individual school, inspired largely by the principal and senior faculty, to create a culture in which sick leave is not synonymous with personal leave. Practices such as requiring teachers to report absences directly to their principal, rather than simply requesting a substitute through the automated system, can go a long way toward creating a professional culture.

1. **Adjust teacher work schedule to an eight-hour day.** Although the KCMSD teacher workday is just short of 7 hours and 45 minutes, and many teachers are likely working longer days already, an 8-hour schedule will enable the district to formally provide teachers with more on-site, structured planning time that may be used for collaborative planning with other teachers, individualized assistance for students and outreach to parents.

2. **Improve record keeping and provide principals with regular attendance reports.** This is not a minor, procedural recommendation. NCTQ has yet to see a district with such poor record keeping. Poor records make it impossible to hold teachers or principals accountable for ignoring rules and standards of professional practice. Better records would enable principals to more actively discourage teachers from abusing sick leave.

3. **Shift leave reimbursement policy from retirement to an *annual* buyback.** As KCMSD teachers use 90 percent of their allotted sick leave, the current policy appears to do little to improve teacher attendance. Shifting the incentive to reimburse teachers for unused sick leave annually may do more to improve teacher attendance.

4. **Make teacher attendance a component of teacher evaluations.**

Recommendation for Missouri

Lengthen the student school year to a minimum of 180 days to be consistent with the national average.



EVALUATIONS

Guiding principles behind this goal

- All teachers receive an annual evaluation rating.
- Objective evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated.
- Classroom observations focus on a set of observable standards that gauge student learning.
- Evaluations factor in multiple observations by multiple parties, such as a school administrator, senior faculty, central office evaluators and content experts. These observers provide regular feedback to teachers on their classroom instruction.
- Evaluations offer multiple rating levels to distinguish performance among teachers, with ratings defined to clearly distinguish performance differences among teachers.
- Observations occur early enough in the school year to provide sufficient time for struggling teachers to improve and for administrators to make a final decision about a teacher’s continued employment by year’s end.
- Decisions about a teacher’s employment termination occur swiftly and are made before a panel of educators, not in a court of law.

Making teacher evaluations meaningful is perhaps the most critical goal of any district’s human capital strategy. However, as in many districts, KCMUSD teacher evaluations have been treated as mere formalities, rather than as important tools for helping teachers improve their craft. District policy should reflect the importance of evaluations so that both teachers and principals use them as a tool for improving teaching and for determining classroom assignment and even compensation.

While KCMUSD’s latest evaluation instrument (its third in three years) is a step in the right direction, it lacks the proper components to ensure a meaningful and fair process.

GOAL #3

**TEACHERS’
PERFORMANCE
EVALUATIONS PLAY
A CRITICAL ROLE
IN ADVANCING
TEACHER
EFFECTIVENESS.**

MISSOURI HAS ALL THREE KEY NECESSARY DATA ELEMENTS IN PLACE TO TRACK A TEACHER'S IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, BUT DOES NOT YET USE THESE DATA OR MAKE THEM AVAILABLE TO THE STATE'S SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

I. Role of student performance

THE KCMSD TEACHER EVALUATION INSTRUMENT FAILS TO SUFFICIENTLY ACCOUNT FOR A TEACHER'S IMPACT ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE. TEACHERS CAN RECEIVE A SATISFACTORY EVALUATION WITHOUT EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE INCREASING STUDENT LEARNING.

While KCMSD's evaluation instrument requires evidence that teachers are using student work, including standardized tests results, to inform their classroom instruction, the district does not require teachers to supply evidence that they are increasing student learning to receive a satisfactory evaluation rating.

Given that teachers do not need to supply such evidence, the ratings KCMSD uses in its new evaluation instrument (Ineffective, Needs Improvement, Effective, Highly Effective) are misnomers. The categories suggest that effectiveness is measured by a teacher's impact on student achievement. But since no such data are collected, nor is the observation adequately assessing student achievement, such designations are misleading.

KCMSD's new evaluation instrument, adapted from the Charlotte Danielson model, evaluates teachers on the following five standards:

- 1** Teachers know the content they teach.
- 2** Teachers facilitate learning for the students.
- 3** Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population.
- 4** Teachers reflect on their own practice.
- 5** Teachers demonstrate leadership.

Each standard is composed of multiple elements on which teachers are evaluated. The combined individual element scores determine the overall rating for the standard. No single element or standard carries a greater weight than another.

While at first blush these factors used by KCMSD to evaluate teachers appear to be reasonable, they fail to strike at the heart of a teacher's impact on student performance. KCMSD's approach focuses too much on teacher behaviors, that is, what the teacher is doing, rather than what the *teacher's* behaviors are producing in *students*.

By way of contrast, consider Washington, D.C.’s, new IMPACT evaluation instrument. Rather than asking “what the teacher knows,” the D.C. rubric assesses how the teacher is imparting knowledge to students, using student behavior in response to the teacher as a measure of the teacher’s skill.

An example pulled from each of the two instruments follows.

HOW DOES KCMSD’S NEW EVALUATION COMPARE?

	Washington, DC-IMPACT	KCMSD-Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation
Component	Deliver content clearly. Teacher has a dynamic presence in the classroom AND delivers content that is 1) factually correct, 2) well organized, and 3) accessible and challenging to all students.	Teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty and recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines.
How the teacher’s classroom presence is assessed	<p><i>Teacher is assigned one of four ratings. The language here describes the highest performance level.</i></p> <p>Has a dynamic presence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains student interest by using engaging body language, tone, and volume • Speaks clearly using age appropriate language • Delivers content with confidence • Conveys enthusiasm for content <p><i>Note: A teacher does not need to be theatrical in her or his presentation. A variety of styles can yield dynamic instruction.</i></p> <p>Presents information without any mistake that would leave the students with a misunderstanding at end of class. Delivers content in a well-organized manner. For example, the teacher might begin by activating prior knowledge and then present concepts in a logical sequence so that each idea builds on the previous one.</p> <p>Makes content accessible and challenging to all students according to different levels of learning readiness. For example, the teacher might</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend additional time with certain students to ensure that they can access the content or to ensure that they are adequately challenged. • Assign leveled texts to different groups of readers. • Make specific, appropriate accommodations and/or modifications for students with special needs. 	<p><i>Teacher is assigned one of five ratings. The language here describes the highest performance level.</i></p> <p>Demonstrates a basic level of content knowledge.</p> <p>Extends knowledge of subject beyond content in teaching specialty and sparks students’ curiosity for learning beyond the required coursework.</p> <p>Collaborates with teachers from other grades or subject areas to establish links between disciplines and to influence school-wide curriculum and teaching practice.</p>

The D.C. rubric offers much greater specificity, tells the evaluator exactly what to look for and describes what good practice looks like, all while focused on the outcomes the teacher has on students rather than on the teacher’s behaviors in isolation.

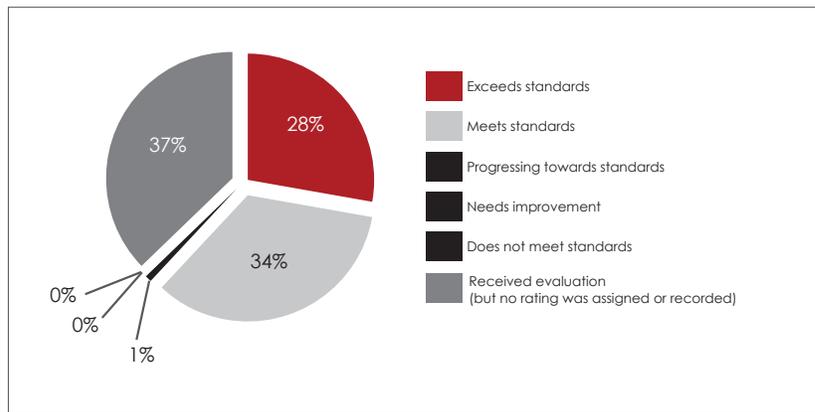
II. Evaluation ratings

KCMSD EVALUATION RATINGS ARE OUT OF SYNC WITH ACTUAL TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN THE DISTRICT:

- In 2009, less than half of one percent of teachers received either a “needs improvement” or “does not meet standards” evaluation rating.
- 38 percent of teachers received a rating of “exceeds standards.”
- 37 percent of KCMSD teachers, although evaluated, received no rating at all. It is unclear if principals did not assign ratings or the ratings were not entered into the district’s centralized database.

Recently the district has done a better job evaluating teachers. In the 2009-2010 school year 91 percent of teachers were evaluated, but again, the evaluation ratings do not reflect actual teacher performance as measured by student performance. Only six teachers received a “needs improvement” or a “does not meet standards” rating last year.

Figure 12. Evaluation ratings of tenured teachers, 2009-2010 school year



Source: 2009-2010 KCMSD evaluation records

The district has no recorded evaluation rating for more than a third of its teachers—meaning that there is no gauge recorded at the district level of how teachers are performing.

It is unlikely that 28 percent of the KCMSD teacher corps is performing at an exemplary level, especially when students are chronically underperforming. In a district where three quarters of 3rd graders, for example, are not proficient in math, clearly there is a lack of adult accountability.

KCMSD’s evaluation instrument should more closely mirror actual teacher performance, identifying roughly 15 percent of teachers as exemplary and 15 percent as ineffective. An instrument that fails to align with teacher contribution to student performance is invalid.

III. Observations and ongoing feedback

WHILE KCMSD’S NEW EVALUATION INSTRUMENT REQUIRES THAT TEACHERS BE OBSERVED MULTIPLE TIMES, OBSERVATIONS ARE PERFORMED ONLY BY THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, WHO MAY HAVE NO EXPERTISE IN THE TEACHER’S SUBJECT AREA. THERE IS NO CHECK ON THE ACCURACY OF A PRINCIPAL’S RATING.

KCMSD’s new evaluation policy requires teachers to be evaluated annually. Prior to the current school year, KCMSD required tenured teachers to be evaluated only once every three years. (The district goes well beyond the minimum requirement of the state, which requires nontenured teachers to be evaluated annually and tenured teachers to be evaluated only once every five years.)

New regulations in KCMSD also require all teachers to be formally observed once each semester and three times informally each semester.¹³ This is an ambitious undertaking, and while frequent feedback is critical for teacher development, it is unclear if there is training and support for principals to complete this obligation. For example, it does not appear that the principal can delegate the responsibility for any of the observations to another administrator. Evaluating a teacher on a regular basis is important, but the process needs to be heavily supported by the district if it is going to yield meaningful data and help teachers to grow.

KCMSD’s new teacher evaluation timeline (beginning 2010-2011)

1ST SEMESTER	2ND SEMESTER	3RD SEMESTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One formal observation and post conference • Three informal observations and optional post-observation conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One formal observation and post conference • Three informal observations and optional post-observation conference 	Summative evaluation and conference

¹³ These observations must last a full class period. The teacher must be provided a five-day window as to when the formal observation will occur.

IV. Dismissing ineffective teachers

NOT ONLY DOES KCMSD DO A POOR JOB IDENTIFYING INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS, IT DOES A POOR JOB REMOVING THE FEW TEACHERS IT IDENTIFIES FROM THE CLASSROOM.

Only 23 teachers have received an unsatisfactory evaluation in the past three years in KCMSD. Ninety percent of these teachers had received multiple years of unsatisfactory evaluations. Whereas state laws and contracts often impede the ability of districts to remove ineffective teachers, KCMSD does not appear to face such constraints: Missouri law states that a teacher who is rated unsatisfactory can be dismissed within one school year, provided the principal notifies the district and teacher by March 15.

The opportunity for multiple appeals, however, has the potential to significantly lengthen the process. In accordance with state law, tenured teachers may appeal the district's decision before the local school board. Further appeals may then be taken to the circuit court and the court of appeals.

As yet another indication of the district's inattention to human capital management, KCMSD was unable to provide a list of the number of teachers dismissed for poor performance over the past five years, instead grouping all departures together, whether due to resignation, poor performance or misconduct.

Recommendations for KCMSD

I. Make student performance the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated. While student learning should be measured in multiple ways, some measures, such as standardized test results, offer greater accuracy and should, therefore, carry greater weight. The most promising model for calculating a teacher's impact on student learning is called "value-added," because it separates a teacher's skills from other factors beyond the teacher's control that might influence student achievement (i.e., socio-economic status or limited English proficiency). While the timing and quality of most standardized tests raise legitimate questions about the ability of such tests to measure an individual teacher's true value, these tests are not without merit. They do in fact correlate with positive outcomes for children in how well they predict both a child's future ability to succeed as a student and even as a functioning adult.

Other measures of student achievement that districts may consider incorporating include:

- Formative assessments, such as district or school exams or nationally normed tests

- Examples of student work connected to specific learning standards that are *randomly* selected for review by evaluators (not by the teacher)
- Examples of typical assignments, assessed for their quality and rigor
- Periodic checks on progress in the curriculum, coupled with evidence of student mastery of the curriculum from quizzes and tests

Where it's been done:

Washington D.C., provides one of the strongest examples of a district requiring that student achievement be the preponderant criterion of evaluations; in fact, 50 percent of a teacher's rating is determined by value-added data. It is important to note here that the teacher evaluation policies in D.C. are not subject to negotiation with the local union, but rather are considered a part of management's right to determine at its own discretion. As collective bargaining is not a requirement in Missouri, it is possible that KCMUSD may be able to adopt a similar policy.

In consultation with its teachers' union, the New Haven public schools system recently revamped its evaluation instrument. Almost half of a teacher's rating is determined by student growth goals. Measures of progress include standardized tests, district assessments and student work. The remainder of a teacher's rating is largely determined by classroom observation, which focuses on evidence of student learning rather than on teacher behaviors, as does the KCMUSD evaluation instrument. Also, when the teacher's rating from the observation does not match the teacher's student growth rating, the mismatch generates an automatic review by the central office, an important check and balance to the system. Teachers who receive either the highest or lowest evaluation rating from their principal are also automatically reviewed by another evaluator.

		Student learning growth				
		Needs Improvement (NI-1)	Developing ((Dv-2)	Effective (Ef-3)	Strong (st-4)	Exemplary (ex-5)
Instructional practice and professional values	Needs Improvement (NI-1)	NI-1	NI-1	Dv-2	Ef-3*	Ef-3*
	Developing (Dv-2)	NI-1	NI-2	Dv-2	Ef-3	St-4*
	Effective (Ef-3)	NI-1	Dv-2	Ef-3	St-4	Ex-5
	Strong (st-4)	Dv-2*	Ef-3	St-4	St-4	Ex-5
	Exemplary (ex-5)	Ef-3*	Ef-3*	St-4	Ex-5	Ex-5

* Ratings with this degree of mismatch are subject to review by the NHPS central office

2. Implement an electronic evaluation system and ensure that all teachers receive a *rating*. The district should be able to easily identify teachers who are routinely found to be performing poorly as well as those who perform above expectations. Such a system should go a long way toward helping the district hold its principals accountable for conducting evaluations.

3. Develop a team of independent evaluators to validate principal evaluations and provide content-specific feedback on teacher instruction. These evaluators should be content experts and should serve the dual purpose of validating principal evaluations and assessing content-relevant instruction. This is particularly important for teachers in the upper grades.

Evaluations that regularly incorporate the views of multiple, trained observers (particularly experts in subject areas) allow the district to gauge the robustness of individual principals' ratings. When a principal's observations nearly match those of an outside evaluator, teachers can be more confident that the principal is unbiased and skilled at evaluation. If they do not match, the school district should increase training for principals in performing evaluations. Additional observations and evaluations can be conducted to the degree the district can afford them. Even if only one teacher in a building is checked by a third-party evaluator, principals will take this task more seriously.

Where it's been done:

Hillsborough County (FL) and Washington D.C., both employ teams of content experts, usually former teachers in the system, to evaluate teachers. D.C.'s "master educators" perform two observations of each teacher while Hillsborough's "peer evaluators" perform one. These observations are in addition to observations by school administrators. Observations by both master teachers and administrators factor into the teacher's evaluation rating. Master educator positions are full-time. Hillsborough employs 75 teachers in this capacity and D.C. employs 31 teachers.

4. Collect and examine student feedback on teacher instruction. Feedback from students can help teachers improve and can give evaluators a better sense of teacher instructional practices. New research from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation shows that student feedback on teacher performance correlates with a teacher's effectiveness as measured by value-added data. This finding is particularly important as districts are struggling with how to develop objective measures of performance for teachers in nontested subjects.

A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENT FEEDBACK MIGHT LOOK LIKE THE FOLLOWING:

DIRECTIONS: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? CIRCLE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ANSWERS:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

- | | STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE | DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 When I work hard in this class, an important reason is that the teacher demands it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 I don't like asking the teacher in this class for help, even if I need it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 The teacher in this class calls on me, even if I don't raise my hand. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 I have pushed myself hard to completely understand my lessons in this class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 If I were confused in this class, I would handle it by myself, not ask for help. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 One of my goals in this class is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Source: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Where it's been done:

Montgomery County, Maryland, Fairfax County, Virginia schools use student surveys to provide feedback to high school teachers. The surveys are not an element of the formal evaluation, however.

A student group in Boston recently lobbied successfully for an anonymous student evaluation of high school teachers. The evaluation will only be seen by the teacher and the principal and will not be factored into the teacher's formal evaluation.

Washington D.C., has also developed a teacher survey to be used by high school students. Again, the survey will only be viewed by the teacher and the principal.

Recommendations for Missouri

1. Provide districts with data on teacher effectiveness and require that this information be a preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations.

Where it's been done:

Tennessee stands out as one of the few states that require districts to use its student and teacher-level longitudinal data system as a factor in the evaluations. Student growth makes up 50 percent of an evaluation, 35 percent of which is derived from value-added data.

2. Require that all teachers statewide be formally evaluated annually. Although KCMUSD now requires that all teachers be annually evaluated, many districts simply follow the state policy of evaluations only once every five years for tenured teachers.

3. Allow teachers only one opportunity to appeal a dismissal decision. Missouri's dismissal policy does not differentiate between license revocation and a district's decision to terminate teachers for poor performance. Consequently, the law effectively permits teachers to appeal their dismissal multiple times, a time intensive and expensive process that harms districts and may deter principals from taking the necessary steps to dismiss ineffective teachers. Dismissal decisions should be made only at the local level. Only if a teacher's license is in question should further appeals be permitted.

TENURE

Guiding principles behind this goal

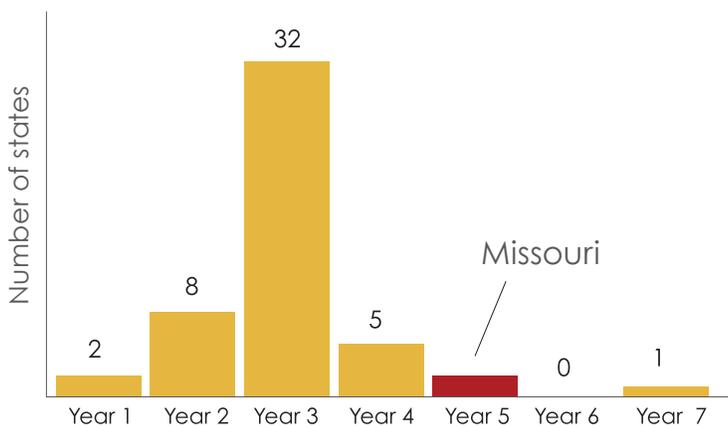
- From the first week of school until the tenure decision, the district invests in new teachers' professional development, with particular attention given to a successful launch in the first year.
- Evidence of effectiveness is the preponderant criterion for making tenure decisions.
- Teachers are eligible for tenure no sooner than four years to enable the district to collect three years of data of teacher effectiveness.
- The decision to award tenure is made by a panel of reviewers.
- Teachers receive a significant pay increase after earning tenure, perhaps the largest of their careers.

I. State role

MISSOURI SHOULD BE DOING MORE TO ENSURE THAT DISTRICTS HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON TEACHERS BEFORE AWARDING TENURE.

The decision to grant tenure is a local decision; however, the parameters are established at the state level. Although Missouri appropriately requires that teachers be in the classroom five years before they are eligible for tenure, the state should be doing more to ensure that tenure is a meaningful decision. For example, Missouri collects the necessary data to assess a teacher's value-added effectiveness; however, the state does not provide these data to districts, a vital factor that could inform teacher evaluations and tenure decisions.

Figure 13. Time period for earning tenure



Source: National Council on Teacher Quality, State Teacher Policy Yearbook 2009
Missouri is among three states that require a probationary period of five or more years; the other two are Indiana (5) and Ohio (7).

GOAL #4

TENURE IS A MEANINGFUL MILESTONE IN A TEACHER'S CAREER AND ADVANCES THE DISTRICT'S GOAL OF BUILDING A CORPS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS.

I. Local role

KCMSD DOES LITTLE TO SUPPORT PRINCIPALS IN MAKING TENURE DECISIONS OR IN MAKING THE TENURE PROCESS MEANINGFUL FOR TEACHERS.

In order for KCMSD to attach the importance to the tenure decision that it deserves, it needs to begin keeping better records. KCMSD does not track either the number of teachers who qualify for tenure each year the number of teachers on a provisional contract who were dismissed. The district does not track the reasons teachers leave the district or, instead grouping together all departures, whether voluntary or involuntary. Furthermore, KCMSD has no process whereby teachers and the principals in whose schools they serve must present evidence of teacher effectiveness.

A sound support system for probationary teachers include the following elements:

- Assigning a full-time instructional coach for the first month or two of school¹⁴, followed by classroom observations by master teachers
- Videotaping lessons, followed by constructive critiques
- Reducing the course load, at least in the first semester
- Strategically building informal relationships, by placing a new teacher in a classroom that is close to a master teacher's classroom¹⁵
- Offering release time to first- and second-year teachers to observe master teachers
- Offering grade- and subject-level seminars with other new teachers

A timeline for making tenure meaningful

YEAR	DISTRICT ACTION
Years 1-4	At the end of each year before tenure, the principal makes a decision as to the teacher's continued employment. The district may terminate a teacher at any time without cause. The district should support principals in knowing where teachers are in their probationary period.
Year 5	At end of year four, tenure is decided. Cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness is reviewed by a panel of educators from outside the school and includes input from the teacher, school principal and department heads.

¹⁴ These coaches may be retiring teachers who agree to delay their retirement by a few months, passing on their knowledge to the next generation before they leave.

¹⁵ Research finds that peer effects account for approximately one quarter of a teacher's effectiveness and that placing struggling or new teachers with high-performing peers improves teacher performance. Kirabo, C. (2010). *Match quality, worker productivity and worker mobility: Direct evidence from teachers*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Recommendations for KCMSD

1. Develop a tenure tool kit to assist principals in making informed and deliberate tenure decisions. Such a tool guides principals through a teacher’s probationary period by organizing his or her progress and filing deadlines for denying and granting tenure.

Where it’s been done:

New York City implemented an online “tenure tool kit” to help support principals in making tenure decisions. The number of teachers denied tenure or placed on an extended probationary period more than doubled in the year after New York’s tool kit was introduced: from 25 in 2005–2006 to 66 the following year. In 2007–2008, 164 teachers were denied tenure, and 246 had their probationary period extended.

2. Hold a tenure review, factoring in value-added data on teacher effectiveness, to decide whether to award tenure to teachers. Tenure should be a significant milestone in a teacher’s career and awarded only after deliberate and thoughtful consideration of a teacher’s performance. KCMSD should develop a review process in which both the principal and teacher are required to present the cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness.

3. Reward teachers who earn tenure with a significant increase in pay, the largest structural pay increase in their careers. A meaningful tenure process warrants a salary structure that recognizes a teacher’s accomplishments as revealed by the process.

4. Aim to dismiss the bottom-performing 25 percent of nontenured teachers each year. Examining consistent patterns of teacher performance, economists recommend that districts should routinely dismiss at least the bottom-performing 25 percent of teachers eligible for tenure in order to build a high-quality teaching corps that is capable of making significant gains in student achievement. Denying tenure to the least effective teachers (as measured by their value-added impact on student standardized test scores) would have a comparable impact on learning as reducing class size by five students per class.¹⁶ Although KCMSD is hiring few new teachers, this strategy would nonetheless have a significant impact on the quality of the teaching corps as a whole.

¹⁶ Goldhaber, D., & Hansen, M. (2009). *Assessing the potential of using value-added estimates of teacher job performance for making tenure decisions*. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.



COMPENSATION

Guiding principles behind this goal

- The district's salaries are competitive with other school districts in the area.
- Raises are tied to a teacher's performance and the teacher's impact on student learning.
- Compensation is higher for effective teachers willing to serve in high-needs schools or who are qualified to teach critical shortage content areas.

Like most school districts in the United States, KCMSD's pay structure for teachers is misaligned with district needs and teacher quality goals. With teacher salaries and benefits accounting for approximately 65 percent of most school districts' budgets, rethinking teacher compensation to better meet the districts' needs should be a strategic goal.

As this analysis will explain, KCMSD could more wisely allocate resources currently tied up in factors not related to a teacher's impact on student learning to better align with the districts' needs and teacher quality goals.

I. Salary comparisons with nearby districts

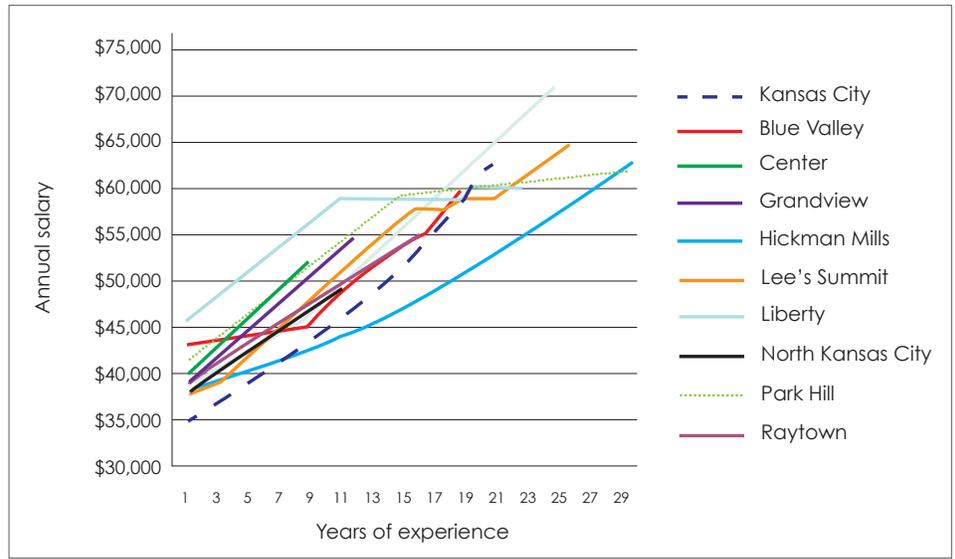
KCMSD'S SALARIES ARE NOT COMPETITIVE WITH SALARIES OFFERED IN SURROUNDING DISTRICTS.

KCMSD teachers have the lowest starting salary of the surrounding school districts. While salaries ultimately recoup some of their competitiveness as teachers gain experience, the starting salary itself needs to be attractive as a mechanism for recruiting talent.

GOAL #5

COMPENSATION IS STRATEGICALLY TARGETED TO ATTRACT AND REWARD HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN HARD-TO-STAFF POSITIONS.

Figure 14. Salary trajectory in KCMSD and surrounding districts

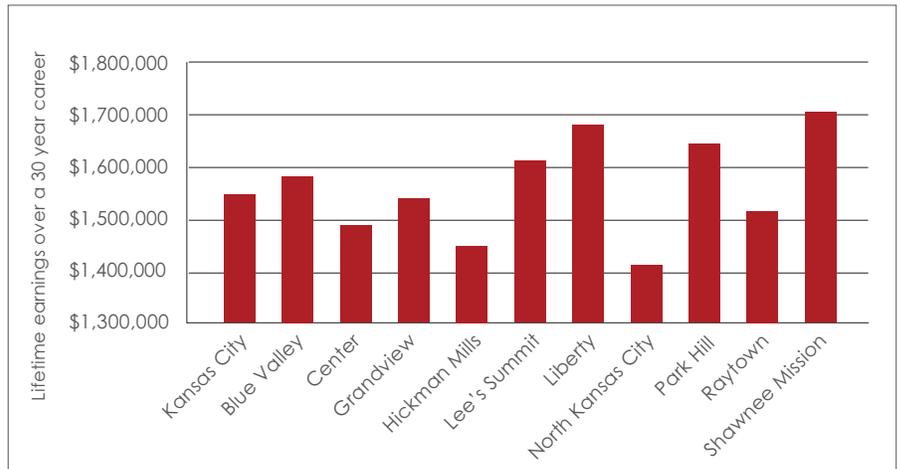


Source: KCMSD and surrounding districts' 2010-2011 salary schedules

KCMSD salaries fall in last place for starting teacher pay, but by the end of a teacher's career, KCMSD's pay scale is more competitive, moving up from last place to fourth.

KCMSD's salaries become more competitive as teachers gain more experience, however, lifetime earnings never recover from the initial setback of low starting pay.

Figure 15. Lifetime earnings in KCMSD and surrounding districts (in current dollars)



Source: KCMSD and surrounding district's 2010-2011 salary schedules

Lifetime earnings for teachers in KCMSD are \$161,000 less than teachers in Shawnee Mission at one extreme and \$136,000 more than teachers in North KCMSD at the other. If starting salaries were more competitive with the surrounding districts, KCMSD would be among the districts with the highest lifetime earnings potential.

II. Degree-based compensation

KCMSD SPENDS 17 PERCENT OF ITS TEACHER PAYROLL, (\$8 MILLION A YEAR), TO COMPENSATE TEACHERS FOR OBTAINING ADVANCED DEGREES.

While many assume that advanced degrees (generally master’s degrees) make teachers more effective, research concludes decidedly otherwise, particularly for degrees not related to the subject matter taught.

Why doesn’t more education make a difference? It may be because school districts (and often states) routinely boost a teacher’s pay for any advanced degree, regardless of its relationship to the subject taught. For instance, few teachers select a degree that will advance their subject-matter knowledge: Nationally, even at the secondary level, fewer than one in four degrees is in the teacher’s content area. At the elementary level, only 7 percent of these degrees are in a content area.¹⁷

In addition to raising teachers’ salaries for having a degree, KCMSD also helps to subsidize tuition, spending just over \$100,000 on these degrees in the 2008-2009 school year. Although this represents a relatively insignificant expenditure, it is nonetheless an expense with little promise of return. Compensation and benefits should all be directed toward results in the classroom, not coursework in and of itself.

KCMSD’s compensation structure for teachers is largely based on the traditional salary schedule, awarding teachers with lockstep raises for experience as well as post-baccalaureate coursework. The state reinforces this notion as well, requiring that the minimum starting salary is at least \$25,000 for a teacher with a bachelor’s degree, but \$33,000 for a teacher with a master’s degree and 10 years of experience. While the minimum salaries mandated by the state are far lower than most districts would pay, they send a strong signal to districts of how they should structure teacher pay. By way of contrast, the district fails to reward teachers for more meaningful measures of a teacher’s value, such as the relative demand for a teacher’s skills, willingness to serve in challenging environments and their classroom effectiveness.¹⁸

Figure 16. What role does the state play in deciding teacher pay rates?



Source: 2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook
Taking additional coursework is the fastest—and only—way to earn a higher salary. It is no surprise then that 84 percent of KCMSD teachers have master’s degrees.

¹⁷ National Center for Education Statistics (2002). *The condition of education 2002* (Table 32-2). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

¹⁸ Missouri Revised Statutes: 163.172.1

THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' ADVANCED DEGREES ON STUDENT LEARNING

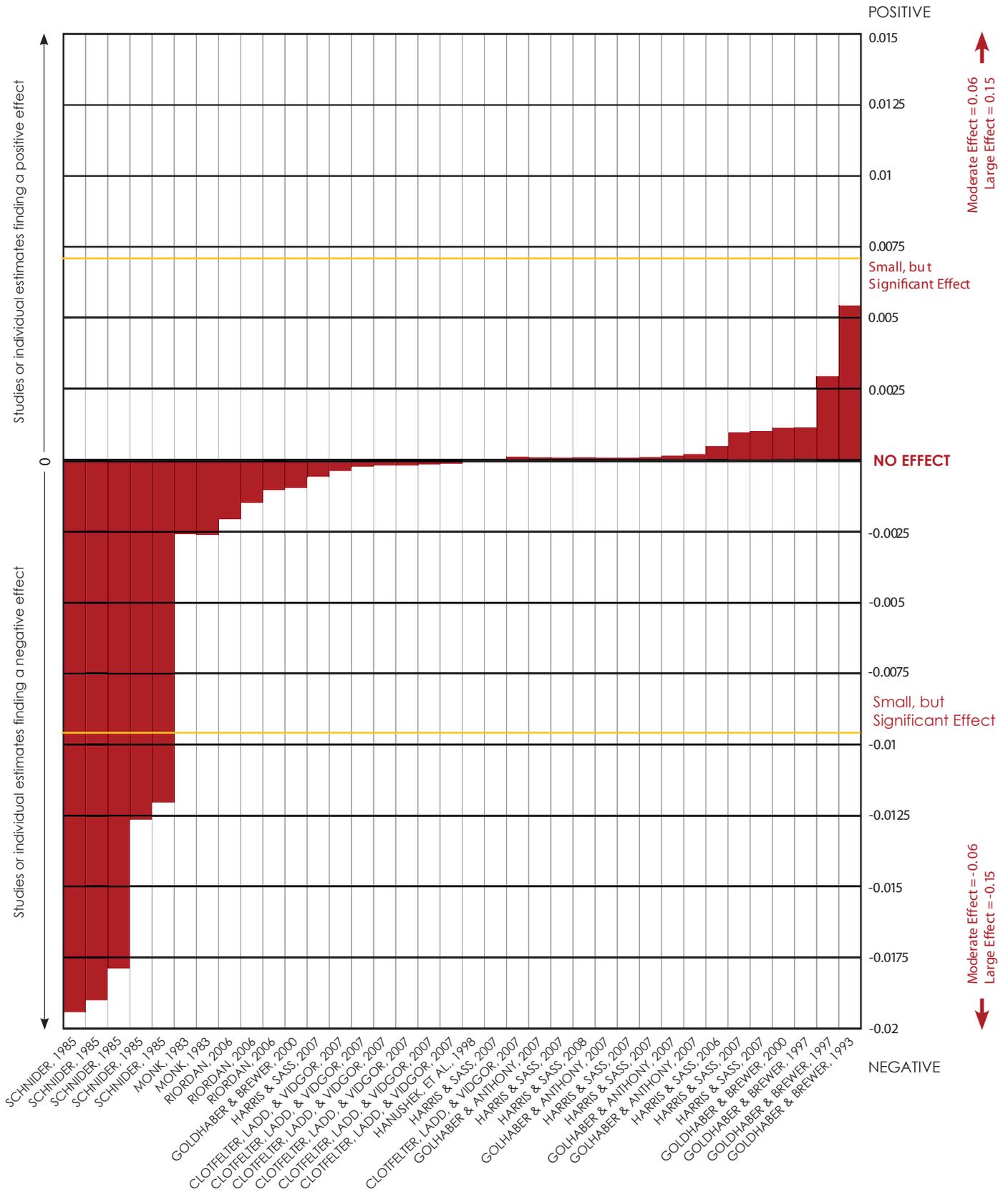
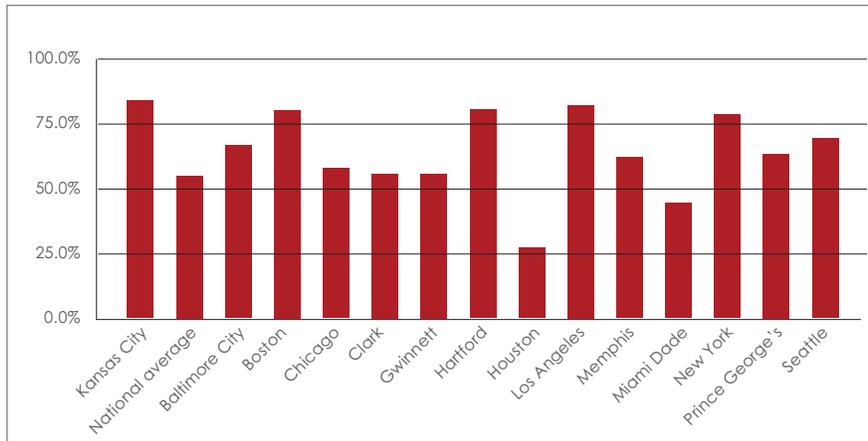


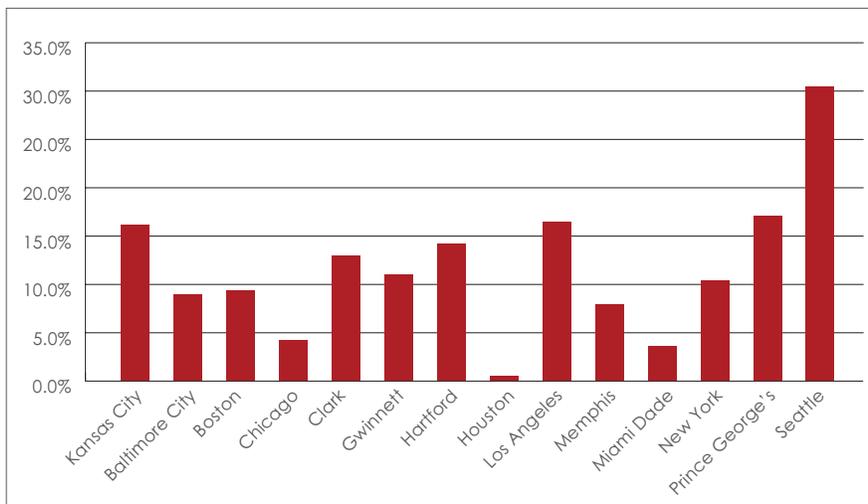
Figure 17. Percentage of teachers with a master's degree



Source: NCTQ internal analysis

KCMSD ties with Los Angeles for the highest percentage of teachers holding a master's degree. Hartford, Boston and New York run a close second.

Figure 18. Percentage of teacher payroll spent on degree-based compensation in KCMSD and other urban districts



Source: NCTQ internal analysis

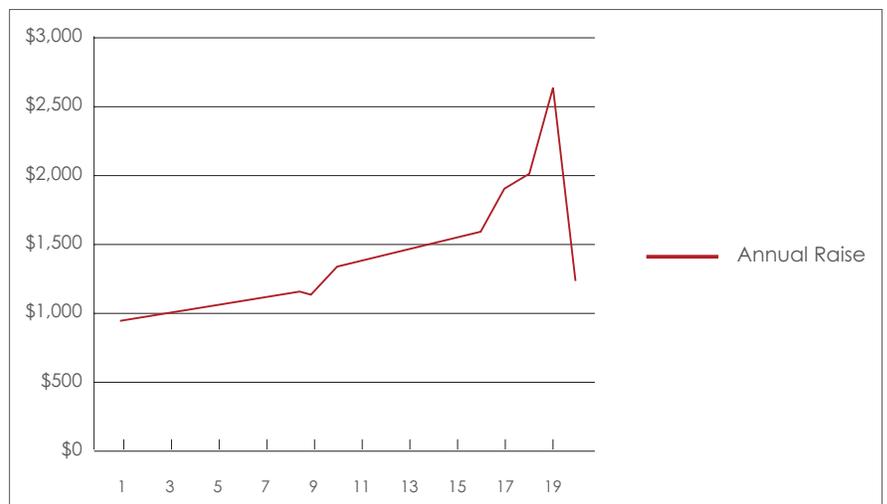
Though dwarfed by Seattle (a district that heavily rewards teachers for completing up to the equivalent of three master's degrees), KCMSD spends a larger percentage of its resources on degree-based compensation than most of the districts tracked by NCTQ.

III. Compensation tied to teacher experience

KCMSD SPENDS MORE THAN \$24 MILLION (35 PERCENT OF ITS TEACHER PAYROLL) ON EXPERIENCE-BASED COMPENSATION.

KCMSD reserves the largest raises automatically awarded each year for teachers with the most experience. Raises for teachers in their 19th year are nearly three times larger than they are for teachers in their first two years of teaching.

Figure 19. Structure of raises in KCMSD associated with teacher experience



Source: NCTQ analysis of KCMSD 2010-2011 salary schedule

The average raise over the last five years of the salary schedule in KCMSD is 86 percent more than the average raise over the first five years.

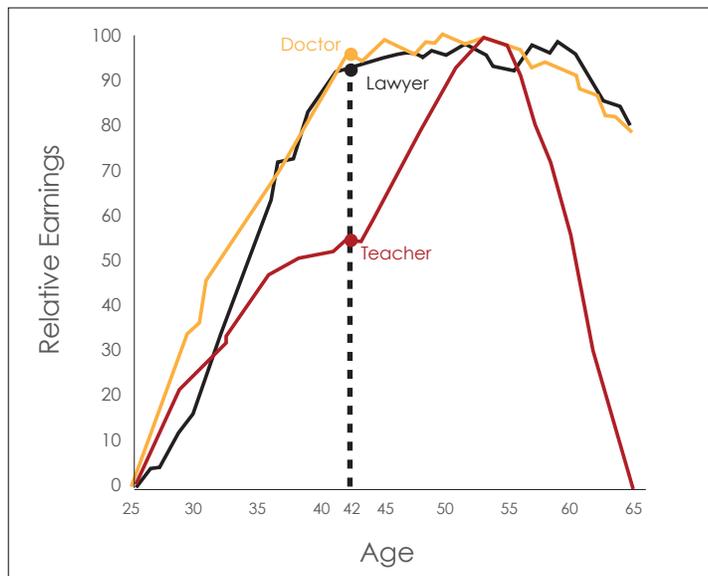
This disproportionate structure of raises does not square with what a large body of research teaches us about the relationship between experience and effectiveness. In fact, research shows that the relationship between experience and effectiveness is not linear. Reserving the largest raises for teachers at the end of their career directs a disproportionate share of the resources to veteran teachers who have the promise of a pension in their near future to keep them in the classroom. Meanwhile, novice teachers have little incentive to stay in a system that makes them wait years before earning a viable salary.

Although experienced teachers undoubtedly offer many benefits that cannot be measured by test scores, experience bears little correlation to effectiveness after roughly three years.¹⁹ Teachers who are on a trajectory of excellence are generally as excellent in their third year as they will be in their tenth or twentieth. Average teachers are generally as average in their tenth year as their third. Weak teachers

¹⁹ Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. (1998). *Teachers, schools, and academic achievement*.

are, on average, no weaker in their third year than their fifteenth.²⁰ Top performers in other professions can earn high salaries much earlier in their careers, without having to wait two decades before they reach maximum earnings. A lawyer, for example, can expect to reach his or her highest salary (excluding a few years of extra higher earnings toward the career end) around age 35, a doctor around age 40. In contrast, a teacher in KCMSD does not reach maximum earnings until the age of 55.²¹

Figure 20. A slower climb



Source: Vigdor, Jacob. Scrap the Sacrosanct Salary Schedule, Education Next, Fall 2008, Vol. 8, No. 4

In most school districts it takes teachers a decade longer to reach peak earnings than it does for other professionals.

IV. Rewarding effective teachers

ALTHOUGH KCMSD DESERVES CREDIT FOR EXPLORING PERFORMANCE PAY THROUGH VARIOUS GRANTS THAT IT HAS RECEIVED, THEY DO LITTLE TO ADDRESS UNDERLYING STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS IN KCMSD'S COMPENSATION STRATEGY.

Until KCMSD's pay structure relieves significant wage compression, whereby the top performing teachers earn the same as less effective peers, its compensation structure will remain inherently unfair to talented teachers.

TIF grant. Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, KCMSD will pilot a program funded by the federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) in 10 schools, spending an additional \$13.6 million over five years to look for more targeted ways to compensate teachers.²²

²⁰ Why experience does not matter as much as we think it should has not been fully explained by research. Some theorize that younger teachers make up for what they do not know by working much harder and longer hours. Others theorize that teachers do not continue to improve because professional development is so poor.

²¹ Vigdor, J. (2008, Fall). Scrap the sacrosanct salary schedule, Education Next, 37-42.

²² Schools selected based on student eligibility for free-and-reduced price lunches, school enrollment, Missouri Assessment scores and the numbers of language-deficient LLP students. At least 75 percent of the school faculty had to vote to participate in the program. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/index.html>

While the district's application ranked high by US Department of Education reviewers, there is cause for concern in how KCMUSD plans to implement this grant. It does not appear to be the case that student growth is the preponderant criteria for awarding bonuses. Instead teacher bonuses will be determined by the following three factors: 1) student growth (measured for both individual teachers and schools as a whole); 2) loosely defined professional growth; and 3) associated wraparound factors (attendance, discipline, parental involvement).

The "professional growth" component raises some cause for concern. KCMUSD's TIF application states that teachers will be eligible for an award on the basis of participation in any training that "manifests itself on a regular basis in classroom practices and advanced certification in their field." This ambiguous definition could well lead to teachers earning bonuses for taking coursework or earning national board certification (if that is what advanced certification implies and which is already covered under another incentive grant), neither of which means that teachers will be getting bonuses for highly effective classroom performance observed and measured by the district. There are other potential problems that the district should address. It is unclear if schools must agree to participate during all three years of the grant or if the schools can change each year. The average amount of the award, an estimated amount of \$2,000 to \$4,000, may not be significant enough to have any measurable impact. Teachers could earn a comparable payment for coaching the school football team, for example.

Central High incentive program. In addition to the TIF grant, teachers at Central High School will be eligible for bonuses ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on which subject they teach.²³ The rules for this program appear to have more rigor and specifics than the TIF grant. Teachers of foreign language, mathematics, science and special education will be eligible for bonuses totaling \$5,000, with \$3,000 bonuses available for communication arts teachers and \$2,000 for all other teachers. To qualify for a bonus, teachers must show that their students have made significant improvement, defined as a 20-point gain. Teachers set goals for individual students and class performance that must be approved by a district level committee.

National Board. Teachers can also earn raises for acquiring National Board Certification—but few qualify. Only four teachers in the district have ever obtained National Board Certification. It is unclear if any of those teachers are still employed by KCMUSD.

KCMUSD will pay \$3,500 to teachers who "successfully apply for and pursue" National Board Certification. The very terms under which teachers earn this initial bonus are costly: All a teacher has to do is to apply for certification, not necessarily earn it. In addition, the district will make another \$3,500 permanent adjustment to a teacher's salary for achieving National Board Certification.²⁴

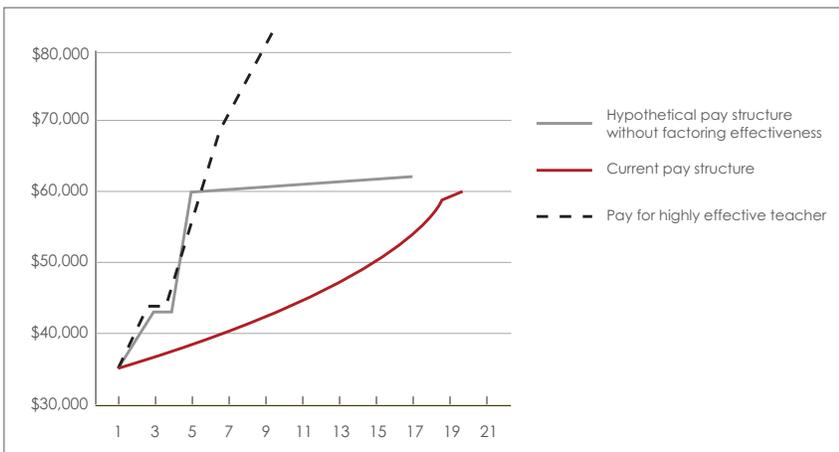
²³ <http://www2.kcmsd.net/Lists/News/DispForm.aspx?ID=1254&Source=http%3A%2F%2Fwww2.kcmsd.net%2FPages%2FEmployees.aspx>

²⁴ Teachers are required to remain in the district a minimum of three years or will have to repay the district.

Recommendations for KCMSD

The teacher pay structure should be predominantly premised on teacher effectiveness, demand for a teacher's skill and willingness to teach in challenging environments. The highest performing teachers should earn dramatically higher salaries than less effective peers of the same experience level. While it is critical for KCMSD to be able to draw top teacher talent into its schools by offering competitive salaries, the only practical way to achieve this is by making the earning potential for top teachers more in KCMSD than in surrounding districts.

Figure 21. Model pay structure



In the hypothetical structure modeled above, the raises tied to teacher experience are minimal and are largely associated with cost of living raises. Teachers are, however, awarded three raises tied to experience: one after both the first and second years (when principals make a decision on whether or not to renew a teacher's contract). The largest increase occurs at the tenure mark. Additional raises beyond the tenure mark are awarded for teacher effectiveness only (as depicted by the dotted line).

Because dramatic overhaul of the salary schedule demands a politically favorable environment, we present a variety of approaches to incrementally shift teacher pay.

1. Raise the starting salary so that KCMSD pay is competitive with surrounding districts.
2. Eliminate salary differentials for earning an advanced degree for any new teacher hired in the system. Redirect savings to three district needs: awarding effectiveness, hiring teachers with much-needed skills and placing effective teachers in the schools with the greatest needs.
3. Redistribute raises associated with experience to earlier in a teacher's career, with the largest raise awarded at the tenure mark. Reserving the largest raises for teachers with the most experience is an ineffective retention strategy and does not align with research on

the impact of experience on teacher effectiveness. Providing significant bonuses at the tenure mark would incentivize teachers to stay in the classroom during the period when there is the highest turnover.

4. Attend to the details of the TIF grant, ensuring that the bonuses go primarily toward teachers in high needs schools who have demonstrated their effectiveness or hold high demand skills. The Central High model appears more promising than the TIF program, as currently described.

Where it's been done:

Baltimore City's new contract with the local teachers union created a new and innovative pay structure for teachers that eliminates automatic raises for experience and reconsiders the weight given to coursework completion. Furthermore, the pay system allows teachers who want to assume greater responsibilities and leadership positions in their school to also earn higher salaries without leaving the classroom, known as a career ladder approach.

Recommendation for Missouri

Eliminate state salary requirements. Missouri should repeal its law requiring higher salaries for teachers with advanced degrees and experience and instead allow districts full autonomy in structuring their salary schedules.



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