

Getting From Facts to Policy: An Education Policy Convening
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Proposal submitted by:

Emily Cohen, Policy Analyst,
National Council on Teacher Quality
1391 G St., N.W, Suite 720
Washington DC 20005
202-393-0020 x16
Email address: ecohen@nctq.org

Focus Area: State Data Systems

Problem Statement:

The formal policies and agreements that establish the rules, roles, and rights governing teachers have important consequences for what schools can and cannot do. Despite their importance, the process by which collective bargaining agreements and personnel policies are negotiated between school districts and teachers too often escapes public scrutiny. Even in districts where there is no collective bargaining, the process by which school boards establish personnel rules is shielded from public view.

Policy Option:

Now there is a central database enabling an entirely new area of research and opening up a new era of transparency to this critical component of how our schools operate. This research, which once would have taken months or even years for a single person to complete, is available at the touch of a button. The database, *Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights*, seeks to bring greater transparency to the rules that govern teachers and schools. By making collective bargaining agreements and personnel handbooks easily accessible and searchable on our website, we better equip academics, policymakers, teachers, administrators and parents to explore the factors that define the professional roles and standards of teachers, particularly in the most economically and racially diverse districts in the country.

In January 2007, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) launched *Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights*—a website that gives the public free, unprecedented access to the content of collective bargaining agreements and employee handbooks from all over the country. NCTQ sorted through mountains of text to create a new online interface giving users the opportunity to compare and contrast over 300 distinct provisions in agreements on a full range of topics, including information on teacher salary and benefits, evaluation, grievance and transfer policies and much, much more. These policies and agreements establish the rules, roles and rights governing teachers and have important consequences for what schools can and cannot do.

The Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights database includes collective bargaining agreements, board policies, and teacher handbooks from the nation's 50 largest school districts, with

50 more scheduled to be added by year's end. Currently, four of California's largest school districts are in the database, with four more to be added this fall. The first of its kind, this portal opens up an entirely new area of research and empowers anyone to analyze and compare the day-to-day operations of teachers and schools. *Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights* can be used to identify trends across districts, answer single questions of interest, and generate reports without wading through lengthy documents. One also has access to all of the documents that NCTQ researchers used to develop the site. Users can download the full text of a teacher contract, just the salary schedule, district calendar, benefits guides and even the evaluation instrument.

How Presentation Will Engage Audience:

In this session, the National Council on Teacher Quality speaker will show how this on-line database is a valuable a tool for state policy makers, school board members, teachers and administrators. Anyone looking to compare school districts' contracts, looking for answers to specific questions, or looking at the strengths and weaknesses of *contracts through the lens of whether the rules governing adults are really in the best interests of students*, will find this database extremely helpful.

Presenter will walk the audience through the site's functionality by preparing custom reports based on audience questions. The presenter will also take relevant stories from recent newspaper articles to show how the database addresses certain issues and how it can be used to gauge national trends, support or debunk arguments.

Data Summary:

Currently, the NCTQ *Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights* database contains information from California's 4 largest school districts: Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego and Long Beach. By year's end, San Francisco, San Bernardino, Santa Ana and Elk Grove will be included. The database contains information compiled from district collective bargaining agreements, school board policies, salary schedules, benefits plans, teacher evaluation plans, and school calendars.

From these documents, we have analyzed over 300 distinct provisions governing the day-to-day operations of schools and teachers. Other easily accessible data includes policies on differential pay, teacher transfer and assignment, dismissal policies, grievances, leave, professional development, tuition reimbursement and working conditions.

We have also created an interactive feature allowing users to see the laws in each state and the District of Columbia that determine what districts can and cannot bargain. States with more limited scopes of bargaining allow districts and unions only to negotiate on bread and butter issues like wages and hours of employment. The scope of bargaining as outlined in state policy greatly determines the local union's role with the school district. This is an important component to understand when looking at what happens at the district level.