

# SHARING THE BURDEN?

## The Impact of Proposed Teacher Layoffs Across LAUSD



The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has issued more than 8,500 “pink slips” informing employees that their contracts may not be renewed at the end of the current school year. If past practice holds, and in accordance with rules set up in the California Education Code and the district’s collective bargaining agreement, the district will use teacher seniority as the primary criteria for determining which teachers are dismissed. That is, the first teachers dismissed will be those with one or two years of experience.

New teachers are not distributed equally across LAUSD’s schools. Because of this maldistribution, some schools will bear the brunt of the proposed layoffs. Our analysis of data on teacher experience from the California Basic Educational Data System suggests that schools serving primarily low-income students and students of color are the most likely to employ high proportions (more than 20%) of first and second year teachers. These same schools are the least likely to employ low proportions (less than 10%) of first and second year teachers.

For example:

- 46% of LAUSD middle schools serving 75% or more low-income students employ a high proportion of new teachers. No middle school with comparable demographics employs a low proportion of new teachers.
- Middle schools serving fewer (less than 50%) low-income students employ fewer new teachers. 67% of such middle schools employ a low proportion of new teachers.
- 40% of LAUSD high schools serving 90% or more students of color employ high proportions of new teachers. Only 8% of such high schools employ low proportions of new teachers.

- In contrast, high schools serving fewer (less than 50%) students of color employ fewer new teachers. 67% of such schools have low proportions of new teachers.

The uneven distribution of the proposed layoffs suggests that the budget cuts may do most harm to schools with the greatest needs. Many schools serving low-income communities of color have worked hard to recruit and develop new teachers with the skills and commitment to be successful in these communities. The dismissal of large numbers of teachers in these schools will disrupt ongoing reform efforts and instructional programs, and might have a long-term impact on the schools’ ability to attract (and retain) new teachers into the profession. Teacher layoffs also will undermine the sense of professional community within schools and erode the relationships between schools and the communities they serve.

As we consider the distribution of teacher dismissals across LAUSD schools, it is important to remember that all teacher layoffs impact student learning. Districts may realize short-term cost savings by creating larger classes and reducing the teaching force, but increasing class size in Los Angeles schools means adding more students to classrooms that are already among the most overcrowded in the nation. Long-term cost savings will come with smaller classrooms and ongoing investment in attracting, retaining, and developing high quality teachers.



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