



Great Public Schools for Every Student

**Children of Poverty Deserve Great Teachers:
Key Findings**

(Full Report Available at: <http://www.nea.org/teacherquality>)

Across this country, thousands of dedicated, hardworking teachers show up to work, determined to provide the best possible education to students from some of our most poverty-stricken communities. These heroes and heroines perform amazing tasks, often with the least amount of support and resources. Our children are fortunate to have these dedicated individuals in their classrooms. However, we need to do more to support not only our students, but the teachers who show up every day, despite the odds, to help ensure that they get the best education possible, regardless of the conditions.

Everyone is talking about supporting our students in their “race to the top.” The key to turning out great students is great teachers. Great teachers, with the right policy supports, are the ideal agents of meaningful and sustainable change in our most challenged schools.

TEACHERS

- Teachers cannot do it alone. Every member of the community has a role and is responsible for the conditions of our schools and for providing a safe and secure learning environment for our children.
- When it comes to attracting and retaining teachers in high-needs schools, it is not about the money. Working conditions are of paramount concern when it comes to decisions about working in high-needs schools. Teachers want to be successful, and we should do what we can so that they are not set up to fail.
- Teachers, like surgeons, require a well equipped environment in which to do their best work. We cannot expect them to be successful if we do not provide the tools and resources needed to do the job.
- It is important that we not only recruit new teachers to work in high-needs schools, but that we foster an environment that encourages professional development and continual learning opportunities for teachers within our schools and districts to help meet the needs of students. We also must “grow our own” accomplished teachers and not rely solely on new recruits for our staffing needs.
- A child’s learning environment is a critical factor in his or her long-term success. We cannot hold teachers accountable for conditions beyond their control and must acknowledge that conditions of teaching and learning are key to achieving high levels of student learning.
- Too often, school district recruitment and hiring practices rest on outdated mid-20th century organizational assumptions about teaching, learning, gender roles, and the career mobility

patterns of today's young adults. Few systems are developing new teachers from within their own high-needs communities.

- Additionally, few are partnering with universities and nonprofits to make strategic investments in new teacher residency programs that can both drive improved working conditions and assure a steady supply of well-prepared, “culturally competent” teachers for high-needs schools.

STRATEGIES:

Children of Poverty describes four strategies that will move us toward research-driven policies that can transform every high-poverty school in America into a high-performing school, fully staffed by effective teachers.

- Recruit *and* prepare teachers for work in high-needs schools.
- Take a comprehensive approach to teacher incentives. Lessons from the private sector and voices of teachers indicate that performance pay makes the most difference when it focuses on “building a collaborative workplace culture” to improve practices and outcomes.
- Improve the right working conditions. We need to fully identify the school conditions most likely to serve students by attracting, developing, retaining, and inspiring effective and accomplished teachers.
- Define teacher effectiveness broadly, in terms of student learning. We need new evaluation tools and processes to measure how teachers think about their practice, as well as help students learn.

Effective state/school district strategies to recruit and prepare new teachers include:

- Launching a long-range campaign to recruit and prepare teachers for urban and rural high-needs schools by offering high-quality residency programs, recruiting 20,000 to 40,000 new educators per year for 10 to 20 years. These well-trained, well-supported recruits will be prepared to lead a 21st century teaching profession that works closely with the health care and community services needed by students in high-needs schools.
- Cultivating effective teachers from within the 5,000 schools targeted as highest need, “growing” National Board Certified Teachers in those schools.
- Developing compensation systems, including performance pay systems, that include financial incentives designed specifically to attract and retain, as well as grow effective teachers in high-needs schools.
- Working with teachers and teacher associations to transform teacher assessment and evaluation systems into effective instruments for helping teachers to improve their practice; and integrate these systems into individualized professional development programs based on the needs of teachers and students.