

LA EDUCATORS CUT DEAL TO SAVE JOBS



In the last couple of years, despite the reputation of stability in the field of education, there have been a fair number of layoffs of educators in districts across the nation. For those of who do not remember our earlier coverage about the devastating cuts to the Philadelphia school district here is an **excerpt**: “Things have not been great for the schools in the city of Philadelphia, as you already know if you live in the area, or if you follow the coverage on this site. The district was dealt another blow today when a third round of layoffs rocked the schools. This time it was 1,400 employees that got the boot. While these layoffs were not to the teaching staff, instead they came to the blue-collar workers who deal in facilities and transportation maintenance services, this is still a serious loss of jobs for the city. This was not the first mass layoff for the city of Philadelphia in the last 12 months. In September the city’s school district had to cut jobs by about 850. Then over the summer roughly 1,000 teachers were cut from the budget as well. So on the whole the schools have shed more than 3,000 jobs since the end of the last school year.” One school district, hoping to avoid a similar fate, has chosen to implement a new plan. The plan, which is backed by a guaranteed moratorium of layoffs, will instead gauge the effectiveness of teacher based on the results of their students, at least in part. Student results will be a key measure, but my no means the only measure by which educators will be evaluated. After all factors such as the home environment, a students level of motivation and any number of other factors can influence the scores that they receive on the exam. The new teacher-evaluation system passed with 56% of the vote, which is hardly a roaring vote of confidence, but it was enough to get the new system implemented. A statement released Saturday by the group Teachers for a New Unionism said the following about the new system, “Teachers will now take the lead on ending the destructive cycle of layoffs and developing a rigorous evaluation system based on multiple measures, including the careful use of student test data.” Of course there are a lot of details that need to be ironed out before the plan goes into action. To give you an idea, the text that the teachers voted on was worded this way: “Shall UTLA’s contractual negotiations with LAUSD include a moratorium on all RIFs for all UTLA bargaining unit members through June 30, 2014, as part of a revised, phased-in, teacher-driven evaluation system mutually agreed upon by UTLA and LAUSD?” Given that this is a vague statement at best, and the only real guarantee made is for no layoffs for the next two years, you can see how many voters might find it an attractive option, especially for the younger teachers who do not have tenure and are the most likely to be cut.

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