

## Retaining Best Teachers

Rhode Island taxpayers are among America's most generous in funding public schools. Unfortunately, by many measures, the state's leaders in education and politics are badly failing those taxpayers.

Yet another nonpartisan study suggests the need for reform. The Washington-based National Council on Teacher Quality gives Rhode Island its worst grade — an "F" — for its policies, or lack thereof, to retain good new teachers and get rid of less effective ones. Massachusetts and Connecticut fared better under the tough grading plan, each scoring a "D."

The NCTQ worked with 150 analysts, organization representatives and teachers to come up with a list of 15 policies they thought would support keeping the best teachers going early in their careers, while rooting out the worst.

Rhode Island failed to meet the experts' goals for tenure decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of teachers. It also received an "F" for a lack of policies to weed out teachers who really do not belong in the classroom. Part of that is, no doubt, because of local teachers-union contracts that impede effective evaluations. Furthermore, despite a lot of talk, Rhode Island has yet to embark on a performance-based system of pay for teachers, choosing rather to reward teachers mainly for longevity, with little or no regard for how much or how little effort or talent they bring to the job.

Excellent teachers are, of course, key to excellent public schools. It makes sense for school systems to encourage them, while protecting students from the worst, especially during the crucial first years of service, before teachers gain tenure. But, as the report suggests, Rhode Island is making no systematic effort to do that.