



# It Is Time To Reform Teacher Tenure In Missouri

Published on *Show-Me Institute* (<https://showmeinstitute.org>)



By: Audrey Spalding

It is no secret that Missouri Rep. Scott Dieckhaus (R-Washington, Mo.) is not a fan of Missouri's teacher tenure law. Last year, [he filed legislation to require annual teacher evaluations](#) . Under that bill, the public school teachers who perform best would receive four-year teaching contracts, and those performing the worst would receive single-year contracts. If poor teachers failed to improve, they could be terminated.

There also was good news for some teachers in [Dieckhaus' 2011 legislation](#) . The proposal called for the best teachers to be paid *at least twice as much as the poorest-performing teachers*. While this may seem like common sense (why not pay the best teachers more, as a reward for their effort?), it runs contrary to the current system of paying Missouri public school teachers.

The 2011 legislation did not pass. However, [Dieckhaus is considering submitting tenure reform legislation again this year](#) . The bill is not yet available, but I have listed two areas of reform that are needed to help improve student academic achievement in Missouri. Our priority should be educating children, not rewarding those who happen to have been teaching for the longest period of time.

**Let's pay good teachers more:** In Missouri, teachers are paid under what is known as a "teacher salary schedule." Broadly, teachers who have more years of experience and higher levels of education are paid more ([here is an example](#) ). At many school districts, these are the

only components of teacher pay — teachers who teach difficult subjects, at-risk students, and teachers who have the best track record of helping students learn do not get a pay boost.

Teachers who do a poor job of teaching students can actually earn more than the good teachers if the poor teachers have a higher education level and/or more years of teaching experience.

Dieckhaus told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 2011 that "It's time we move away from paying people based on how long they've been teaching and what piece of paper they have hanging on the wall." I certainly agree.

Paired with the issue of teacher compensation is the question of how to deal with teachers who have a track record of *failing to teach students*. *Right now, those teachers can stay at a district for years, if not indefinitely.*

**Let's help school districts get rid of bad teachers:** State law awards teachers "indefinite contracts" if they have taught at the same school district for at least five years. These "permanent teachers" can be terminated, but only through a lengthy process. If a school district terminates a teacher (after going through all of the [notification requirements specified by state law](#)), [that teacher can appeal the termination, triggering a court case](#). If the teacher wins in court, the school district must pay that teacher all of the compensation he or she would have received had he or she stayed at the district during the period of appeal.

I suppose that if you are trying to discourage teacher termination, the above makes sense. But, as a state, our concern should not be to hire and keep on as many teachers as possible. We should instead be concerned with how to provide quality education to students. Allowing failing teachers to continue to teach students does nothing to help students, and may be hurting them.

It is an uncomfortable truth, but one we must acknowledge. As [U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan put it](#), "We can no longer pretend that all teachers or all principals are from Lake Woebegone where everyone is above average." Many academic studies have shown that teacher quality matters. Eric Hanushek, an education economist at Stanford University, has shown that [good teachers can teach students three times as much as bad teachers — in a single year](#). Improving student academic achievement can be achieved in part by attracting more good teachers to the profession, and encouraging the bad teachers to leave the field.

I hope that the 2012 teacher tenure reform legislation can help enable school districts to have more autonomy when it comes to rewarding good teachers and terminating the worst teachers. When the full text of the bill becomes available, I will post my take on it here.

## About the Author



*Audrey Spalding*

## Read Online

<https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/school-choice/it-time-reform-teacher-tenure-missouri>

## Links

- [1] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/school-choice/it-time-reform-teacher-tenure-missouri>
- [2] [http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/political-fix/article\\_0677afec-451e-11e0-ad8f-0017a4a78c22.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/political-fix/article_0677afec-451e-11e0-ad8f-0017a4a78c22.html)
- [3] <http://house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills111/biltxt/intro/HB0628l.htm>
- [4] [http://www.stltoday.com/news/state-and-regional/missouri/missouri-considers-changes-to-teacher-tenu-re/article\\_33c5c91b-501e-587d-a485-8650bbb1612d.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/state-and-regional/missouri/missouri-considers-changes-to-teacher-tenu-re/article_33c5c91b-501e-587d-a485-8650bbb1612d.html)
- [5] <http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us/bcs/bcsbus/PDF%20Files/2011-12%20Teacher%20Schedule.pdf>
- [6] <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/C100-199/1680000116.HTM>
- [7] <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/C100-199/1680000120.HTM>
- [8] <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/working-toward-wow-vision-new-teaching-profession>
- [9] <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1001507-Higher-Teacher-Quality.pdf>

## Mission Statement

Advancing liberty with responsibility by promoting market solutions for Missouri public policy.

## Show-Me Institute

5297 Washington Place	3645 Troost Avenue
Saint Louis, MO 63108	Kansas City, MO 64109
Phone: (314) 454-0647	Phone: (816) 287-0370
Fax: (314) 454-0667	

Email: [info@showmeinstitute.org](mailto:info@showmeinstitute.org)

## Support Our Work

The Show-Me Institute is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Make your tax deductible contribution today: <http://ShowMeInstitute.org/donate>