

# Teacher Assignment in Low-income Schools

Susan Moore Johnson

Project on the Next Generation of Teachers

Harvard Graduate School of Education

June, 2007

# Who Gets the “Best” Teachers?

## **What does “the best” mean?**

- Those with the best preparation
- Those with the highest test scores (SAT, certification)
- Those with master’s degrees
- Those with National Board Certification
- Those who are experienced
- Those who are new
- Those the school wants



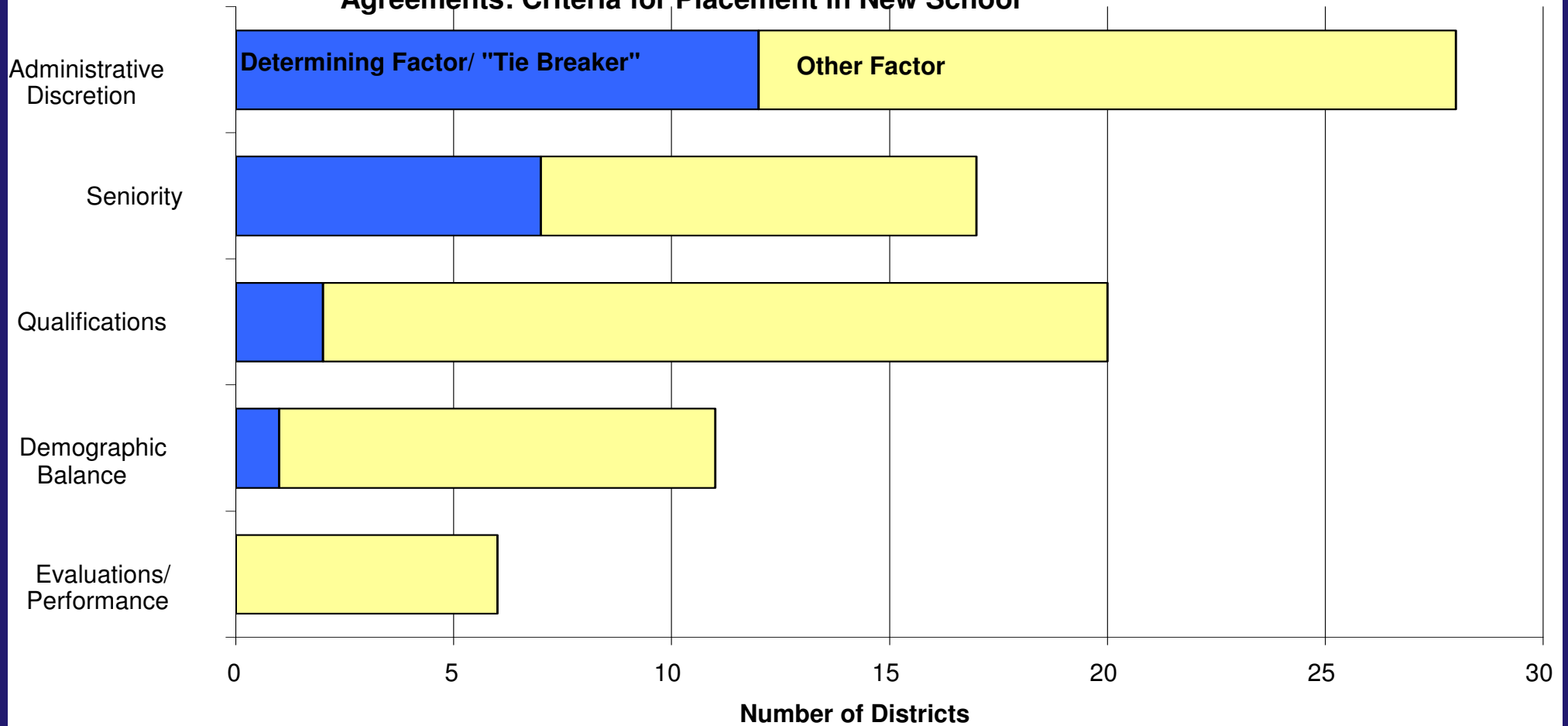
# *Unintended Consequences*

## The New Teacher Project, 2005

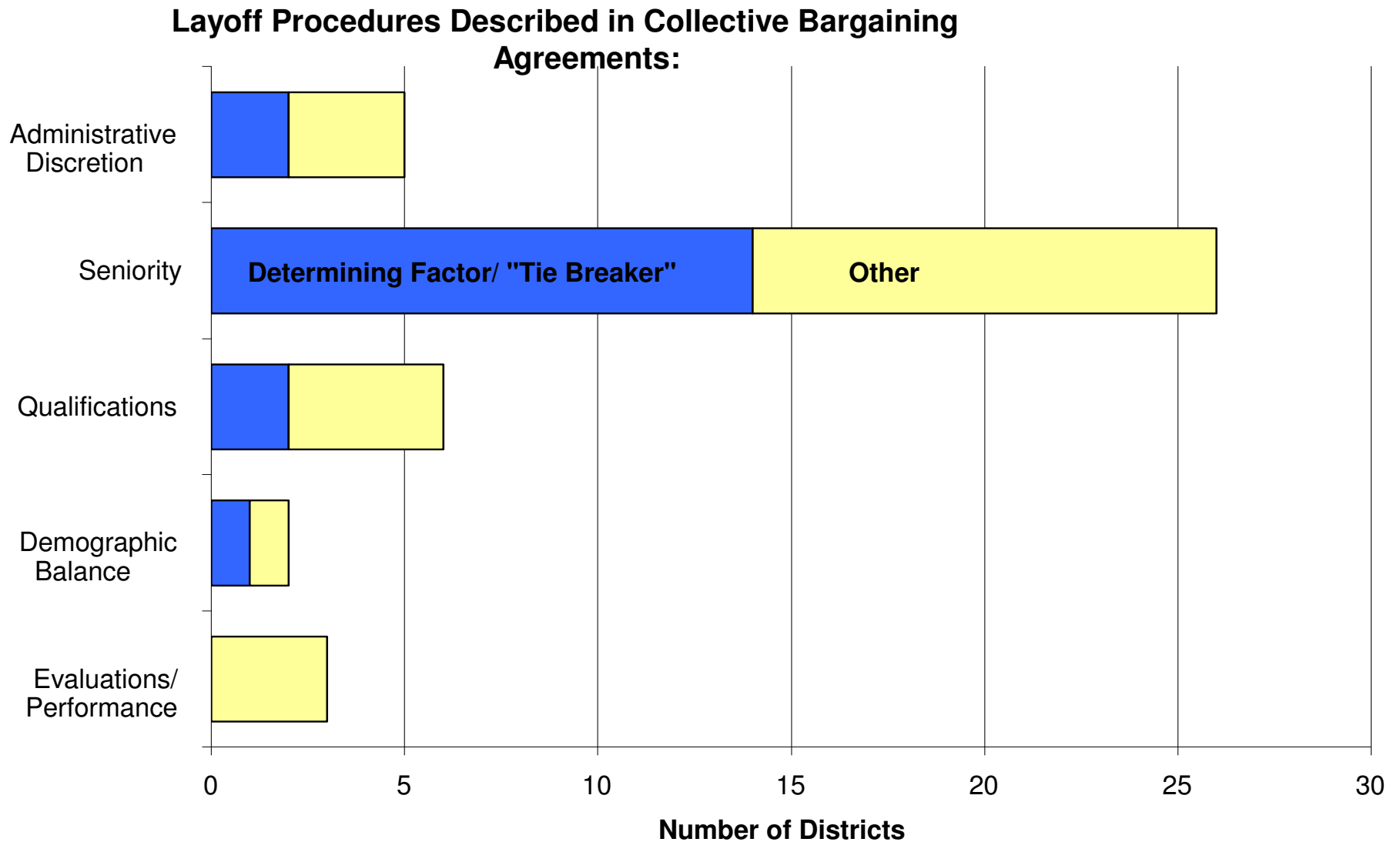
“Contractual staffing rules strip urban schools of their ability to hire and keep the best possible teachers, treat new teachers as expendable, and result in poor performers being passed from school to school” (press release)

# Seniority in Transfers: Evidence from 30 Contracts

**Voluntary Transfer Procedures Described in Collective Bargaining Agreements: Criteria for Placement in New School**



# Seniority in Layoffs: Evidence from 30 Contracts



# A Timetable that Supports the Schools

- Plan positions and openings at the schools
- Layoffs and involuntary transfers because of enrollment changes or program cuts (who must leave?)
- Assignments for current, tenured teachers who have no position (involuntary transfers and those returning from leave)
- Voluntary transfers
- Hire new teachers

# Reforming Teacher Assignment in Boston

- Reduced role of seniority in transfers (1985-2000)
- Negotiated a new timetable for assignment (2000)
- Created opportunities for open posting and early hiring by the schools
- Reformed the district's human resource office
- Stopped the "dance of the lemons"; prohibit involuntary transfers
- Supervised principals in procedures for tenure and dismissal

(Johnson and Donaldson, 2006. "The Effects of Collective Bargaining on Teacher Quality")

# Addressing the Factors that Affect Staffing

- *Collective bargaining agreement*
  - Minimize role of seniority in transfers
  - Negotiate an accelerated timetable for transfers and hiring
  - Open hiring and transfers simultaneously
  - Grant schools more control over who is placed there
  - Prohibit transfers of unsatisfactory teachers
- *State and city*
  - Approve budget in a timely way to permit early hiring
  - Require timely retirement

# Addressing the Factors that Affect Staffing

- *HR policies and practices*

- Make realistic job projections; Avoid unnecessary layoffs
- Prepare for timely posting and assignment of candidates
- Use technology to track candidates
- Maintain contact with candidates until jobs are open
- Support schools in making hiring decisions
- Assist principals in evaluation and dismissal practices

- *School leadership and working conditions*

- Assign *best* principals to hard-to-staff schools
- Provide induction and support for new teachers
- Ensure that schools are well maintained and have sufficient resources and professional opportunities for teachers
- Evaluate all teachers in all schools regularly. Tenure only effective teachers. Dismiss weak teachers

# Project on the Next Generation of Teachers

[www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt)