

SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOLS APPROVE LAYOFF EXCEPTIONS FOR TEACHER PERFORMANCE



Another school district is moving away from the more traditional seniority system of layoffs and towards a system that favors results in the classroom instead. That school districts is in the city of San Francisco and their system will not entirely unseat the seniority system, but make some interesting exceptions to the rule that will help keep the best teachers in schools. The system, which is designed to help keep the best teachers in the schools that need them the most, will not be an easy task. The schools Superintendent Carlos Garcia had to fight long and hard to get the San Francisco school board to get them to vote in favor of this system. Under the general seniority system the newest teachers are the ones to get the ax when the budget cuts come to town. In this new system, which passed with a 5-to-1 vote, the school system has allowed high performing teachers and 14 schools to be kept on even if they are newer than teachers at other schools. These 14 facilities have been targeted because the students there have shown an overall poor academic performance. The students in these schools need extra help in order to meet the schools academic standards. These schools, which are considered to be less desirable places to work, usually have the newest teachers in their classrooms. This means that they are affected disproportionately by the school district budget cuts. These schools tend to lose a great number of teachers per capita. The teachers union, which has long been a proponent of the seniority system was not in favor of the current changes and fought vigorously to defend the tenure system. The system of seniority is one that many unions believe is a key advantage for their unions. The new vote, which will be the second exemption for educators at schools that need the most help, will impact only 70 teachers. In the prior wave of exemptions 389 teachers will be made exempt from the normal system of seniority based system. This will lead to a grand total of 485 school employees who are going to be exempt in a school district of roughly 8,000 employees. As you can see it is not a great number of the employees who will be enjoying that exemption is actually not that large at all. Leaders from the union have criticized the move of signaling only 14 schools for layoff exemptions saying that the list was an arbitrary selection. They claim that there are other schools in equally dire straights. The schools were selected not for the layoff exemption, but were selected two years ago for special help by the administrators of the school board. The school list includes schools at all levels. This city is not alone in making its controversial move to a system based on the performance of teachers. A very recent law was passed in the state of Minnesota. For those of you who missed our [earlier coverage](#) here is an excerpt: "On Monday, the Minnesota Senate approved a bill that would allow schools to lay off teachers based on performance rather than solely relying on seniority. The bill was passed by a 36-24 majority and connects performance of a teacher to performance of students under his or her tutelage. Prior to the passing of this bill, the state required that school districts rely solely upon the factor of seniority to decide layoffs. However, individual school districts had the freedom to separately negotiate for other qualifying conditions. According to the new system, at least one-third of the evaluation of a teacher would depend upon the performance of his/her students. Senator Pam Wolf, who was among lead sponsors of the bill, said that the new law would help schools to retain the most effective teachers. "More matters than just when you sign the contract," said Senator Wolf, who teaches at Pines School at the Anoka County Juvenile Center. Democrats opposed the bill saying that a statewide teacher evaluation system needs more time to mature before layoff policies are changed."

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