

# Teaching at Risk:

# A Call to Action



THE  
TEACHING  
COMMISSION

# The Teaching Commission

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**THE TEACHING COMMISSION**

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**THE TEACHING COMMISSION**



# About The Teaching Commission

**E**STABLISHED AND CHAIRED by Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., the former Chairman of IBM, The Teaching Commission seeks to raise student performance by transforming the way in which America's public school teachers are recruited and retained.

This goal is already part of the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires that every classroom have a "highly qualified" teacher by the 2005-2006 school year and that each state develop a specific plan for reaching that goal. But without better guidance and a more extensive set of standards specifying what it means to be highly qualified, we fear that the objective will remain elusive and unfulfilled. Education reformers worry that states with teacher shortages may lower the bar or simply maintain their inadequate existing requirements.

The Commission's strategy is twofold: (1) to bring a national sense of urgency to luring and keeping the best and brightest in the teaching profession; and (2) to muster the political will to act on recommendations for putting a high-quality teacher in every classroom.

The Teaching Commission is a diverse group, comprising 19 leaders in government, business, and education. Gaining complete consensus is never easy for any commission. Our members have unanimously signed off on the report, recognizing that individual members would give greater or lesser emphasis to particular recommendations or prefer one method over another for achieving our desired outcomes.

The purpose of this report is to offer specific policy recommendations that will break through the barriers to meaningful improvement efforts—such as low standards, low, lockstep pay, mistrust of efforts to identify what makes for effective teaching, education schools out of touch with current school needs, and outmoded and inflexible work rules and district regulations—so that student learning, rather than teacher protection, is the number one priority. But The Commission will not measure its success solely by what it recommends. The true test of its effectiveness will be its ability to bring these ideas to life at the federal, state, and local levels.

**THE TEACHING COMMISSION**





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**THE TEACHING COMMISSION**



# Preface



The United States enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an undisputed world leader. Despite difficult challenges at home and abroad, we still have the world's strongest economy, and American business continues to inspire growth and development across the globe.

## THE TEACHING COMMISSION

But our nation is at a crossroads. We will not continue to lead if we persist in viewing teaching—the profession that makes all other professions possible—as a second-rate occupation. Nothing is more vital to our future than ensuring that we attract and retain the best teachers in our public schools.

Over the next decade, we will need to bring two million new teachers into our nation’s public schools—700,000 in urban areas alone. Filling these openings with the best talent will be a tall order, especially in inner-city schools, where half of all new teachers quit within three years.

We must invest in the future of our children and our nation by ensuring that all students have the best teachers possible. Such an investment will necessarily compete with other demands on our national resources. But if done wisely, it will ultimately pay for itself by improving productivity and reducing costs associated with remediation.

The Teaching Commission believes that the moment is ripe to move the debate past old stalemates and toward a new consensus on meaningful reform, to break the cycle in which low-performing college students far too often become the teachers of low-performing students in public schools.

This report calls for a new compact with teachers, built around clear and attainable goals that recognize teachers for excellence while ensuring that those who do not pull their weight will not bring others down with them. The compact would include raising teacher salaries, something most Americans firmly support, while also asking teachers to be measured and compensated based on their classroom performance, including the academic

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gains made by their students. We also propose higher pay for teaching subjects such as math and science, and for working in our toughest classrooms.

This plan will require commitment on all sides. In exchange for accepting performance-based accountability, teachers would receive greatly improved training and support—including mentoring for new teachers and ongoing and targeted professional development for everyone—to help them meet these demanding new standards. Such a system would make teaching more rewarding, while helping students achieve their goals.

As part of this effort, university presidents will be asked to recruit many more of their best and brightest into teaching and to ensure that they are properly trained. States must raise licensing standards substantially while also streamlining the certification process so that talented individuals who choose to teach later in life are encouraged to enter the profession.

Teachers want to be great and our children deserve no less. For many teachers, their profession is a calling rather than just a job. But the public school system currently offers virtually no incentives to reward excellence, and a system that does not reward excellence is unlikely to inspire it.

Helping our teachers to succeed and enabling our children to learn is an investment in human potential, one that is essential to guaranteeing America's future freedom and prosperity.

—LOUIS V. GERSTNER, JR.  
CHAIRMAN, THE TEACHING COMMISSION  
FORMER CHAIRMAN, IBM

# Introduction



ALL GOOD SCHOOLS have one thing in common: good teachers. Top-quality teaching fosters high student achievement—and high achievers can harness their talents and energies to become successful, contributing citizens.

Look around the world. In country after country, the most vibrant and stable economies draw their strength from a well-educated, highly skilled citizenry.

This should serve as a reminder that teaching, our nation's most valuable profession, is vital to our continued economic well-being and civic stability.

The Teaching Commission, a diverse group of veteran educators, policy makers, and business leaders, believes that too many American schools have languished for too long despite decades of repeated warnings. If the United States is to remain the world's leading economy—and simply because it is the right thing to do—we must make bold efforts to improve the quality of education for the nearly 50 million young people in our public schools. And we believe that excellent teaching, which combines passion and art along with academic prowess, has the potential to be the great equalizer.

There is plenty of evidence that educational changes are needed. Just over two decades ago, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, drawing widespread attention to the sorry state of American schools. Thanks in large part to that landmark report, a powerful consensus soon emerged to reform American education. Politicians, business leaders, educators, and ordinary citizens joined together to push for a quality education for all students.

Yet for all these efforts to fix our schools, academic achievement is still disappointing. While we have seen a welcome rise in recent national math scores, overall test

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scores are still at about the levels they were in 1970.<sup>1</sup> Less than one-third of U.S. fourth-graders meet the “proficient” standard on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).<sup>2</sup> High-school graduation rates have actually declined when equivalency diplomas of questionable value are excluded.<sup>3</sup> And international comparisons show that American teens continue to lag behind high-school students in many other industrialized nations in math and science.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps most troubling, large discrepancies persist between poor and minority students and their peers. Fourth-graders in high-poverty schools score dramatically lower on NAEP reading tests than the general population: over 85 percent fail to reach the proficient level.<sup>5</sup> Black and Hispanic 12th-graders score on average the same as white eighth-graders.<sup>6</sup> The Education Trust reports that 33 percent of every 100 white kindergartners ultimately go on to obtain at least a bachelor’s degree. The proportion of African-American kindergartners who later earn four-year degrees? Just 18 percent.<sup>7</sup>

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, an extension of the standards and accountability movement that many states began embracing in the 1990s, seeks to close these stark gaps and ensure a “highly qualified” teacher for every classroom. The law has set the ambitious target of bringing all children to academic proficiency by 2014—an admirable goal that will require extraordinary efforts to reach.

**T**ODAY’S WORRISOME educational disparities underscore the far-reaching stake we all have in the quality of our nation’s schools. On the social front, dramatic achievement gaps—whether by race or socioeconomic status—risk undermining the American promise of upward mobility through education. In economic terms, our nation can ill afford a poorly educated labor force that cannot support continued growth. Economists warn that in a competitive global economy, all citizens must continually race to obtain new, higher skills, just to stay in place.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the costs of a poorly educated population are huge. As a nation, we spend billions of dollars every year on programs that seek to compensate for the



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shortcomings of our education system. It is estimated that addressing the lack of basic skills among students and employees costs billions to institutions of higher education and businesses each year.<sup>9</sup> Raising student achievement, says economist Eric Hanushek of Stanford University's Hoover Institution, "is directly related to individual productivity and earnings and to national economic growth."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in an analysis conducted for The Teaching Commission, Hanushek estimates that significant improvements in

education over a 20-year period could lead to as much as a 4 percent addition to the Gross Domestic Product.<sup>11</sup> In today's terms, that would be over \$400 billion, an amount that rivals total current expenditure on K-12 public education.<sup>12</sup>

What can be done to fix the problems that persist in American public education? The Teaching Commission firmly believes that the missing link has been an intense, sustained, and effective campaign to revamp our country's teaching force.

Bolstering teacher quality is, of course, not the only challenge we face as we seek to strengthen public education. There are social problems, financial obstacles, and facilities issues, among other concerns. But The Teaching Commission believes that quality teachers are the critical factor in helping young people overcome the damaging effects of poverty, lack of parental guidance, and other challenges. As The Education Trust's Kati Haycock points out, "A decade ago . . . we believed that what students learned was largely a factor of their family income or parental education, not of what schools did. But recent research has turned these assumptions upside down. What schools do matters enormously. And what matters most is good teaching."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the effectiveness of any broader education reform—including standards, smaller schools, and



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choice—is ultimately dependent on the quality of teachers in the classroom.

How much do individual teachers influence how well students learn? In a study completed by Hanushek and two colleagues, the most effective teachers were able to boost their pupils' learning by a full grade level more than students taught by their least successful colleagues. Replacing an average teacher with a very good one, Hanushek and his coauthors found, nearly erased the gap in math performance between students from low-income and high-income households.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, a study of Tennessee students revealed that the chances for fourth-graders in the bottom quartile of performance to pass the state's high-stakes exit exam in ninth grade were less than 15 percent if students had a series of poor teachers. But the chances for students from the same background who had a series of good teachers were four times as great, or 60 percent.<sup>15</sup> The proven value of excellent teaching, in other words, all but demolishes the notion that socioeconomic status is the most important determinant of what kids can learn.<sup>16</sup>

Surveys have shown that the public agrees that improving the quality of teaching is the most important thing the nation can do to strengthen public education. In a Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, 73 percent of Americans said that getting good teachers is a high priority in their communities.<sup>17</sup>

**M**ANY TEACHERS are working incredibly hard to help children succeed. But their effectiveness is often undermined by inadequate, one-size-fits-all compensation, flawed teacher preparation, ineffective leadership, and poor working conditions. These systemic problems prevent teachers from achieving their goals and mire educators and their students in the quicksand of the status quo.

Our methods of teacher preparation and licensure are often marked by low standards, while teacher induction is too haphazard to ensure that new teachers have the knowledge, skills, clinical experience, and support they need to succeed. Universities often derive considerable income from teacher preparation and professional development programs without providing ongoing help that novice and experienced teachers need. Low, lockstep teacher pay undermines the prestige of the profession and the

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ability to renew and replenish the field. Cumbersome and constantly delayed school hiring practices in our largest cities scare off the best applicants. Principals and teacher leaders rarely get a chance to work together to build the instructional teams that schools need to reach challenging academic goals.

The nation has moved forward to set higher standards for what students must know and can do and to hold schools and young people accountable for performance. But our education system has few ways to build on teacher success or to use teacher evaluation and compensation in ways that will improve student performance. Effective teachers who dramatically raise student achievement and who make other teachers better through their knowledge, leadership, and skills are treated exactly the same as those who make no positive difference in their classrooms. We say that quality teaching matters, but we treat quality teachers as if they don't.

We know we can do better. We have been too slow to fully test and develop fair and effective ways to link pay to performance and to reward those teachers who take on important leadership roles and demonstrate success in helping students achieve.

It is time to remove the restraints and restrictions, and to provide the missing opportunities and supports that keep all teachers from helping all students learn. We must revitalize the noble calling that brought millions of teachers into the field. Only then will we see greater success for America's teachers and the young people they serve.

**T**HE TEACHING COMMISSION believes that the first step to accomplishing this is the establishment of a new compact for teachers. The Commission recognizes that in order to attract the best and the brightest into teaching and retain them in the profession, we need to commit to paying them more—a lot more. At the same time, we believe that simply raising teacher salaries across the board is not enough to improve student achievement, our most important objective. Our new compact says not only that the nation must increase base pay for teachers, but also that teachers must be measured—and compensated—on the basis of their classroom performance, including the academic gains made by their students. Under our plan, teacher pay could rise substantially for those instructors who are most effective in raising

student performance.

We also propose offering higher salaries to master and mentor teachers, to instructors who work in shortage specialties like math and science, and to teachers who embrace the challenge of working in our toughest classrooms. These reforms would allow the most effective and sought-after teachers, who are lamentably underpaid today, to be properly rewarded for their efforts. And they would provide a long-missing financial incentive for the country's most talented college graduates to consider teaching as a career.

But this new compact cannot be a one-way street. In exchange for accepting performance-based accountability, teachers would also receive vastly improved training and professional support services to help them meet these demanding new standards. Today's university-based teacher preparation programs and district-run professional development classes cost states and the nation millions, if not billions, of dollars per year, yet are rarely tied to what matters most: improving the performance of our young people. That would change under our new compact, with benefits not only for the professional lives of teachers but also, most importantly, for student learning.

There are, of course, many excellent teachers in U.S. public schools. But we need more. Far too many of those entering the profession do not have the skills and knowledge base needed to succeed. One study found that college graduates whose SAT or ACT scores were in the bottom quartile were more than twice as likely as those in the top quartile to have majored in education.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, students with the highest grades and test scores were the least likely among their peers to enroll in education classes or teacher training programs.<sup>19</sup> Just 14 percent of college graduates with education majors had SAT or ACT scores in the top



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not required by their states' certification rules to take tests in the subjects they now teach.<sup>22</sup> And although many states have made progress toward meeting the No Child Left Behind Act's requirement for testing all new teachers—including subject-area assessments—the rigor of these tests remains open to question.

Adding insult to injury, we are placing some of those teachers least likely to succeed in high-poverty, high-minority schools.<sup>23</sup> While state licensing standards are geared toward ensuring that new professionals “do no harm,” we continue to damage our most vulnerable students—and keep our schools from closing the achievement gap—by allowing teachers who lack basic skills and knowledge to enter the field. Fully one-third of students in high-poverty secondary schools take at least one class with a teacher who lacks even a college minor in the subject.<sup>24</sup> “No matter which measure of teacher quality we use,” reports the Education Trust, “we find that poor and minority children consistently receive substantially fewer well-qualified teachers.” No wonder a recent domestic policy manifesto calls improving teaching for kids in poverty “the next great frontier for social justice.”<sup>25</sup>

Against this gloomy backdrop, the past decade has seen some encouraging devel-

quartile, compared to 26 percent of social science majors and 37 percent of those who majored in mathematics, computer science, or natural sciences.<sup>20</sup> Strong SAT scores are certainly no guarantee of teacher success, but they are an effective measure of an individual's verbal and cognitive abilities. And studies have shown that teachers with strong verbal and cognitive abilities are most likely to improve student achievement.<sup>21</sup>

State licensure requirements often don't help. Many current teachers were

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opments: Denver, New York, Dallas, and a few other cities have experimented with performance-based pay; states such as Pennsylvania have raised entrance requirements for their schools of education;<sup>26</sup> and improvements in traditional pathways to teaching and the growth of alternative-certification programs have started to bring stronger talent to our classrooms.<sup>27</sup> Organizations like the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which has certified 25,000 teachers by measuring teacher practices against high and rigorous standards, have also highlighted the need for excellent teaching.

Yet these efforts, while promising, remain modest in scale and are not systematic. As a result, they can do little to address the severe and continuing problem of high teacher turnover. In some urban areas, teacher turnover averages 50 percent within three years.<sup>28</sup> Making matters worse, the most capable teachers are especially likely to abandon schools that serve high-need populations, either for more sought-after schools or for opportunities outside education, leaving less able instructors in the classroom to teach our children.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, what we are doing today is not working. It is time for revolutionary—not evolutionary—change.

**I**N THE ANALYSIS that follows, The Teaching Commission takes a clear-eyed look at some of the challenges facing the teaching profession—and offers an action-oriented agenda for how to fix them. We recognize that The Commission cannot look at every issue in education reform. Our focus is intentionally narrow and crucially important. We describe steps that K-12 educators and policy makers can take to ensure that teachers are better prepared, compensated, supported, and held fully accountable for the achievement of their students.

By providing a package of specific recommendations that spell out the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders—each of whom is essential to the success of this effort—and then focusing explicitly and aggressively on implementation, we seek to break the institutional logjam that has stalled the admirable efforts of our predecessors. Only then can we move toward real reform.

# Rationale & Recommendations

The capacity of America's educational system to create a 21<sup>st</sup>-century workforce second to none in the world is a national security issue of the first order. As things stand, this country is forfeiting that capacity.

—THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON NATIONAL SECURITY

FEBRUARY 2001

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THE TEACHING COMMISSION applauds the consensus our nation has reached on the need to raise the academic bar for America's students. But The Commission also believes that it is time to accept a fundamental truth: if we cannot attract and retain the nearly two million high-quality teachers that we will

need in the critical decade ahead, we simply will not succeed in providing young people with the education they need and deserve. It is time to raise the bar for teachers as well. This will require a series of bold steps, none of which will be easy. But we are convinced that all are necessary—implemented as an integrated whole—if we want to foster real change.

The Commission's recommendations are focused on making improvements in three areas that continue to undermine the professionalism of teaching. At a minimum, most professions are characterized by some performance-based compensation, a clear set of skills for entry, and extensive opportunities for mentoring and professional growth. Yet all three components are missing in teaching—to the detriment of teachers and ultimately their students. Accordingly, we believe that improvements in the following broad categories of teachers' professional lives hold the most promise for raising standards and bolstering accountability in schools:

- COMPENSATION AND PERFORMANCE
- SKILLS AND PREPARATION
- LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT

All of our proposals are focused on helping teachers become more effective. Our ultimate goal, of course, is to improve the education our children receive.

## COMPENSATION & PERFORMANCE

**“It’s time to move beyond a pay method designed early in the last century and to begin building an innovative system that addresses the realities of public schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”**

BRYAN C. HASSEL, PUBLIC IMPACT  
“BETTER PAY FOR BETTER TEACHERS”



THE TEACHING COMMISSION strongly believes that teacher pay must be improved. Money matters—as evidenced by countless teacher surveys and the large number of teachers who flock to affluent suburbs where pay and working conditions are significantly better than in troubled urban schools.<sup>30</sup> Broadening and strengthening the pool of people who are attracted to and remain in teaching will require paying salaries that come closer to what talented college graduates can earn in other professions. Districts that now offer below-average teacher salaries must pay special attention to increasing base pay if they wish to attract and retain stronger candidates.

We also know, however, that simply raising salaries for all teachers will not, by itself, raise student achievement. Therefore, while calling for an increase in base compensation, The Teaching Commission also urges a far-reaching break with tradition: a salary scheme that is commensurate with excellence. That is, paying teachers more for high performance, as measured by fair evaluations and clear evidence of improved student learning.

Under our plan, a teacher who demonstrates consistently excellent results could earn significantly more than his or her base salary. This quid pro quo is virtually



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unheard of in today's classrooms and labor contracts. Yet striking such a bargain is essential if we are to meet the demands of parents and the ambitious goals set by politicians, not to mention give our young people the skills they need in an increasingly knowledge-based, global economy.

Today's pay structure, a "single salary schedule" that bases pay increases on years of experience and number of education credits and degrees, was established in the 1920s to ensure fair and equal treatment for all.<sup>31</sup> Sadly, this outmoded salary structure has not changed much in the past 80 years.<sup>32</sup> As the number and type of lucrative job opportunities expanded over time, particularly following the civil rights and women's rights movements, a plethora of attractive jobs opened up for groups who had once gravitated in large numbers toward teaching. As a result, many talented college graduates moved into other professions.<sup>33</sup> This gradual but dramatic shift in the makeup of the teacher population should not be surprising given a salary structure that fails to reward excellent teaching.

We believe that our current compensation system fails our teachers and our children. It does nothing to reward excellence because all teachers, regardless of effort or performance, get the same automatic pay increases. "Both reformers and teachers themselves say that the status quo does little to cultivate and nurture teachers who do an excellent job," concluded a team of Public Agenda researchers in an in-depth review of attitudes toward teaching conducted for The Teaching Commission.<sup>34</sup> By precluding the possibility of performance-driven compensation, we fail to attract more talented and motivated individuals to our schools. For teachers already in the classroom, our failure to link pay to performance, a standard practice in other professions, removes the possibility of reward for success and accountability for failure. Until teachers are rewarded and given responsibility for what really matters—their impact on student achievement—we cannot expect to see a marked change for the better in student performance.

Opponents of performance-based compensation often contend that it cannot be implemented accurately or fairly because of the inherent subjectivity of determining whether a teacher is effective. We believe this argument simply does not withstand



**We need to establish career ladders that give the best teachers incentives to continue teaching and to serve as mentors to younger peers, who need guidance and support to become equally successful.**

close scrutiny. Judgments must be made in every profession about which employees are performing well and which ones are not measuring up. Such determinations are not an exact science, but supervisors are nevertheless expected to use regular evaluations and raises as an incentive to reward performance. Surveys indicate, and The Teaching Commission has certainly found in its own discussions with teachers, that many dedicated teachers know who the poor performers are in their own schools—and wish they were required to

improve or leave.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, despite the controversy surrounding proposals to link pay to performance, there is considerable evidence that educators themselves favor the concept. In one major survey, 85 percent of teachers and 72 percent of principals said that providing financial incentives would “help a lot” when it comes to attracting and retaining good teachers.<sup>36</sup> A performance-based evaluation needs, of course, to be carefully designed and subject to checks and balances—including the involvement of teachers in the evaluation process—to prevent either favoritism or punishment of excellent teachers who “rock the boat.”

Together with rewarding the teachers who are most effective in helping children learn, school districts need to create advancement opportunities for successful instructors who wish to stay in the classroom. For the most part, teachers view moving out of the classroom as the only way to move up in the system, both to improve their earnings and to assume more prestigious leadership roles. We need to establish career ladders that give the best teachers incentives to continue teaching and to serve as mentors to younger peers, who need guidance and support to become equally successful.

Another vitally important salary reform is paying teachers more to serve in

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hard-to-staff schools or to teach high-demand subjects such as math or science. Paying a premium to meet market demand is common practice in the private sector and in many professions—except teaching.<sup>37</sup> As a result, public schools in certain disadvantaged urban or rural districts continue to face severe staffing shortages, as do many schools seeking qualified math, science, and special education teachers.<sup>38</sup> Without a structural mechanism to meet market demand, schools will continue to face teacher shortages, particularly in areas where underperforming students are most in need of high-quality teachers.<sup>39</sup>

The teacher shortage in hard-to-staff schools is exacerbated in some places by the tendency of the teachers with the most years of experience to use their seniority rights to transfer to more desirable schools within the same district.<sup>40</sup> As a result, some of our most vulnerable students are often left to be taught by the least experienced individuals.<sup>41</sup> Until we make it more attractive for teachers to stay in our most challenging schools by offering a significant salary premium—enough to make their earnings exceed those of teachers with less demanding assignments in affluent neighborhoods—the teacher shortage in hard-to-staff schools will not go away. Some promising efforts to solve this problem are already underway and should be carefully studied. In Chattanooga, Tennessee, for instance, turnover has been reduced and teacher quality improved in the city’s most troubled schools through a variety of incentives for teachers, including free graduate school tuition and annual bonuses of \$5,000 for instructors who boost student achievement.<sup>42</sup>

In high-need subjects such as math and science, schools face teacher shortages mostly because candidates with strong content knowledge in those fields have numerous opportunities in other professions that pay significantly more and offer greater potential for career advancement than does teaching.<sup>43</sup> Schools often have difficulty competing because of their inability to differentiate pay for teachers on any basis other than years of experience and graduate credits earned: teachers in high-demand subjects earn exactly the same as teachers in specialties where there is a surplus of applicants. We believe that districts should encourage and support competitive compensation for individuals with skills and knowledge for which there is high market demand.

## RECOMMENDATION ONE

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School districts and unions need to transform how teachers are paid. We call on school districts and unions to address the critical problem of low base compensation while also ensuring that a significant portion of future increases in teachers' total compensation is tied to improvements in student performance. Districts and unions should also establish career advancement tracks that provide greater compensation for teachers who take on leadership roles and additional responsibilities. Finally, districts and unions should ensure that teachers who agree to teach in hard-to-staff schools or in shortage subject areas are offered higher pay in exchange for a commitment to remain at the school for a specified amount of time.

■ **COMPETITIVE BASE PAY.** Attracting and retaining the best and brightest will require that teachers receive compensation that is competitive with that of other professions. Particularly in school districts where salaries are clearly below average, base compensation must be addressed so that low pay is not a deterrent to entering and remaining in the profession.

■ **PAY BASED ON PERFORMANCE.** We believe that school districts and unions need to agree to base a significant percentage of teachers' total compensation on improvements in student performance. While the specific details of any compensation system are best determined by individual states, districts, and schools, we believe all performance-based compensation programs should include the following components:

1. **PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES** for teachers need to be large enough to influence behavior. Some experimental programs offer incentives of less than \$1,000 to excellent teachers—a good start, but inadequate to transform today's compensation structure. If we are serious about reform, increases in pay and performance rewards for good teachers must be significant. An ambitious and conscientious new teacher needs to know that his or her starting salary of \$25,000 to \$40,000<sup>44</sup> could increase significantly over the years based on a combination of regular salary

increases and performance-based compensation. Moreover, additional incentives can be implemented with a relatively modest increase in education spending. If, for example, our nation were prepared to commit an additional \$30 billion annually to teacher pay, each teacher could get a 10 percent raise while the top half would receive a 30 percent increase.<sup>45</sup> In our view, it is critically important that the two happen simultaneously. That is, any across-the-board increases in teacher pay must be combined with a pay-for-performance approach.

**2. INDIVIDUAL TEACHER EVALUATIONS**, the linchpin of performance pay, should occur frequently and be comprehensive, including assessments of student achievement and other teacher skills, such as lesson planning and classroom instruction and management. Proper documentation is also critical as it creates a fact-based history of teacher and student performance; it should be used to identify both exemplary teachers and those who fail to improve achievement. A performance-based compensation system should be transparent and easy to understand.

**3. SOME VERSION OF THE “VALUE-ADDED” METHOD** should be used to measure student achievement gains. This evaluation system looks at the rate of improvement in student performance each year, as measured by state tests. It then estimates how much a teacher has contributed to a student’s gains, factoring in the gains that the student was projected to make based on past performance.<sup>46</sup> A teacher who raised students’ scores significantly over the course of one year would be deemed very effective even if student performance remained below the district average. Evaluating performance is very complicated, and a teacher’s record must be considered over a period of time. While the value-added methodology is not perfect, it is at present the most promising technique available, and as states upgrade their testing systems to comply with No Child Left Behind, we believe they should take the opportunity to evaluate and implement value-added systems.

**4. ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS** should ultimately be based on performance, including student achievement; however,



**Almost seven in 10 young college graduates think that teachers do not have good opportunities for advancement and leadership.**

districts or states may want to use a team approach that rewards all teachers in a specific subject matter, grade, or school for overall gains in student achievement.

■ **NEW CAREER TRACKS.** Almost seven in 10 young college graduates think that teachers do not have good opportunities for advancement and leadership.<sup>47</sup> To improve that outlook, districts, schools, and unions should agree to establish career-advancement paths that offer teachers increasing levels of responsibility and compensation as their skills and effectiveness grow. An

instructor who demonstrates leadership skills and the ability to boost student achievement would have the opportunity to become either a “mentor teacher,” charged with advising inductees during their first years in the classroom, or a “master teacher,” responsible for evaluating and training other teachers and improving their instructional skills. Mentor and master teachers would be required to demonstrate highly accomplished teaching, including continued improvement in student performance, in order to maintain their positions. Districts should increase a teacher’s compensation as he or she moves from inductee to master teacher, and should establish compensation bands within each level to reflect a teacher’s experience and demonstrated ability.

■ **PREMIUM PAY IN HIGH-NEED AREAS.** Districts and unions should agree to speed up efforts to fill positions in high-need schools and shortage subjects by offering additional compensation to teachers who agree to teach in hard-to-staff schools or who are qualified to teach math, science, or other shortage subjects. To minimize turnover, these salary premiums should be paid in exchange for a teacher’s commitment to remain at the school for a specified amount of time.



## The Teacher Advancement Program

Started in 2000 by the Milken Family Foundation, the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) is an ambitious effort to improve student performance by attracting and retaining larger numbers of motivated and talented teachers. One of the primary goals of the program, which is now underway in 71 schools in eight states, is to provide new career paths for teachers who want to advance without having to leave the classroom and take administrative jobs. At TAP schools, a successful “career teacher” can earn more money and develop new skills by going on to become a “mentor teacher,” advising new teachers and leading a small cluster of career teachers, or eventually a “master teacher,” whose duties include giving teaching demonstrations and training fellow instructors. The TAP philosophy includes conducting regular evaluations of teacher effectiveness and providing market-driven compensation that rewards teachers for exemplary performance, including the performance of their students. Teachers are encouraged to constantly improve the quality of their instruction through training, planning, collaboration, evaluations, and ongoing professional development.<sup>48</sup>

TAP has developed an especially effective evaluation system, which succeeds in being both rigorous and supportive. Classroom teachers are individually observed and evaluated six times each year by their mentors, master teachers, and school administrators, all of whom provide immediate feedback on each teacher's strengths and

weaknesses and develop detailed plans for improvement. Although these evaluations are primarily used for individualized professional development, they are also used to determine a portion of teacher bonuses at the end of the school year. Students' test-score gains, measured using a value-added approach, are also factored into teacher evaluations and bonuses. The combination of frequent evaluations with individualized feedback and development plans helps to clearly identify those teachers who fail to improve classroom instruction in spite of continued assistance and support. School schedules are also restructured to allow for "cluster time" led by mentor teachers, in which groups of teachers share and learn about research-based, proven techniques for improving instruction and student achievement.

In addition to teacher evaluations, progress in student achievement is used to determine the raises and bonuses teachers receive. Schools and districts have discretion over whether to distribute the bonus money equally to all or to differentiate it by teacher, based on his or her contribution to improvements in student achievement.<sup>49</sup>



## Value-Added Approach for Assessing Teacher Performance

The best known and most influential method for evaluating the impact of individual teachers, schools, and school systems on student learning is the "value-added approach" developed by researcher William Sanders. Sanders' model draws on several years' worth of student test scores in grades three to eight (in reading, math, science, language arts, and social studies) to provide a longitudinal picture of individual student progress. It shows how each student performs on a year-to-year basis compared to his or her "expected score," which is calculated on the basis of the pupil's results on prior



tests. At the same time, it tracks a student's performance against that of his or her peers. Both sets of results can be used to gauge an individual teacher's effect on student learning.<sup>50</sup> The statistical approach for value-added calculations is designed to minimize outside influences by controlling for factors such as family background, race, and socioeconomic status.<sup>51</sup>

Value-added models for evaluating teacher effectiveness have been adopted by several states, including Tennessee, Arizona, Colorado, Ohio, Florida, and North Carolina. In addition, Operation Public Education, a nonprofit organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, is in the midst of efforts to take the value-added methodology to scale and introduce it to schools nationwide. Tennessee is using the value-added approach to comply with No Child Left Behind's "highly qualified" teacher requirement. Teachers have the option of being designated as "highly qualified" on the basis of their students' academic progress, although the data would not be made public. So far, relatively few schools have used value-added models to determine teacher salaries, but the growing interest in this methodology suggests that it has great potential to become part of a comprehensive performance-pay strategy.



## Staffing the Lowest-Performing Schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee

In 2000, the Chattanooga, Tennessee school district embarked on a successful, broad-scale effort to improve student performance by moving some of the region's best teachers into the highest-need schools. This effort targeted nine low-performing Chattanooga schools that were among the bottom 20 in the state.

The initiative used a value-added and portfolio approach to identify and attract

teachers in the district who had consistently demonstrated an ability to increase student scores above and beyond the expected trajectory. The district then focused on attracting these teachers to the nine low-performing schools by providing incentives for working in the schools. Some of these incentives included:

- \$5,000 annual bonus
- Free tuition toward a master's degree
- \$10,000 loan toward a down payment on a house around one of the schools, forgivable if teachers taught at the school for at least five years
- \$2,000 for every teacher in a school that boosted its overall test scores by a significant degree

The program was largely funded by a \$5 million grant from the Benwood Foundation, a local philanthropy. In addition to the financial incentives, teachers at “Benwood schools” are honored each year. Morale among participating teachers has improved dramatically because of the attention and respect they have received.

Since the initiative began, 100 underperforming teachers have been transferred out of the Benwood schools and replaced with more accomplished teachers. Staffing has also become much easier: the 2003-2004 school year began with only two vacancies (one for a new position) compared to over 30 in previous years. The teacher applicant pool is also stronger, as higher-quality teachers have come to view the targeted schools as desirable places to work.

Most importantly, the program has had a positive impact on student performance. Every Benwood school saw increases—typically of 10 percentage points or more—in the proportion of third-graders reading at or above grade level.

## SKILLS & PREPARATION

**“It takes a whole university to prepare a teacher.”**

ROBERT MAXON, PRESIDENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AT LONG BEACH



CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP requires that all teachers have the skills and knowledge needed to help all students meet high standards.

To accomplish this goal, we must break the cycle in which low-performing students in college become the teachers of low-performing students in public schools. The chronically low test scores of education majors in higher education are not just of academic interest. Research based on classroom practice makes it quite clear that teachers' verbal and cognitive abilities have a greater impact on student learning than any other measured characteristic.<sup>52</sup>

The shortcomings in the basic skills of future teachers are compounded by teacher education programs that function in isolation from academic departments. Teacher education students sometimes major in subjects such as “mathematics education” and “social studies education” rather than in true academic fields. Many prospective teachers gain exposure to trends in how to teach without mastering the content knowledge required to be effective in the classroom,<sup>53</sup> and often without receiving significant

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practical opportunities to explore effective ways to help students from diverse and challenging backgrounds achieve. Too many of the nation's teacher education programs—which often provide significant revenue for their institutions—have continued to churn out teachers lacking in relevant skills and unready to step into the realities of today's classrooms. Although Title II of the Higher Education Act, passed in 1998, required schools of education to submit detailed accountability reports and 85 percent of students to pass state certification exams, many programs remain riddled with low expectations and continue to lack rigor and real-world relevance.<sup>54</sup>

Another barrier to recruiting and training a higher-quality teaching force is a state certification system that discourages quality teachers from entering the field, discounts the importance of content knowledge, and is characterized by low standards and unclear relevance to classroom realities. Many would-be teachers are discouraged from entering the field by the sheer number of bureaucratic requirements they must meet.<sup>55</sup> The problem extends to big city school districts. A study recently completed by the New Teacher Project concludes that urban school districts often “alienate many talented applicants because of slow-moving bureaucracies and budgeting delays.”<sup>56</sup>

What's more, several studies have found that the relationship between how well students do in school and whether or not they are taught by certified teachers is unclear.<sup>57</sup> A teacher's subject-matter knowledge, by contrast, is strongly correlated with student learning, but it often isn't measured adequately—or at all—during the certification process. Congress and the White House have taken a step in the right direction through the No Child Left Behind Act's mandate for a qualified teacher in every classroom by the 2005–2006 school year. The law requires that prospective teachers have an undergraduate degree, be certified by a state-sanctioned program, and demonstrate competency in the core academic subjects that they teach. But it also leaves states with “significant flexibility to design ways to do this,”<sup>58</sup> leaving the door open for continued low standards and lack of rigor.

As a result of these problems, it is no surprise that a survey conducted by Public Agenda, the nonpartisan public-opinion research firm, found that only 13 percent of principals and 7 percent of superintendents believe that certification in their states guarantees that the typical teacher “has what it takes” to make it in the classroom.<sup>59</sup>

## TEACHING AT RISK: A CALL TO ACTION

The Teaching Commission believes that improving the skills and preparation of teachers will require two significant changes: college and university presidents must align their teacher education programs with the rigor, quality, and accountability of our 21<sup>st</sup>-century world, and states must overhaul their certification and licensing processes.

### RECOMMENDATION TWO

College and university presidents must revamp their teacher education programs and make teacher quality a top priority. We call on the presidents of all American colleges and universities to make a personal and institutional commitment, including resources, to tackle the problem of unskilled teachers. Ensuring that the best and brightest college graduates are encouraged to teach in public schools, and that they receive high-quality academic training, should be among the top priorities of college and university presidents. That means raising standards for entry into teacher preparation programs, beefing up the academic content of those programs while also ensuring a connection to real practice, and promoting teaching as an exemplary career path for new graduates who wish to become engaged citizens. It also means measuring results in order to ensure that teacher education programs are doing their job. The federal government, for its part, should be prepared to withhold funds from colleges and universities that fail to show the effectiveness of their teacher-recruitment and preparation programs.

■ **RAISING STANDARDS.** Presidents of colleges and universities with schools of education must ensure that admission and performance standards in teacher education programs are commensurate with those of other university departments. Among other things, that means (1) recruiting stronger students from all major fields of study; (2) requiring education majors to acquire solid academic content skills by receiving at least a minor in an academic subject other than education; (3) drawing clear connections

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between what future teachers are taught about pedagogy and what research shows to be effective; and (4) offering opportunities to learn and observe in a real world setting. To guard against faddism, new approaches to teacher education should include an evaluation component that uses high research standards, such as those employed by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, a central source of research-based, educational best practices.

■ **ENCOURAGING TEACHING.** Presidents of colleges and universities without schools of education should make an explicit attempt to encourage graduates to go into teaching. There is ample evidence that they will find a receptive audience: almost one in five young college graduates who end up in fields other than teaching say they would have seriously considered teaching as a career.<sup>60</sup> College presidents, as part of their efforts, should ask academic departments to offer structured opportunities for individuals in regular degree-granting programs to get credit for taking a course relevant to teaching.

■ **MEASURING RESULTS.** In the same way that universities and colleges publicize and take pride in the number of their graduates who go on to careers in engineering, accounting, and law, they should publicly disclose the number of individuals who go into teaching, the percentage of graduates who pass teacher certification exams, and their grade point averages. Colleges should also disclose the number of those graduates who actually go into the classroom. In addition to encouraging many more of their undergraduate majors to go into teaching, academic departments should eventually be asked to track how many actually do so, how long they remain in teaching, and, most importantly, how successful they are in raising student achievement.

■ **FEDERAL FUNDING.** The federal government should tie continued federal funding of teacher education programs to measures of success for graduates of these programs. Institutions that do not meet acceptable standards of performance should no longer receive federal funding for their programs.



## University of Texas— UTeach

UTeach, one of the nation's most innovative teacher preparation programs, exemplifies what major research universities can do to fulfill their responsibilities to address the teacher quality crisis. With the full support of the Chancellor of the University of Texas, UTeach was started by the College of Natural Sciences at UT-Austin in 1997 to address a severe statewide shortage of math and science teachers. Through UTeach's academic program, participants get rigorous preparation and training in math and science in regular academic departments while also receiving the opportunity to take education courses and obtain hands-on experience in the school of education.

The program is open both to undergraduates, who can complete the program over the course of four years, and to graduates with degrees in math, sciences, or computer science, who are eligible to complete the program in three semesters. UTeach participants benefit from close contact with faculty both during the program and after graduation. A network of advisors gives graduates an opportunity to receive ongoing counsel and advice from a mentor during their first three years of teaching.

UTeach is already helping meet Texas's teaching needs. In the 2002-2003 school year, 879 math teachers in the state had "emergency" certificates, 22 percent of high-school math teachers were not certified, and 35 percent of math teachers in grades seven to 12 did not have a major in mathematics. Thanks to UTeach, however, over 280 math and science teachers have been trained in the past four years. By 2006, the number is expected to increase to 400 teachers per year.<sup>61</sup>



## Carnegie Corporation— Teachers for a New Era

In 2001, The Carnegie Corporation of New York initiated an ambitious reform initiative, Teachers for a New Era, to help establish exemplary teacher education programs at selected colleges and universities.

The program is organized according to three broad principles:

1. Reliance on research-based evidence for improving student achievement via instruction. A teacher education program should promote a culture of research, inquiry, and data analysis, with a heavy emphasis on pupil learning gains. Student learning will become one measure of the effectiveness of a teacher education program under Teachers for a New Era.
2. Active engagement of Arts and Sciences faculty in teacher preparation. High-quality education of prospective teachers, especially in specific subject areas, requires active involvement of faculty from the Arts and Sciences.
3. Closer collaboration between colleges of education and actual practicing schools. Education should be understood as an academically taught clinical practice profession. Teachers for a New Era will focus on relevant pedagogical skills (driven by research on impact on student learning), use schools as practical clinics, and provide support over two years for newly inducted graduates.

As designated leaders in this area, participating institutions will be required to disseminate lessons learned, successful innovations, and difficulties encountered.

Participating colleges and universities, selected by invitation, will receive \$5 million for a period of five years, to be matched by funds provided by the institution. In all,



Carnegie has committed more than \$45 million for the initiative. The Ford and Annenberg Foundations have committed an additional \$17 million to this program.

To date, 11 institutions have been chosen to participate in this initiative: Bank Street College of Education in New York City, California State University in Northridge, Michigan State University, and the University of Virginia (all selected in 2002); and Boston College, Florida A&M University, the University of Connecticut, Stanford University, the University of Texas at El Paso, the University of Washington, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (all selected in 2003).



## Ready to Teach Act

The Higher Education Act is up for reauthorization. In the first of what is likely to be a series of bills, the Ready to Teach Act, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2003, is focused primarily on the goal of placing a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the 2005-2006 school year, as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act. The new legislation seeks to ensure that teacher training programs are producing well-prepared graduates who are able to meet the needs of America's students. The Ready to Teach Act proposes to authorize competitively awarded grants to: (1) increase student academic achievement; (2) improve the quality of the current and future teaching force by improving the preparation of prospective teachers and enhancing professional development activities; (3) hold institutions of higher education accountable for preparing highly qualified teachers; and (4) recruit highly qualified minorities and individuals from other occupations into the teaching force.<sup>62</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION THREE

States must improve—or overhaul—their licensing and certification requirements. We call on governors and state education departments to ensure that every individual who wants to become a teacher passes a rigorous test for both content and essential skills. At a minimum, this will require raising the passing score on existing certification exams. It should also entail replacing low-level basic competency tests with challenging exams that measure verbal ability and content knowledge at an appropriately high level. In addition, states need to streamline the cumbersome bureaucracy that often surrounds teacher licensure in order to make the profession more attractive to a wide range of qualified candidates.

■ **RAISING THE BAR.** Forty states now require teachers to pass minimum competency exams, but as discussed above, these exams lack rigor and passing scores are notoriously low.<sup>63</sup> Almost half the states do not require teaching applicants to take tests in the subjects they plan to teach—and even in some states that do have such requirements, it is possible to answer only about half the questions in a given subject correctly and still receive a teaching license.<sup>64</sup> Despite these rudimentary requirements, there are nevertheless many districts, especially in high-need urban areas, where students are routinely taught by teachers who have not passed certification exams. Worse still, too many middle- and high-school students are taught by teachers who have no background in the subject they are teaching. Fifty-six percent of high-school students taking physical science are taught by out-of-field teachers, and *Education Week's* seventh annual report “Quality Counts 2003” notes that 38 percent of urban secondary-school students are taught by teachers who lack either a college major or certification in the subject that they teach.<sup>65</sup> We therefore recommend that all states test would-be teachers in specific content areas. Most importantly, states should agree on a common national standard for subject-area tests and set cutoff scores at a level that requires

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teaching candidates to demonstrate mastery reflecting at least two years of undergraduate study. Those who don't measure up shouldn't be allowed in the classroom.

■ **STREAMLINING BUREAUCRACY.** In addition to raising licensing standards, states should ensure that the focus of teacher certification is on substance, not process. Each state currently has its own licensing and certification system, which typically requires would-be teachers not only to pass exams but also to take a certain number of education classes and to spend a period of time as a student teacher. More often than not, the certification process takes at least one year to complete and is regarded by many as cumbersome and bureaucratic, serving as a barrier to entry for the well-qualified and highly motivated individuals who are badly needed in our classrooms.<sup>66</sup> Critics have often complained that promising candidates are turned off by the cumbersome licensing process, which often seems long on bureaucracy and short on common sense. A sample reform: in order to hire otherwise-qualified individuals who have not been student teachers, school districts and schools should be permitted to bypass this requirement by providing at least one year of intensive on-the-job mentoring, whereby new teachers spend their first month observing classes taught by mentor or master teachers.

A streamlined approach to certifying teachers would also include the sanctioning of high-quality alternative certification programs that often serve as models for how states can overhaul their own processes. Graduates of such programs should face the same accountability requirements as their traditionally-prepared peers. Since 1985, some 200,000 people have become teachers through these programs,<sup>67</sup> which typically require a bachelor's degree, passage of a competency test, and an intensive (but compressed) regimen of specialized preparation, often undertaken while on the job. They attract talented and enthusiastic individuals into teaching who might otherwise be lost to the calling. Research shows that teachers with alternative certification are more likely than traditionally certified teachers to have bachelor's degrees in math and science, two fields with chronic shortages of qualified teachers. They are also more likely to be members of minority groups.<sup>68</sup>



## Testing Innovations

The Educational Testing Service, the country's leading test vendor, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have recently announced a collaborative effort to establish a minimum passing score on the Praxis II test, which measures the subject-area knowledge of prospective teachers. This welcome partnership would set a common national standard for what new teachers should be expected to know—but states will still need to do their part by adopting the new, higher standard.

Another effort to reform testing and certification for potential teachers is also underway. The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) was recently created to develop high-quality teacher credentials that are portable and can be earned in a time-efficient, cost-effective manner. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored jointly by the Education Leaders Council and the National Council on Teacher Quality, ABCTE certification will be available for individuals first entering the teaching profession who can pass tests in both pedagogy and subject-area knowledge.



## Alternative Pathways to Teaching

The nation's first alternative certification program, New Jersey's "Provisional Teacher Program," has "markedly expanded the quality, diversity, and size of the state's teacher candidate pool," according to one analysis. Started in 1984, the program had been used by over 75 percent of the state's school districts by 1998. On average, applicants had higher scores on teacher licensing tests than traditionally prepared teachers. Attrition rates for alternatively certified teachers were also lower than those of their traditionally trained counterparts.<sup>69</sup>

The popularity of programs such as Teach for America (TFA), which places liberal arts graduates without formal education course work in public school classrooms in inner cities and poor rural communities, indicates that the prospect of teaching without first being obliged to spend years in pedagogical study appeals to some of our brightest college graduates. With nearly 16,000 applicants for 1,800 available positions in 2003,<sup>70</sup> Teach for America had a lower acceptance rate than did Harvard Law School for the same year.<sup>71</sup> Although research regarding the success of alternative certification programs remains limited, initial findings about TFA are positive. A study conducted by Macke Raymond and Stephen Fletcher of TFA participants in Houston, Texas, found that TFA teachers perform at least as well as, and in many cases better than, other teachers hired by the Houston

Independent School District. Moreover, the highest-performing teachers were consistently TFA teachers, and the lowest-performing teachers were consistently non-TFA teachers.<sup>72</sup>

Another leading group, the New York City Teaching Fellows Program, was established in 2000 to bring outstanding individuals into the city's public schools and to provide them with intensive teacher training and opportunities to simultaneously pursue a Master's degree in education. The program is open to individuals with or without education backgrounds and has trained and placed over 5,000 highly talented teachers in New York City's public schools to date.<sup>73</sup>

## LEADERSHIP & SUPPORT

**“The factor that empowers the people and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is the leadership of those organizations.”**

WARREN BENNIS

AUTHOR, *ON BECOMING A LEADER*



THE TEACHING COMMISSION’S final recommendation grows from our recognition that good teaching does not take place in a vacuum. Developing a culture of performance in our schools—which requires, among other things, an orderly and disciplined environment, parental involvement, and a coherent academic program—is impossible without strong leadership from principals.<sup>74</sup> Accomplishing that reform, in turn, means giving principals the tools they need to lead, beginning with the ability to recruit promising teachers and to sanction or dismiss those who do not measure up. School leaders must nurture talent, both in the crucial early stages of teachers’ careers and on an ongoing basis as their professional skills develop.

According to Richard Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania, teacher turnover is the most significant contributor to the U.S. teacher shortage, particularly in “hard-to-staff” areas. Ingersoll maintains that lack of professional support is one of the primary reasons why one out of five new teachers leaves within three years and almost 50 percent of teachers leave the classroom within the first five years. Perhaps even more

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disturbing, those who leave are often the teachers who come in with stronger academic credentials and are likely to have more options outside of teaching.<sup>75</sup>

In many schools and districts, new teachers are recruited to fill openings by school board or district officials, with little input from building principals. The situation is exacerbated by the seniority system, discussed earlier, which further undermines principals' authority by allowing teachers with long tenure in a district to apply for and receive transfers to schools of their choice. That means good teachers with seniority often leave challenging schools for more desirable assignments. Conversely, seniority and tenure rules sometimes force principals to keep sub-par instructors; once teachers have passed a probationary period, it is notoriously difficult to dismiss those whose performance is inadequate.<sup>76</sup> In 2002, for instance, only 132 of 78,000 teachers in New York City's massive school system were removed for poor performance.<sup>77</sup> The net result of this and other policies is that many of our nation's neediest children are taught by teachers who are inexperienced, ineffective, or both. To fix this problem, the probationary period must be taken more seriously, tenure and seniority rules must be changed, and principals must be given ultimate responsibility for staffing. Most importantly, principals should be given the authority to ensure that incompetent or underperforming teachers are helped to improve, or, if they don't, to leave.

Needless to say, these reforms cannot be accomplished by principals alone. Strong leadership will also be required from superintendents, school boards, state policy makers, and, of course, teachers. Moreover, giving principals greater authority over personnel decisions will require more attention to the qualifications and skills of principals themselves. Too many of today's principals are former classroom teachers with little or no preparation for the significant managerial task of running a school. Like teachers, principals need better initial training and ongoing professional development. And just as states and school districts are increasingly opening up alternative routes into teaching, they should also begin recruiting non-traditional candidates to become principals—tapping the management abilities of individuals from business or nonprofit backgrounds, for instance.

Even with strong principals in place, simply asking those school leaders to hire promising teachers and remove ineffective ones is not enough. Teachers who don't receive mentoring and encouragement on an ongoing basis are more likely to leave the



classroom.<sup>78</sup> Mentoring is especially important in the early days of a teacher’s career, when many teachers feel isolated in their classrooms and are sometimes left to sink or swim with little assistance from their colleagues and school administrators.<sup>79</sup> Later, professional development is vital—but it needs to be far more effective than what is typically offered today. Each year, schools, districts, and the federal government spend millions, if not billions, of dollars on one-time seminars and other forms of training that are of questionable value. Too often, schools simply reimburse individual teachers for attending conferences and seminars of their choice and categorize the time and money spent under “professional development.” Even when these seminars and workshops provide meaningful information or training, the lack of follow-up and support given to teachers afterwards often means that only a portion, if any, of what they have learned actually influences classroom instruction.<sup>80</sup> The net result is that districts end up spending money unwisely, teachers fail to receive the professional development they need and deserve, and students continue to be deprived of constant improvements in teaching.

### RECOMMENDATION FOUR

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**School districts need to give principals say over personnel decisions, while principals must provide teachers with mentoring and ongoing professional development that is known to improve classroom instruction.** We call on superintendents to ensure that school principals are given the authority they need to provide leadership through a coherent academic program and the fostering of teaching excellence. Using fair and agreed-upon measures of performance, every principal should be given the responsibility and ultimate authority to hire, fire, and promote teachers. Principals should also be held responsible for ensuring that new teachers receive structured mentoring and that all teachers benefit from scientifically-based professional development opportunities that focus squarely on assessing and improving instructional practices and thereby raising student achievement. To ensure the effectiveness of this support, principals should create school environments that encourage teachers to get directly involved in decision making in these areas.

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■ **LETTING PRINCIPALS LEAD.** Principals need to be the ultimate decision makers at their school sites, so that they can be held fully accountable for ensuring first-rate teaching. Making sure principals have proper authority is one of the most effective means of attracting the best candidates to these key leadership roles.

Moreover, giving principals ultimate say over which teachers they can hire or fire—while abiding by due process—is a vital step toward motivating teachers to get results.

■ **ENCOURAGING TEACHERS TO BE INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING AND PLAY A LEADERSHIP ROLE WITH REGARD TO INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES.** Teacher leadership is an important component of successful schools. Therefore, principals must ensure that mechanisms exist for teachers to get directly involved in key decisions affecting the classroom and the day-to-day life of the school. A group of respected teachers should be directly engaged in helping the principal make personnel decisions. Through the career ladder approach, principals can also benefit greatly from the instructional knowledge of teachers by ensuring that they have opportunities to take leadership roles in helping their colleagues.

■ **IMPROVING HOW PRINCIPALS ARE RECRUITED AND TRAINED.** The innovations we propose to improve teacher quality cannot take place without principals who are significantly more skilled and better trained than today's typical school administrators. A detailed proposal to transform school leadership is beyond the scope of this report. Broadly speaking, however, our recommendations for reforming how principals are recruited and trained mirror our agenda for improving teaching: (1) school districts need to recruit more talented, non-traditional candidates who are reluctant to navigate the bureaucracy now required to become a principal; and (2) districts need to improve the way principals are trained, by better preparation before they take their jobs and through ongoing professional development after they have become school leaders.

■ **MENTORING NEW TEACHERS.** In a previous section, we called for streamlining the process by which would-be teachers enter the classroom. The Teaching Commission believes that individuals with proven mastery of subject knowledge and

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a desire to teach should be welcomed into our schools. At the same time, it is incumbent on school principals to ensure that all new teachers receive intense and carefully designed mentoring from more senior colleagues. Nobody should simply be thrown into a classroom without the support needed to be successful. According to *Education Week's* "Quality Counts 2003," only 16 states finance new teacher induction programs, and fewer still require inductees to be matched with mentors in the same subject. All new teachers should have a mentor throughout their first year. This apprenticeship should include opportunities to observe other classes, to be observed and receive constructive feedback by administrators and colleagues, and to work one-on-one with a mentor on a regular basis. New teachers should also be given the chance during their first month on the job to observe the classrooms of successful veteran colleagues.

■ **OFFERING BETTER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** Principals must ensure that all teachers have the chance to improve their classroom instruction by receiving ongoing training aimed at professional growth and better student outcomes. Professional development should be aligned with state and district goals and standards for student learning, and should become an everyday part of the school schedule rather than be conducted as a set of ad hoc events. The content of this professional development should be driven by frequent assessments that identify the specific topics that individual students are having trouble with, so that individual teachers' instructional practices can be altered to directly address these students' learning needs. Professional development activities should also involve opportunities for collaboration so that teachers can learn from each other. The irony of existing professional development approaches is that great ideas and effective instructional practices often already reside within schools, yet are overlooked because of a lack of structured interaction among the best teachers and their peers. Collaboration could, for instance, take the form of weekly "cluster" discussions, organized by grade level or subject area and led by a designated team leader. The goal should always be to share effective, research-based techniques that can be cycled back into classroom teaching to improve student learning.



## Regional Assistance Centers

A proposal currently underway in Congress would consolidate federal programs aimed at professional development and establish Regional Assistance Centers to offer practical assistance to teachers. The primary goal of these centers is to focus on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provision in No Child Left Behind and to specifically help those schools most in need. By linking with the What Works Clearinghouse, the Regional Assistance Centers would help states, local districts, and schools to increase their capacity to understand and effectively utilize and implement programs based on scientific research.



## New Leaders for New Schools

New Leaders for New Schools is a nonprofit organization that aggressively recruits talented individuals, both from within and outside of the education sector, to become urban school principals. The organization has a rigorous screening process for all applicants to the program and provides intensive training so that New Leaders Fellows acquire specific skills needed to lead instructional improvements, manage effective organizational change and school operations, and engage parents and the outside community in accomplishing the school's mission. The Fellows also receive intensive support and professional development for two years after graduation.

# Conclusion

**W**E CONCLUDE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS by reiterating a point made early in this report: none of the reforms The Teaching Commission proposes should be carried out in isolation.

Asking universities to take the lead in graduating better-prepared teachers, for instance, will be considerably easier if those teachers can in turn anticipate a compensation structure that rewards them for effective instruction. By the same logic, schools will be able to retain good teachers more successfully if they can offer greatly improved mentoring and professional development. Like a handshake, our proposals are intended to convey simultaneous and mutual commitment. Implemented as a package, we believe they can transform teaching and guarantee a superior education for all of our children.

The Commission understands that putting this agenda into action will be challenging. But we believe it is essential to cut through past controversies and ensure that high-quality teachers are given competitive compensation tied to student performance; that nobody is allowed to teach without the right knowledge and skills; and that teachers are given on-the-job support that enables them to succeed.

Taken together, our recommendations would fundamentally shift how we approach teaching as a profession. Only then will the broad but vague public consensus about teacher quality fall into line with what our schools and our children really need.

**THE TEACHING COMMISSION**



# Next Steps

The Commission will not measure its success by its recommendations, but through its ability to mobilize key stakeholders, and through subsequent changes in policies and practices nationwide.

—LOUIS V. GERSTNER, JR.

CHAIRMAN, THE TEACHING COMMISSION

FORMER CHAIRMAN, IBM

## THE TEACHING COMMISSION



THE TEACHING COMMISSION is not the first group that has sought to raise student achievement by improving the quality of teaching. Other important studies have attempted to reshape the nation's thinking about the pay, performance, preparation, and prestige of the teaching profession. Many of these efforts, though, have lacked sustained follow-through to ensure implementation of their proposed changes.

The Teaching Commission has developed an action plan to ensure that our recommendations are implemented in a thoughtful and thorough manner. While we call on all Americans to support the recommendations in our report, The Commission believes that educators and public officials have a particular obligation to help ensure that they become a reality. State officials, university presidents, school district leaders, principals, teachers, teachers' unions, and the federal government all have a critical role to play—both individually and collectively. Active and vocal support from business and civic leaders is also essential to ensure that educators and public officials have the assistance they need.

In the next few months, the activities of The Teaching Commission will include the following:



## TEACHING AT RISK: A CALL TO ACTION

(1) Reaching out to a broad coalition of education groups that are already engaged in work related to teacher quality. These partner groups will help inform their constituents about The Commission's recommendations and fine-tune strategies for implementation.

(2) Working with eight to 10 governors and their chief state school officers to implement The Commission's agenda and pilot specific recommendations.

(3) Supporting college and university presidents who will assume direct responsibility for improving the quality of teacher education programs and bolstering the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers.

(4) Working with the federal government to build support for the recommendations as a means for helping states and school districts meet the teacher-quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

(5) Developing a communications and outreach campaign at the national, state, and local levels to encourage support for a new teacher compact and other recommendations.



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# Notes





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If we don't step up to the challenge of finding and supporting the best teachers, we'll undermine everything else we are trying to do to improve our schools. That's a conscious decision that would threaten our economic strength, political fabric, and stability as a nation. It's exactly that clear cut.



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