

Senate Bill 955 (Huff)
Comprehensive Education Reform
FACT SHEET

Teacher Seniority

Problem: Under current law, layoffs, transfers, assignments, reassignments and reappointments for teachers must occur strictly on the basis of seniority. For example, administrators - who have not been in the classroom for years - can replace effective, but laid off teachers due to seniority. This forces school districts to retain or rehire ineffective teachers solely based on their seniority status. Such provisions have already resulted in the loss of many committed and highly effective teachers during the ongoing budget crisis.

Seniority provisions disproportionately impact struggling schools in low-income neighborhoods because these schools tend to have teachers with the least seniority. As a result, a large portion of teacher layoffs have come from these schools and have disrupted these schools' efforts to improve student achievement.

Solution: SB 955 will allow school districts to make staffing decisions based on teacher effectiveness and student needs rather than the current quality-blind staffing system.

March 15 Deadline

Problem: Current law requires school districts to notify teachers of lay-off notices by March 15, which is well before the state typically adopts its budget and districts know how much funding they will receive. This arbitrary date forces districts to assume the worst budget scenario possible and over-notify teachers. They then proceed with the time-consuming and expensive layoff process and, after the state adopts its budget, rescind the notifications and attempt to rehire teachers who really should not have been notified in the first place.

The March deadline puts unnecessary cost pressures on school districts who are already struggling to address budget shortfalls and provide core educational needs to students. The date also creates undue anxiety for teachers as many of the teachers who receive notices will not actually be let go.

Solution: SB 955 will extend this deadline to May 15, giving school districts more time to evaluate their budget situation and send out more accurate notifications.

Dismissal Process

Problem: School districts have found that the Commission on Professional Competence, as part of the certificated dismissal process, can unduly limit a local district's ability to provide high quality staff in schools. Local school district governing boards have little authority over who works with the students they serve. Under current law, the decision of the Commission on Professional Competence is deemed to be the final decision of the governing board in regard to the termination of certificated staff.

For example, according to a LA Times investigation, Los Angeles Unified spends \$10 million a year on teachers who receive salaries but are not teaching while they are reviewed for job suitability.

Solution: SB 955 will give governing boards more freedom and authority in making these essential staffing decisions.

Substitute Teachers

Problem: State law requires teachers who have been laid off to receive first priority for substitute teaching assignments and that these substitutes be paid at the rate they received *before* they were laid off if they work more than 20 days within a 60-school day period. For districts that have laid-off teachers, existent provisions significantly increase substitute teacher costs and could force additional layoffs and cuts to classroom spending.

Solution: SB 955 will relax costly substitute requirements and limitations on staff selections.

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