

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Stephen Buckley
National Council on Teacher Quality
sbuckley@nctq.org
(202) 393-0020 ext. 129

**Eight Districts Win First-Ever Great Districts for Great Teachers Initiative;
School Districts Proved Greatness Through 18-Month Evaluation**

***Winners Chosen for Practices that Support & Encourage Great Teachers;
Great Districts Will Serve as Models for Others***

Austin, TX--Eight school districts just became the nation's first-ever Great Districts for Great Teachers. This new honor, developed by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), recognizes districts for their exceptional programs and policies on recruiting, encouraging, supporting, and retaining great teachers. These winners are:

- Boston Public Schools
- Broward County Public Schools (Florida)
- Denver Public Schools
- District of Columbia Public Schools
- Gwinnett County Public Schools (Georgia)
- New York City Department of Education
- Pinellas County Schools (Florida)
- Pittsburgh Public Schools

These eight Great Districts have proven themselves national leaders in developing great teachers, so that they, in turn, can deliver great instruction to their students. NCTQ declared two of these districts -- District of Columbia Public Schools and Gwinnett County Public Schools -- to be Outstanding Great Districts for exceeding the organization's benchmarks and demonstrating exceptional achievement.

In addition, NCTQ named four honorable mention districts:

- Duval County Public Schools (Florida), for teacher support and feedback
- Indianapolis Public Schools, for staffing structures
- Newark Public Schools (New Jersey), for compensation and evaluation
- School District of Osceola County (Florida), for professional support

NCTQ announced these winners at the South by Southwest EDU conference in Austin, TX. This is the first year NCTQ has named Great Districts for Great Teachers.

"We first conceived the Great Districts for Great Teachers initiative over a year ago as a way to celebrate the good work on the part of so many school districts," said Kate Walsh, President of NCTQ. "We hope these winners will inspire other districts in their own transformations so that sometime soon, all districts will be great districts where great people want to work."

To develop the criteria districts would need to meet to earn this honor, NCTQ obtained the input of great teachers in focus groups and surveys and examined what research has concluded about best practices, as well as the organization's own extensive experience analyzing district human capital policies and practices.

The eight winners excelled in five key areas: compensation, professional support, effective management and operations, career and leadership opportunities, and support services for students.

Some of the criteria included:

- Substantial salaries provide a good standard of living, and the district rewards excellence in multiple ways;
- Professional development and coaching are tailored to teachers' needs and include sufficient collaborative planning time;
- Schools are run efficiently, with evidence that the district allows schools to make decisions in their own best interest;
- Teachers have multiple opportunities to tackle leadership roles; and,
- Districts offer vital support that enables great teachers to meet the needs of their students.

"We are proud to have been named a Great District for Great Teachers winner and that our work to recruit, reward, and recognize our teachers is getting noticed," said J. Alvin Wilbanks, CEO/Superintendent, Gwinnett County Public Schools. "We have some of the most outstanding educators in the profession and their dedication to their students and to providing a world-class education for students is a driving force in our district's success.... This national recognition is a testament to the hard work our teachers do every day and our district's work to support and develop educators."

"Great teachers transform the lives of their students," said Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education 2009-2016. "Great districts understand their most important job is to get great teachers into every single one of their classrooms, and support them in the complex, critically important work they do every day."

In choosing the winners, researchers conducted an 18-month analysis, carefully evaluating data from districts' teacher contracts, examining documents and data, and surveying and interviewing teachers. NCTQ staff verified the selected finalists through focus groups with teachers and interviews with district leaders in each district.

"Pinellas County Schools is honored to be selected as a Great District for Great Teachers," said Dr. Michael A. Grego, Superintendent, Pinellas County Schools. "Our successes, especially the academic achievements made by students, are possible because of dedicated teachers. We strive to make educators feel supported from the moment they are hired until they retire... I want to thank our teachers for their commitment to students and to their growth as educators."

“Supporting and aiding great teachers is the best way to shape a better future for all students,” said Sarah Heaton, NCTQ’s Managing Director of District Policy and Practice, who ran this initiative. “By recognizing great teachers and building their leadership potential, these Great Districts magnify the impact of great teachers beyond the walls of their individual classrooms.”

Sponsors of this initiative include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Heinz Endowments, and the Walton Family Foundation.

More details about the program can be found at www.greatdistricts.org.

For additional information or to arrange an interview with Kate Walsh or Sarah Heaton please contact Stephen Buckley at (202) 393-0020 ext. 129.

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About the National Council on Teacher Quality:

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a nonpartisan research and policy group, committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. NCTQ is the nation’s expert on the quality of teacher preparation programs and evaluates national teacher education against evidence-based criteria. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org