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Priority Staffing Program Evaluation report

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Summary

This evaluation of the Priority Staffing Program found that the program was contributing to teacher recruitment and retention in LAUSD's 22 Program Improvement 4 and 5 senior high schools by providing support to new teachers in the form of Teacher Advisers.

- The Teacher Advisers supported the new teachers at each of these schools both inside and outside the classroom.
- In January 2007, 11 of the 22 schools were fully staffed and by November 2007, 18 of the 22 schools were fully staffed.
- Eighty-five percent of all new teachers recruited by these schools in 2006-07 remained teaching in LAUSD schools in 2007-08.
- There was some evidence to suggest that the program assisted its target schools with meeting their staffing goals in fall 2007 through increased recruitment activities.

These findings speak to the operational goals of the program, which were to recruit and retain new teachers at these 22 senior high schools. However, these findings cannot be used to determine the long-term effect of new teacher support on instructional quality.

Overview

In July 2006, the LAUSD re-established the Priority Staffing Program (PSP). Initially existing in the 1980s and early 1990s, the PSP was designed to assist with new teacher recruitment and retention in the LAUSD's lowest-performing senior high schools and middle schools. The PSP consisted of two major program elements: 1) a Teacher Adviser assigned to and housed at each of the 22 senior high schools to provide support services and 2) an Incentive Substitute Teacher Program to reduce unfilled positions and teacher absenteeism. For the duration of this study, the Peer Assistance and Review office (PAR) was responsible for implementing the PSP.

This report addressed the following questions:

- How was the PSP plan implemented during its first year with regard to each of its elements?
- What was the impact of the PSP on teacher recruitment in the target schools?
- What was the impact of the PSP on measurable teacher retention in the target schools during 2006-07 and returning for 2007-08?

Methods

To determine how the PSP was being implemented, we analyzed Teacher Adviser activity logs from August 2006 to May 2007 and from August 2007 to May 2008. We also conducted interviews and observations during the 2006-07 school year. We interviewed 115 new teachers

from all 22 PSP schools. The PSP defined a new teacher as one who is in the first or second year of teaching at a PSP school, regardless of years of teaching experience. We also interviewed an administrator from each PSP school and all 22 Teacher Advisers. We also observed 182 meetings covering the seven types of activities the Teacher Advisers were tasked with conducting at their schools. These seven activities were:

- Meetings and orientations,
- Instructional support,
- General management,
- Collaboration,
- Recruitment,
- Other activities as assigned, and
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA)–related activities.

To determine the program’s impact on new teacher recruitment and retention, we analyzed school-level staffing data and staffing data from Human Resources.

Key Findings

How was the PSP plan implemented during its first year with regard to each of its elements?

Teacher Advisers consistently spent their time organizing meetings and orientations, providing instructional support, assisting new teachers with general management tasks, collaborating with teachers and administrators, assisting with recruitment, organizing BTSA–related activities, and engaging in other duties as assigned. Approximately 35% of Teacher Adviser time was spent providing direct support to new teachers either by organizing and/or leading professional development meetings or by providing instructional support in classrooms through observations. The Incentive Substitute Teacher Program was implemented inconsistently at the PSP schools.

What was the impact of the impact of the PSP on teacher recruitment in the target schools?

The number of staff vacancies at the PSP schools declined in 2006–07 and in 2007–08. There was limited evidence that the PSP had helped target schools achieve their staffing goals by fall 2006. However, there is some evidence that the PSP helped its target schools achieve their staffing goals in fall 2007. Teacher Advisers only spent approximately five percent of their time engaging in recruitment activities during both the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. However, they spent more time on recruitment activities in May, July, and August 2007 than in other months. During those months, all Teacher Advisers were recruiting teachers from job fairs. Half of the Teacher Advisers were also conducting initial interviews of teacher candidates, participating on formal interview panels, and assisting administrators with final hiring decisions.

What was the impact of the PSP on measurable teacher retention in the target schools during 2006–07 and returning for 2007–08?

While there was limited evidence that the PSP had an impact on measurable teacher retention, 85% of all new teachers at the PSP schools in 2006–07 remained teaching in LAUSD schools in

2007–08. Within the PSP, school-level new teacher retention rates in 2007–08 ranged from 74% to 100%

Conclusion

The Teacher Advisers spent much of their time directly supporting new teachers, either through meetings and workshops or through direct classroom observation. There is some evidence to indicate that the PSP may have contributed to improved recruitment and retention efforts at these 22 schools by fall 2007. The number of teacher vacancies at each of the PSP schools had been steadily declining. Also, 85% of new teachers at the PSP schools continued to teach in LAUSD schools in 2007–08.

These findings must be interpreted with caution. We were unable to establish a causal link between increased teacher retention and the PSP. We cannot claim that the PSP caused the observed increase in new teacher retention. However, given the steady decline in teacher vacancies at the PSP schools, and the overall positive perception of the program from the new teachers and school administrators, it is possible to state that the PSP had an influence on new teacher retention.

Based on these findings (some of which were detailed in this research brief), we made the following recommendations:

- PAR should continue to clarify the roles of the Teacher Advisers with respect to BTSA involvement.
- PAR should also continue to clarify the roles of the Teacher Advisers with respect to new teacher recruitment and hiring.
- There should be more of a focus on recruiting and retaining teachers at the feeder middle schools.
- There should be more uniformity with respect to the school-level implementation of the Incentive Substitute Teacher Program.
- The PSP should focus more on how new teachers are being supported in the classroom.

For more information regarding this study see the full report:

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