



## The Oregonian

### District, teachers near hiring agreement

Portland schools - A study last fall recommended overhauling the system

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The Portland School District has reached a tentative agreement with its teachers on an issue that has been contentious for at least a decade: the hiring and transferring of teachers.

The district will make details of the new agreement public later this week but the changes will improve the experience for both sides, said Richard Clarke, district chief of human resources.

Teachers are voting on the agreement this week. Leaders with the Portland Association of Teachers did not return several phone calls seeking comment.

The new plan calls for condensing the district's three-round system of hiring and transferring teachers, according to information provided to the district's teachers. One major change to the system includes giving teachers a cash incentive if they declare their retirement before April 15.

Portland begins hiring and transferring teachers in spring along with many area districts, but it doesn't conclude internal transfers until mid-August and continues filling positions through the start of school.

A study released last fall by the New York-based New Teacher Project said the process hinders the district's ability to compete for the best candidates, and it recommended that the district and teachers' union work to overhaul the current system.

Clarke said the agreement accomplishes the district's major goals: reducing turnover, giving teachers and principals greater choice and making sure there are strong instructional teams at each school.

But, key parent and community groups said the agreement takes the system's three major issues -- forced placement of teachers, length of the hiring process and impact on low-income schools -- and makes them worse.

"The process will be more drawn out," said Jonah Edelman, executive director of Stand for Children. "There will be the same amount of forced placement. And it will cause low-income schools to wait even longer to get teachers, and it will make their situation more unfair. It's an incredible sell-out of students."

Portland Public Schools has long wanted to discuss the hiring policy with the teachers union. In 2003, city and county officials pressured the district to back away from the policy as they worked to navigate a funding crisis and avoid a teacher strike.

Officials and community leaders say the New Teacher Project's report gave a joint hiring, assignment and transfer committee, formed in 2003, the independent analysis and additional impetus to seek changes. The report was funded partly by the district and an outside grant.

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