



TURNING A BENEFITS CONUNDRUM INTO A POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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Labor, in the form of wages and benefits, makes up most of the costs of schooling. Much has been written about wages—especially the idea that we need to make salaries more competitive to attract a stronger labor pool. Analysts pay less attention to benefits, except to bemoan the rising cost of them. But as a portion of labor compensation, we find, benefits are growing faster than salaries. Higher benefits costs mean fewer dollars for other purposes—not just salaries, but also technology, facilities, curricular materials, and more.

This analysis examines the per-teacher cost of benefits, both on an annual basis and a weekly basis, relative to costs in other professional industries. Because the work year is shorter in teaching than in other industries, the cost of benefits per week of labor is substantially higher. Some analysts suggest curbing costs by reducing benefits packages. Instead, we propose changes to the work year. By increasing the number of weeks in the contracts for instructional staff, school systems could get the most for their benefits dollars, teachers could make more money overall, and students could be given new opportunities for when and how to learn.

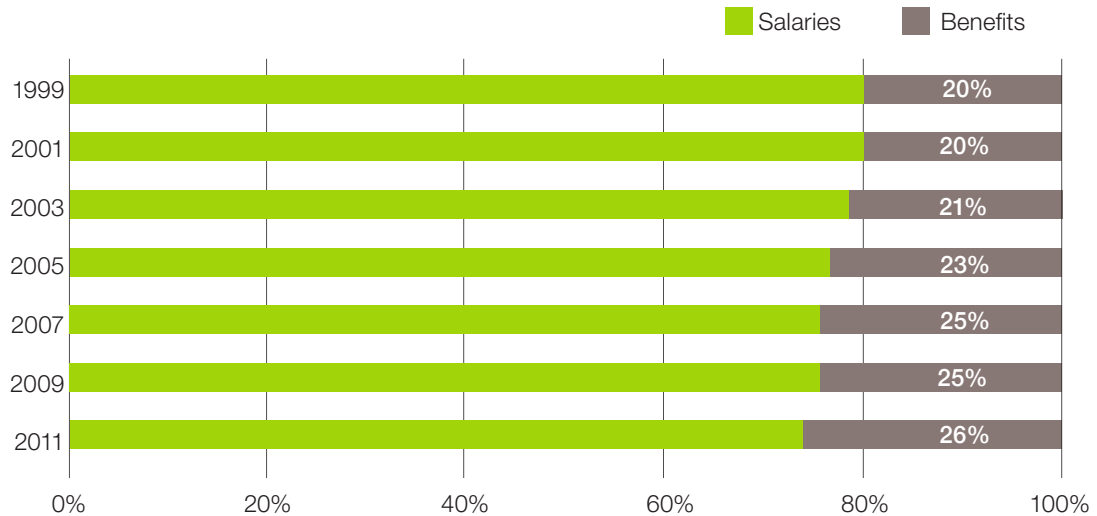
The rising costs of benefits

Across most industries, the cost of benefits has been rising, both in dollars and in share of compensation. On average, private sector benefits as a share of total compensation have jumped from 13% in 1973 to 20% in 2012.¹ In education, the benefits issue is even more significant as benefits consume a larger share of total compensation, in part because full benefits are awarded for fewer days of paid work. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, from 1998-99 to 2010-11 (the most recent year for national reporting), benefit costs for teachers, like other industries, grew faster than salaries. As shown in Figure 1, in 1998-99, benefits totaled 20% of the total compensation package for instructional staff; 12 years later they had risen to 26%.²

¹ James Sherk, "Productivity and Compensation: Growing together," Heritage Foundation, 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/07/productivity-and-compensation-growing-together>.

² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "National Public Education Financial Survey (State Fiscal)", 1997-98 (FY 1998) v.1b, 1998-99 (FY 1999) v.1b, 1999-00 (FY 2000) v.1b, 2000-01 (FY 2001) v.1b, 2001-02 (FY 2002) v.1c, 2002-03 (FY 2003) v.1b, 2003-04 (FY 2004) v.1b, 2004-05 (FY 2005) v.1b, 2005-06 (FY 2006) v.1b, 2006-07 (FY 2007) v.1b, 2007-08 (FY 2008) v.1b, 2008-09 (FY 2009) v.1b, 2009-10 (FY 2010) v.2a, 2010-11 (FY 2011) v.1a; "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey", 2012-13 v.1a.

Figure 1: Benefits make up an increasing share of compensation for instructional staff



Teachers' salaries, at an annual average of \$53,710, are lower than those of many other comparable professionals, such as accountants and computer programmers.³ Their annual benefits, at \$15,708, are higher, bringing their total compensation closer to that of their peers—but not equal.^{4,5}

Teachers, however, work fewer weeks than other professionals. The National Council on Teacher Quality's Contract Database suggests that teacher labor contracts range from 175 to 198 days with combined sick and personal leave ranging from 10 to 30 days. In other words, a teacher in the middle of this range is contracted to work some 34 weeks (37 weeks minus 15 days for sick, personal, or other leave).⁶ Accountants and computer programmers, in contrast, are contracted for 47 weeks: 52 weeks less 5 weeks of sick, personal, and vacation leave.⁷

³ Computer programmers and accountants are commonly referenced comparisons, as they are professional services industry roles with similar education levels, bachelor's or master's degrees, as teachers. Data are from BLS Occupational Employment Statistics, May 2013, Occupation profile for Elementary and Middle School Teachers (252020). <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes252021.htm> Accessed December 2014.

⁴ Data are from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 2014 Employer Costs for Employee Compensation News Release, and include the categories of insurance and retirement. This analysis focuses only on the insurance and retirement and savings benefits categories as the most relevant and significant basis of comparison. For benefits figures for teachers, computer programmers, and accountants, see the line item "Employer costs per hour worked for employee compensation and costs as a percent of total compensation" in the respective categories and tables: "Primary, secondary, and special education school teachers" category in Table 4 June 2014 (p.9), "Management, business, and financial" category in Table 11, June 2014 (p. 20), and "Management, professional, and related" category in Table 11, June 2014 (p. 20). Using figures from these tables, this analysis calculated the insurance and retirement and savings benefits load (as a portion of total compensation) for teachers, computer programmers, and accountants as 20.32%, 12.6%, and 11.95%, respectively. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf>

⁵ See, for example, Michael Podursky "Fringe Benefits: There is more to compensation than a teacher's salary," Education Next, Summer 2004. <http://educationnext.org/fringebenefits/>

⁶ National Center on Teacher Quality's Teacher Contract Database. Available at <http://www.nctq.org/districtPolicy/contractDatabaseLanding.do>

⁷ National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2014, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2014. <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2014/ebbl0055.pdf>.

Comparing costs *per week of labor*

Few analysts examine compensation costs per week worked, rather than overall for the year. But computing the benefits costs on the actual weeks worked makes sense when trying to understand the cost per sellable unit of contracted labor.⁸ Teachers, unlike programmers and accountants, are free to work other jobs in the summer, and according to the National Education Association, many do.⁹ During those months when teachers aren't under contract to be at school, their labor is essentially available to sell to other industries. Evidence from the Current Population Survey shows that 12% of male elementary teachers and 14% of male secondary teachers take on second jobs—roughly double the rate professionals do on average.¹⁰

In fact, when teachers do work additional jobs, the school districts are effectively subsidizing those other employers. Because the school district covers the full year of benefits, other employers using the same employees don't have to.

Let's be clear: Teachers absolutely should earn a full year of benefits. Given that teaching is the primary occupation, and teachers need annual benefits, the job would likely not be competitive if it only funded benefits on a partial-year basis. It is unlikely that all teachers would reliably subsidize their benefits coverage with other employment in a way that covered the full year if not covered by the school district, in part because the labor market has an insufficient supply of partial-year employment opportunities, and because short-term jobs are unlikely to provide benefits. That said, the benefits bill presents a cost conundrum for districts, which are essentially paying more than other industries for the benefits cost on a week of labor.

When you consider costs from this perspective, the picture changes. As Figure 2 indicates, while the salary per week worked for teachers is comparable to that of the other professions, the benefits cost is much higher. For each week of work, teachers earn \$462 in benefits, 55% more than computer programmers (\$297) and 92% more than accountants (\$241).

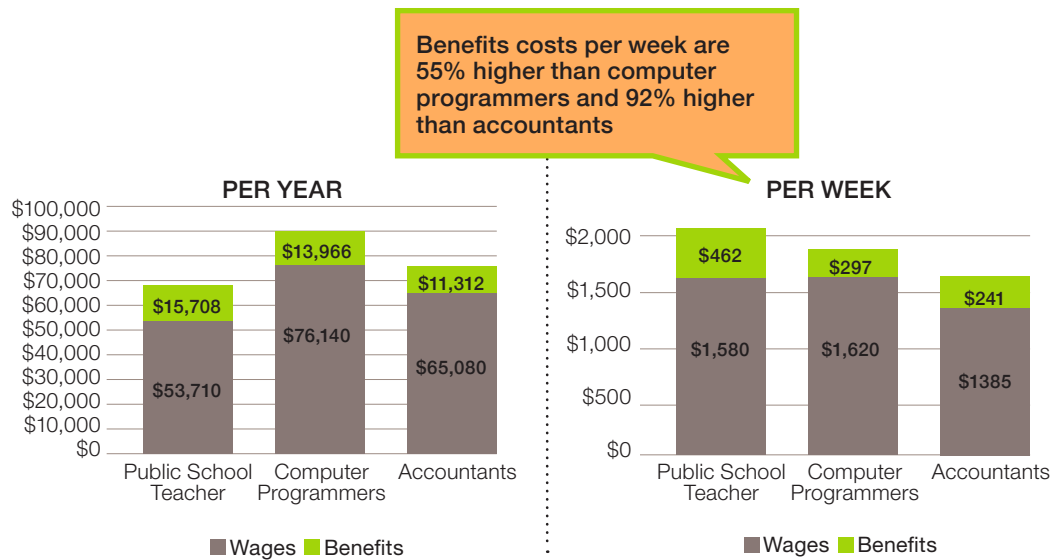
⁸ Why not compute the cost per hour worked, given that teachers may work longer days than their counterparts? One rationale is that teachers are free to, and more often do, work different jobs during non-teaching portions of the year, than is the norm for their programming and accounting peers. Teacher labor, then, functions less as a full year employment than for those professions working 48 weeks, regardless of the number of hours worked during the contracted days.

⁹ "Myths and facts about educator pay," National Education Association, <http://www.nea.org/home/12661.htm>.

¹⁰ Steven F. Hipple, Multiple Jobholding during the 2000s. *Monthly Labor Review*, June 2010.

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Figure 2: Benefits cost per week of labor¹¹



The promise of extending labor time

In some industries, the solution to this puzzle would be straightforward: Instead of using a 34-week workforce, the employer would spread the work out over 47 weeks, and get the job done with fewer employees. The employees would earn more annually (by working more weeks for the same weekly pay), but each employee's benefits load would be spread across a full year of labor. The employer's total benefits tab would be lower, since the total workforce would be smaller.

Of course, this works in industries where the work can be done by a labor force deployed evenly throughout the year. But for some industries, like snow removal or crop harvesting, hard constraints mean that employers can't hire fewer year-round employees and get the same work done. Is schooling one of those industries? Is there some hard constraint that prevents the work of schooling being done outside of September through June?

Before considering how changing the labor arrangement could work in schooling, let's analyze the cost implications. Suppose for a moment that schooling was like accounting and computer programming, and that the work of teachers could continue throughout the year.

¹¹ Annual figures are from BLS Occupational Employment Statistics, May 2013 <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes252021.htm>. Per-week wages and benefits estimates are determined by dividing the annual wages and benefits by the number of weeks of work (contracted weeks minus sick, leave, or other paid non-working days).

Holding constant the current weekly salary earnings and the annual benefits cost per employee, this analysis explores the effect on costs of shifting from a 34-week to a 40-week labor force (still shorter than the 47-week norm, but perhaps more practical for schools). The analysis also holds constant the total weeks of teacher labor required for schooling.

If some (or all) teachers were employed more weeks each year, though, the system would need fewer of them to accomplish the same number of weeks of teaching. The result is a change in the number of teachers needed, their annual (not weekly) salaries, and the district's total benefits bill.

For the sake of financial modeling, we assume a 25,000-student district with a cost structure equal to national averages. Given the norm of 14 students per certificated instructional FTE,¹² over a 34-week year such a district uses 1,785 certificated instructional FTEs,¹³ for a total of 60,690 weeks of instructional labor. The certificated staff earn an average of \$53,710 in salary for the 34 weeks (or \$1,580 per week) and \$15,708 in annual benefits.

For the 25,000-student district, the financial model holds constant the following parameters:

- 60,690 weeks of certificated instructional labor needed
- Weekly wage of \$1,580 for certificated labor
- Annual benefits cost per FTE of \$15,708
- Total district expenditures

As Figure 3 illustrates, if you hold these numbers constant but move from a 34-week to a 40-week staffing model, substantial differences in the basic cost structure emerge. Say teachers are offered the option to take on an additional six weeks of work. For every six teachers that take this offer, one fewer teacher could be hired. The district would need only 1,517 FTEs, instead of 1,785. Second, holding weekly wages constant and reallocating the salary of the eliminated teacher spots, the teachers in the 40-week model would earn 18%, or roughly \$10,000, more annually than their peers in the shorter work year model. Third, the district would free up \$12,538 in benefits for each eliminated teaching spot. That would result in a smaller overall bill for the same benefits package, yielding \$168 per pupil that could be repurposed to raise salaries even higher or to offer other services for students.¹⁴

That's a triple whammy of an opportunity for teachers and students: higher annual salaries, a higher quality workforce, and a lower benefits bill freeing funds that can be directed to other student needs.

¹² Rankings of the States 2013 and Estimates of School Statistics 2014, NEA Research, March 2014. Student enrollment taken from Table B-2. Public School Enrollment, Fall 2012; Instructional staff count Table C-1: Total Instructional Staff in Public K-12 Schools, 2012-13.

¹³ The 1,785 teacher FTEs is 25,000/14.

¹⁴ Six teachers teaching an extra six weeks are needed to cover one full-time teacher's workload of 34 weeks. The district saves \$69,420 in salary and benefit costs from not hiring one teacher. The district spends \$56,880 covering the teachers' additional weekly salaries, for a total of \$9,480 for each teacher, and the remaining \$12,538 is a net savings for the district that it can repurpose as desired.

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Figure 3: Teachers would earn more and districts could better manage the benefits burden with a 40-week staffing model

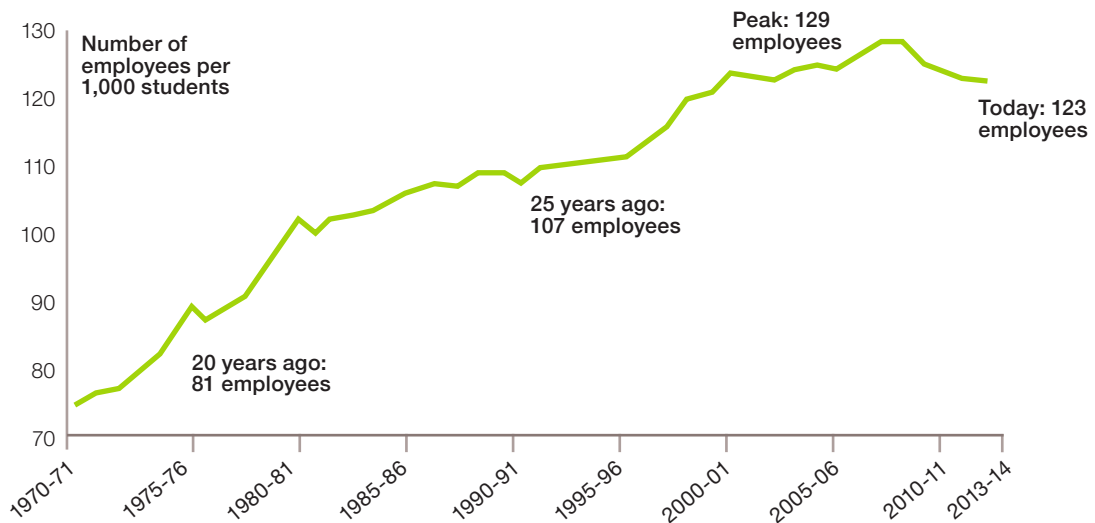
Staffing Model	Total Weeks	Contract Weeks	Number of Full-Time Employees	Salary Per Employee	Total Salaries	Benefits Per Employee	Total Benefits	Benefits Cost Per Student
Traditional 34-week	60690	34	1785	\$53,710	\$95,872,000	\$15,708	\$28,038,780	\$1,122
Hypothetical 40-week		40	1517	\$63,200			\$23,829,036	\$953
			More selective staff	Higher salary for teachers			Lower benefits bill for districts	

What could schools accomplish with a longer work year?

Is it feasible to change the work year for teachers? Or is schooling something that can't be done during certain months of the year? Tradition, it seems, functions like a real constraint in many locales, and making changes to student and teacher schedules is bound to be disruptive. But changing schedules is possible—and in fact many districts have done it. They have stretched out the school year, which typically requires the same number of teachers in front of classrooms all year. What we imagine instead is a system where having teachers engaged for more weeks each year enables a variety of innovative practices. As the model shows, there is good financial reason to consider redesigning schooling around a longer labor year.

For school districts over the last few decades, instead of adding time to the labor contract, the trend has been to add staff. In 1990, schools averaged 107 employees for every 1,000 students. As Figure 4 demonstrates, today, even after the recessionary dip in overall staffing, the average has increased to 123 employees per 1,000 students.

Figure 4: Schools have steadily added staff per 1,000 students.¹⁵



Despite this growth in total staffing, the number of weeks worked per employee has remained essentially constant.¹⁶ In some cases, those staff additions have added new services (for bilingual education, say, or smaller classes). Rarely have districts paused to consider whether any of those services might be offered by extending the work year of existing staff.

So what, exactly, might it mean for teaching and learning? And how does a district eliminate FTEs and still get the work done? The issue here isn't just salary increases, nor changes in the benefits bill. Rather, the concept should be seen as an opportunity to restructure labor in a way that works better for students too.

The first step is to think about what kind of schooling activities can be shifted to the summer months and what upside there would be for students. Depending on the context, schools might consider any of the following options:

- Increase access to top teaching talent: A particularly effective high school chemistry or U.S. history teacher might teach an additional class over the summer, and interested students could opt in. Such a strategy works like a “reach” strategy where the most effective teachers reach more students.¹⁷ Those choosing the option would know they'd get top-tier instruction and could take one less course during the traditional school year (reducing the number of teachers needed during the school year).

¹⁵ Jim Simpkins and Marguerite Roza, “The Real Deal on K-12 Staffing,” Edonomics Lab, December 2014. <http://edonomicslab.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/K-12staffingLevels-PDF-12.5.pdf>.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ For more information on “Reach” strategies, see Public Impact's work in this area at <http://opportunityculture.org/>

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- Allow more flexibility for students' workload: Where students choose to take a summer class, they'd get a reduced workload in the school year. Some students might appreciate the reduced school year load, especially struggling students for whom school work presents a larger burden. Such a schedule might also appeal to students who would prefer a reduced school year workload to accommodate outside employment or athletic commitments.
- Reduce "summer slide" with redesigned intervention support: At the elementary level, students who need reading intervention might be offered a summer reading boot camp from a strong teacher. For some children, that would help enough to replace pullout services during the school year—they could stay in their regular classroom throughout the year, reducing the need for some special education or other intervention staff. Some parents would appreciate the extra childcare coverage, and the students might avert the well-documented harm of summer slide.¹⁸
- Restructure support services to add time: Could intense English-language programs be made available to recent immigrants during the summer? Could some students needing specialized services, like speech therapy, be served during non-typical school days such as mid-term breaks or summer vacation? For those students, the services would yield more schooling time and likely fewer interruptions during the existing school year. Given the evidence that many students need more instructional time, another school might add three weeks of half-day schooling in August as a jumpstart program for low-income students, instead of augmenting their program during the fixed 180 days of the school year with compensatory funds and separate staff.
- Add time as a tradeoff for smaller classes: One school might offer its entire staff the option of adding weeks to the school schedule instead of lowering class sizes, an approach that would appeal to those who want to earn more money and aren't convinced they would necessarily get better results with a couple fewer kids per class.

These are but a few creative options; there are likely many more. Some of the options may meet districts' desires to lengthen their school year. When districts have adopted longer school years, they have usually had to find additional funding streams to pay for them, making such programs an unsustainable or impossible option for most districts.¹⁹ This approach offers a way to expand learning time without the need for new resources. No proposal will be feasible in every setting, as staff and parents in different locales have varying appetites for change. Each school will need to make its own calculations regarding what tradeoffs are worthwhile.

¹⁸ K.L. Alexander, Entwisle, D.R., & Olson, L.S., "Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap," *American Sociological Review*, 72(2), 167-180. (2007).

¹⁹ Mokoto Rich, "To Increase Learning Time, Some Schools Add Days to the Academic Year," *The New York Times*, August 5, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/06/education/some-schools-adopting-longer-years-to-improve-learning.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. The article discusses Balsz School District in Arizona, which received additional state funding to support increasing the school year by 20 instructional days. The article also cites two schools forced to end longer school years due to insufficient funding.

The upside for teacher salaries varies by state

Low teacher salaries remain a pressing concern, as evidenced by new reports from the Center for American Progress and TNTP.²⁰ These studies focus exclusively on the need to raise salaries, but a true understanding of teacher compensation and potential solutions must consider the tradeoffs in terms of the number of staff, the length of the labor year, and the role of the benefits bill.

As shown in Figure 3, which relies on national averages, teachers could earn more in a shift to a longer work year. But how much more depends on the local cost structure. The last step of this analysis examines the state-by-state cost factors in order to compute how much of a pay increase teachers could expect by shifting to such a model. Using the 2012-13 state-by-state average number of students per certificated staff and average teacher salaries,²¹ this analysis computes the pay increment teachers could expect if six weeks were added to their labor contract. Table 1 reports that salary increment by state and the amount of funds per pupil that could be repurposed with the savings on the incremental benefits, assuming reallocations of time result in a corresponding reduction in total staff FTE.

The salary increase teachers could expect with six additional weeks of work varies from \$7,172 in South Dakota to \$13,564 in New York. Overall, teachers could expect to see pay grow by approximately 18%.

²⁰ Ulrich Boser and Chelsea Straus, "Mid- and Late-Career Teachers Struggle with Paltry Incomes." Center for American Progress, July 23, 2014, accessed on July 30, 2014. <<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/07/23/94168/mid-and-late-career-teachers-struggle-with-paltry-incomes/>>. Shortchanged: The Hidden Costs of Lockstep Teacher Pay," TNTP, July 15, 2014, <http://tntp.org/publications/view/shortchanged-the-hidden-costs-of-lockstep-teacher-pay>.

²¹ Table 1 data from Rankings and Estimate: Rankings of the States 2013 and Estimates of School Statistics 2014, NEA Research, March 2014. Average salary taken from Table C-18. Average Salaries Instructional Staff in Public Schools, 2012-13; staff counts are from Summary Table E: Estimated Number of Instructional Staff Members in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2012-13 and staffing ratios from Table C-6: Students Enrolled Per Teacher in Public K-12 Schools, Falper pupil calculated by dividing the benefit amount per teacher by number of students per 7 teachers in that state.

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Table 1: Teacher pay increase associated with six additional weeks of work

STATE	Salary Increase Per Teacher for 6 Additional Contract Weeks	Per-Pupil Benefits Savings	STATE	Salary Increase Per Teacher for 6 Additional Contract Weeks	Per-Pupil Benefits Savings
Alabama	\$8,801	\$131	Missouri	\$9,040	\$162
Alaska	\$11,809	\$210	Montana	\$8,824	\$156
Arizona	\$8,803	\$119	Nebraska	\$8,647	\$209
Arkansas	\$8,767	\$138	Nevada	\$9,959	\$130
California	\$9,839	\$94	New Hampshire	\$9,812	\$192
Colorado	\$12,368	\$166	New Jersey	\$12,881	\$254
Connecticut	\$9,202	\$165	New Mexico	\$8,405	\$133
Delaware	\$12,247	\$203	New York	\$13,564	\$268
DC	\$11,163	\$215	North Carolina	\$8,071	\$127
Florida	\$12,513	\$188	North Dakota	\$8,675	\$168
Georgia	\$8,459	\$128	Ohio	\$10,812	\$147
Hawaii	\$9,773	\$146	Oklahoma	\$8,156	\$120
Idaho	\$9,148	\$118	Oregon	\$10,674	\$116
Illinois	\$10,432	\$155	Pennsylvania	\$11,444	\$186
Indiana	\$8,839	\$113	Rhode Island	\$12,145	\$215
Iowa	\$9,407	\$156	South Carolina	\$8,960	\$148
Kansas	\$8,605	\$147	South Dakota	\$7,172	\$123
Kentucky	\$9,264	\$139	Tennessee	\$8,761	\$138
Louisiana	\$9,522	\$163	Texas	\$9,122	\$140
Maine	\$8,818	\$168	Utah	\$9,101	\$100
Maryland	\$12,020	\$194	Vermont	\$9,547	\$246
Massachusetts	\$12,765	\$217	Virginia	\$8,950	\$172
Michigan	\$10,864	\$140	Washington	\$9,762	\$117
Minnesota	\$10,819	\$161	West Virginia	\$8,380	\$139
Mississippi	\$7,726	\$120	Wisconsin	\$10,210	\$156
			Wyoming	\$10,385	\$198

Would teachers take the deal?

It is hard to predict what portion of the existing workforce would find such a proposition appealing. We do know that many teachers already work outside their contracted schedule to earn more money. According to the Schools and Staffing Survey, 50% of teachers in 2011-12 chose to take on additional responsibilities within their district to earn more (often coaching or other stipend-based work from their school districts), and 16% took second jobs outside the district.²² A study in Texas found that a whopping 56% of teachers reported taking second jobs.²³ Given evidence from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that moonlighting is more common for teachers than for other professionals,²⁴ there is some possibility that a substantial share of teachers would prefer to work more and earn more.

A longer work year could also mean that the teaching profession might attract or retain people who wouldn't have otherwise considered teaching because of its paltry annual pay. Teachers reported an average of \$2,500 for additional duties within the school system and \$4,800 from outside jobs.²⁵ Those amounts are much lower than what could be offered through this proposal. And higher salaries would not only make teaching positions more attractive to incoming staff, they could also help to alleviate high levels of turnover among existing staff.²⁶

Fewer staff, longer year: an idea worth considering.

Certainly, this approach comes with various considerations and complications, but they can be addressed. While a longer work year for teachers means keeping schools open more days, which may increase transportation and infrastructure expenses, some of these costs could be covered by the savings in benefits or counteracted by decreased recruitment and training costs as fewer new teachers need to be hired. In order to raise the pay for those teachers who do want to add more weeks while still realizing cost savings, a district will need to decrease the overall number of staff. Because doing so through layoffs is inevitably disruptive, districts and schools might add extra weeks into some teachers' schedules as they experience teacher attrition or enrollment growth. While change is difficult in many communities, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders may come on board eagerly if they are given good information about the potential benefits of this path toward greater productivity.

And those benefits are many.

1. Teachers could earn substantially more annually. On average, the addition of six weeks to a labor contract would raise average teacher salaries by 18%. Those salary gains are essentially cost neutral for a district if accompanied by a corresponding reduction in overall staff counts.
2. Districts would see a reduction in benefits costs. Because districts would be able to employ fewer teachers, the benefits bill would drop by an average of \$168 per pupil, funds that could be redeployed elsewhere. Those savings would grow, given that benefits costs escalate faster than other district cost factors.

²² Schools and Staffing Survey: Table 6. "Among regular full-time public school teachers, average base salary and earnings from all sources, percentage of teachers with earnings from various salary supplements, and among those teachers, the average amount earned from the supplement during the current school year, by state: 2011–12," National Center for Education Statistics, available at http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013314_t1s_006.asp

²³ According to "Teachers, Moonlighting, and Morale," a study that involves a series of biennial surveys, the percentage of Texas public school teachers working summer jobs stood at 56% in 2010. This represents the highest figure on record over the last three decades in which the survey was conducted. "2010 Texas Teachers, Moonlighting and Morale Survey," Sam Houston State University, 2010, accessed August 2014, http://www.tsta.org/sites/default/files/Moonlight_release_data.pdf.

²⁴ Steven F. Hipple, Multiple Jobholding during the 2000s. Monthly Labor Review, June 2010.

²⁵ Schools and Staffing Survey: Table 6. "Among regular full-time public school teachers, average base salary and earnings from all sources, percentage of teachers with earnings from various salary supplements, and among those teachers, the average amount earned from the supplement during the current school year, by state: 2011–12," National Center for Education Statistics, available at http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013314_t1s_006.asp

²⁶ Dan Goldhaber, "Teacher Pay Reforms: The Political Implications of Recent Research," Center for American Progress, published online May 2009, accessed July 30, 2014, http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2006/12/pdf/teacher_pay_report.pdf.

3. More students could have access to better teachers. Reduced teacher rolls means districts can be more selective in hiring. And when districts utilize top teachers to teach courses or provide specialized services during the summer, more students benefit from their skills.
4. Some students could get more time in school and avert summer slide. Shifting some services from the school year to the summer would not only increase the number of hours students are served, it would also help avert the learning losses typical in summer months.

This concept is likely not ripe for large-scale implementation, but rather could serve as a guiding principle for school and staffing redesigns. Or where individual schools have discretion over their calendars and delivery models, they could experiment on a small scale, or allow some teachers within the school to select this contract while other teachers may choose to remain in the traditional model. To guide such experimentation, leaders should ask: Are there ways to offer more work to existing staff members, and offer struggling students more total time, rather than hiring for new positions and leaving instructional time constant?

There is good reason to believe that, like other service sectors, public education could be redesigned toward greater labor productivity and a more sustainable cost structure, particularly since many of the staffing additions were made in the last decade. But education leaders have to take a hard look at their cost factors, with an eye to redesigned delivery models that leverage resources toward greater productivity. It's clear that exploring the potential savings—and opportunities—of a longer contract year for teachers is a promising step in the right direction.



THIS SERIES OF RAPID RESPONSE BRIEFS IS DESIGNED TO BRING RELEVANT FISCAL ANALYSES TO POLICYMAKERS AND EDUCATION LEADERS AMIDST THE CURRENT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT.

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