

Great Lakes Center for Education, Research and Practice: Report critical of teacher absences fails to provide thoughtful analysis, review finds

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EAST LANSING, Mich. (Nov. 7, 2017) — A report issued by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in September attempted to compare the rates of teacher absences for teachers in public schools and charter schools. The report called on policymakers to address high rates of teacher absenteeism through ESSA implementation plans in order to hold teachers more accountable. However, an academic review released today finds that the report lacks support for its major claims, ignores known discrepancies in data, and draws unwarranted conclusions.

Patricia H. Hinchey, Penn State University, reviewed the report, *Teacher Absenteeism in Charter and Traditional Public Schools*, for the Think Twice think tank review project. Think Twice, a project of the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), is funded by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The report claimed that teachers who are allowed more absences were more frequently absent and recommended less generous leave policies be implemented. Its rationale was that absences cost taxpayers money and harm student performance.

In her review, Hinchey says that the report cited resources in highly selective ways and ignored large bodies of contradictory research. Of particular concern to Hinchey was the use of the term 'chronic absenteeism' or 'chronically absent,' which she felt "misrepresents the data" and "appears intended to create a national alarmist picture unwarranted either by the data or by other research."

Regarding the use of 'chronically absent' for teachers, Hinchey reminds that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of education defines 'frequently absent' as 10+ days, while the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) uses 18+ days for 'chronically absent.' By characterizing teachers as 'chronically absent' after just 10+ days, the report according to Hinchey "imposes negative connotations on data unique to this report."

In her conclusion, Hinchey writes: "This report offers little new information, and what it does offer is of no use in determining policy." Hinchey recommends that the important topic of analyzing teacher absences should be more thoughtfully presented with high-quality research evidence.

Find Hinchey's review on the GLC website:

<http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

Find the Fordham report on the web at:

<https://edexcellence.net/publications/teacher-absenteeism>

Think Twice, a project of the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), provides the public, policymakers and the press with timely, academically sound reviews of selected publications. The project is made possible by funding from the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The review can also be found on the NEPC website:

<http://nepc.colorado.edu>