

Opinion: School districts should change format for layoffs

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Feb. 26, 2011, Sacramento Bee.*

More than 20,000 public school teachers in California have received pink slips during each of the last three years. The state's ongoing economic and budget troubles mean that trend is likely to continue with upcoming March 15 layoff notices.

Unfortunately, the distribution of layoffs is anything but equitable because districts rely on "last-in, first-out" rules.

Few veteran teachers experience layoffs, while the newest teachers are hit hard. Sign a contract a few minutes later than your colleagues and you're out, regardless of how effective you are as a teacher.

And because the newest teachers tend to be the lowest paid, districts have to lay off more teachers than if layoffs were balanced across the teacher corps.

The result is that many schools experience no layoffs, while high-poverty, high-minority schools often are decimated – creating a cycle of turnover and instability.

It doesn't have to be that way. For this March 15 round of layoff notices, districts should vow to do things differently.

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