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Los Angeles Unified School District

It Can do More to Reduce the Impacts of Removing Teachers From Classrooms Because of Alleged Misconduct

Background

With about 27,000 teachers, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) removes teachers from their classrooms and reassigns them during the time they formally investigate allegations of misconduct to ensure safety. Reassigned teachers remain at home for the duration of their reassignment.

Our Key Recommendations

To reduce the impacts of removing teachers from classrooms, LAUSD should do the following:

- Establish procedures to identify appropriate placement options and to periodically monitor key steps throughout the reassignment process to ensure more timely resolution of reassignments.
- Develop a comprehensive risk evaluation tool to guide its local administrators in determining whether allegations against a teacher represent a clear risk and require reassignment.
- Formalize its practice of monitoring assignments of substitutes frequently to ensure substitutes do not serve in classrooms longer than legally permitted.

Key Findings

- Costs related to reassigning teachers can be high—for the 18 reassignments we reviewed the costs per case ranged from about \$7,000 to nearly \$315,000.
 - » The cost of the teachers' salaries and benefits—\$12.6 million during fiscal year 2015–16—while reassigned, represents an administrative cost in addition to the cost of arranging for substitute teachers, which was at least \$3.3 million during that same year.
 - » The number of open reassignments has increased recently and the median length of the reassignments LAUSD has resolved has nearly doubled from 236 to 420 calendar days since fiscal year 2011–12.
- LAUSD frequently exceeded time frames, including those for investigating allegations against reassigned teachers and for decisions on whether to discipline those teachers—LAUSD took 127 workdays to investigate one case in which the teacher pushed a student to the floor.
 - » Local administrators and district managers missed key decision deadlines.
 - » Administrators took months or even years to return some teachers to work after it had been decided that the district would retain the teachers.
- Although LAUSD identified clear safety risks in most of the formal reassignment cases we reviewed, some were made without demonstrating clear risks—formally reassigning teachers who do not pose a clear safety risk, may unnecessarily disrupt classrooms, stigmatize teachers, and cause LAUSD to incur substantial costs.
- LAUSD does not monitor the effects of teacher reassignments on the students in those classrooms but attempts to reduce the effects of such reassignments by assigning long-term substitutes. However, LAUSD has kept some substitutes in classroom assignments longer than legally permitted.

The Number of Reassignments LAUSD Resolved Each Year for Fiscal Years 2011–12 Through 2015–16, and Their Median Length When Resolved

