



Great Public Schools for Every Child

ENSURING EVERY CHILD A QUALITY TEACHER SUMMARY

The National Education Association believes the essential characteristics of a quality teacher include:

- Knowing his/her subject matter;
- Knowing how to teach that subject matter; and
- Understanding how students learn and what it takes to reach them.

To ensure every student the opportunity to learn from a quality teacher, we must support teachers along every point in the Teacher Quality Continuum:

Protect and promote high standards for entry into the profession

- Recruit talented and committed professionals to the teaching profession and develop a teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of the student population and nation as a whole.
- All teachers entering the profession must demonstrate subject matter competence, pedagogical skills, and teaching ability before entering the classroom as a teacher-of-record. Alternative route programs must maintain the same standards as other teacher preparation programs and must be equal in rigor and content.

Support and measure new teacher performance

- Policies and funding should focus on comprehensive new teacher induction systems that treat new teachers as “residents” or “interns.” This would mean more support and training, less demanding classroom assignments, and significantly more focused performance assessments for all beginning teachers, regardless of their preparation and routes to licensure.

Improve teaching and learning conditions

- Teaching and learning conditions—time, teacher empowerment, school leadership, professional development, and facilities and resources—are critical to increasing student achievement and retaining teachers.
- Teachers must be intimately involved in every phase of their ongoing training, with high-quality professional development programs focusing on pedagogy and helping teachers develop the deep understanding of how students learn.
- Principals should also be provided with high-quality professional development so they can serve as instructional leaders in their schools and work collaboratively with teachers to improve student learning.

Strengthen teacher evaluation systems

- New policies and funding should create teacher evaluation systems based on a set of standards that measure teacher practice. Professional development and teacher learning programs should be aligned to meet the needs of both students and teachers – needs that are determined at the local level through measures of student performance and teacher evaluations.

Enhance and reward teacher skills and knowledge

- Provide teachers with job-embedded professional learning opportunities and create systems for regular collaboration among educators within schools and districts.
- Ensure a \$40,000 minimum salary for all teachers in every school in the country.
- Provide financial recognition to individual teachers who demonstrate superior teaching skills (such as National Board Certified Teachers) and to those who take on additional responsibilities (such as mentor teachers), and provide school-wide bonuses for improved student learning.

Ensure that students in high-poverty and other hard-to-staff schools have access to quality teachers

- Provide an array of incentives to attract and retain qualified teachers to such schools.
- Improve teaching and learning conditions, including by reducing class sizes and ensuring safe modern facilities.

ENSURING EVERY CHILD A QUALITY TEACHER

No organization in America has done more to support and promote quality teaching than the National Education Association. Throughout its long history, the NEA has advanced the profession of teaching and worked toward a goal of a qualified teacher in every classroom. From being a founding member of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to supporting the creation of the United States Department of Education to organizing over a dozen independent state teacher standards boards to helping establish the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, NEA has been in the forefront of innovation, research, and policy to support teacher quality.

I. Background

In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future published its groundbreaking report, "What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future" (NEA was a primary partner in the development of this report). This report offered definitive evidence on two major issues:

- 1) What teachers know and do is the most important influence on what students learn; and
- 2) Students most in need of high quality teachers are least likely to have them.

This report rekindled the now 10-year-old policy debate about what makes a quality teacher. Policymakers often look to define a quality teacher in a quick sentence or catchy phrase. In reality, however, teaching is a complex and demanding profession, and what great teaching looks like is hard to define in a single sentence or sound bite. All too often, this search for a simple definition leads to an overly simplistic concept of what it takes to be a good teacher (i.e., be really smart and know math really well). Yet, research and practice have shown that being a great mathematician is not synonymous with understanding the science of teaching math to a room with 25 to 30 thirteen-year-old middle school students.

NEA believes that defining a quality teacher can best be achieved using a set of principles and standards, combined with a process of preparation, licensure, support, and assessment. NEA's "Principles of Professional Practice" define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions a quality teacher should possess:

A Quality Teacher...

- **Designs and facilitates instruction that incorporates the students' developmental levels, skills, and interests with content knowledge;**
- **Develops collaborative relationships and partners with colleagues, families, and communities focused on meaningful and deep learning;**
- **Provides leadership and advocacy for students, quality education, and the education profession;**
- **Demonstrates in-depth content and professional knowledge;**
- **Participates in ongoing professional learning as an individual and within the professional learning community;**

- **Utilizes multiple and varied forms of assessment and student data to inform instruction, assess student learning, and drive school improvement efforts;**
- **Establishes environments conducive to effective teaching and learning;**
- **Integrates cultural competence and an understanding of the diversity of students and communities into teaching practice to enhance student learning;**
- **Utilizes professional practices that recognize public education as vital to strengthening our society and building respect for the worth, dignity and equality of every individual;**
- **Strives to overcome the internal and external barriers that impact student learning.**

Attaining knowledge and skill in each of these practices is not easy and cannot be measured effectively by one snapshot in time (such as a single classroom observation or a single standardized test of teacher knowledge).

II. The Role of the Federal Government and States

To ensure a quality teacher for every child, the federal government and states must support a systemic approach that recognizes, supports and measures a teacher’s growth and ability along the various stages of a quality continuum -- a continuum that includes recruitment, preparation, licensure, hiring, induction, professional development, on-going performance assessment of teaching skills and practice, and advanced certification. Specifically, they must take affirmative steps in the following areas:

- **Protecting and promoting high standards for entry into the profession;**
- **Supporting and measuring new teacher performance;**
- **Improving teaching and learning conditions;**
- **Improving the distribution of quality teachers in hard-to-staff schools;**
- **Strengthening teacher evaluation systems; and**
- **Recognizing and rewarding teacher skill and knowledge.**

1. Protecting And Promoting High Standards for Entry into the Profession

Ensuring that new teachers enter the profession with the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities is the most important function of federal and state policies governing teaching. Current policies supported by ESEA allow a new generation of “trial and error” teachers into classrooms – usually those with the most needy children. These policies and programs allow people with little or no preparation to “try” teaching and to learn on the job (too often without legitimate mentoring and support). The fact that teachers in alternative route programs can be considered “Highly Qualified” under ESEA is a clear example of this “trial and error” approach.

NEA believes that all teachers entering the profession should be required to demonstrate subject matter competence, pedagogical skills, and teaching ability before entering the classroom as a teacher-of-record. Alternative route programs must maintain the same standards as other teacher preparation programs and must be equal in rigor and content.

a. Teacher Recruitment¹

We must recruit talented and committed professionals to the teaching profession and we must develop a teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of the student population and nation as a whole. There is significant evidence that these programs work but there has been little policy and financial support for these strategies.

To strengthen teacher recruitment efforts, NEA supports:

- Funding programs that provide financial incentives for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession, and for collaboration among school districts, teacher unions, and institutions of higher education for the development of programs that facilitate the recruitment and retention of a qualified, diverse group of teacher candidates.
- Creating incentives such as loan forgiveness that encourage teachers to gain licensure in shortage subject areas.
- Developing “grow-your-own” recruitment programs for high school students, community college students, paraprofessionals, and mid-career changers.

b. Teacher Preparation/Licensing²

Quality teacher preparation and comprehensive performance-based state licensing systems help to ensure that candidates have the knowledge, skills, and ability to be effective beginning teachers.

NEA supports:

- Allowing multiple pathways for entrance to the teaching profession and for attaining full licensure. These pathways should provide options so that candidates may select the one that best provides a pathway to full licensure. None should be considered superior or inferior to the other.
- Requiring every teacher preparation program (alternative and otherwise) to complete a single national accrediting process. The National Commission for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is the proven leader in teacher education accreditation and should be the sole accrediting body.
- Giving independent, teacher-led standards boards authority over developing state preparation and licensure standards for all teachers.
- Closing federal and state loopholes that allow unlicensed and/or unprepared teachers into classrooms.
- Rejecting testing-only approaches to licensure that allow for “trial and error” teachers to enter the classroom without demonstrating they possess the necessary teaching knowledge and skill.
- Requiring that measures of actual performance be part of every state licensure system. This would require that teachers be granted an *initial* license to teach but

¹ See, Clewell, B.C., Villegas, A.M. (2001) Evaluation of the DeWitt Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund’s Pathways to Teaching Careers Program. The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410601>; www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410601_Pathways.pdf

² See, Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D. J., Gatlin, S. J., & Heilig, J. V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13(42). Retrieved [date] from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n42/>.

granted a *professional* license only after demonstrating effective practice during their first few years of teaching.

2. Supporting and Measuring New Teacher Performance

Teaching is the only profession in which a brand new, untested professional is asked to perform the exact same duties with equal proficiency as a seasoned and proven professional. Policies and funding should focus on comprehensive new teacher induction systems that treat new teachers as “residents” or “interns.” This would mean more training, less demanding classroom assignments, and significantly more focused performance assessments for all beginning teachers, regardless of their preparation and routes to licensure.

a. New Teacher Support, Induction, And Retention³

The key to helping beginning teachers improve their practice and to slowing the revolving door of teacher turnover is to support policies and funding that provide a comprehensive induction experience for every new teacher—induction experiences that are tailored specifically to individual needs and school/district/state circumstances.

To this end, NEA supports:

- Instituting formal systems of comprehensive teacher induction for at least the first two years of teaching, under the supervision of experienced and/or accomplished teacher-mentors.
- Creation of incentive grants to districts to develop peer assistance programs that focus on the improvement of staff knowledge and skills.
- Providing new teachers with a reduced course load and/or less demanding classroom/school assignments that permit them to participate in organized professional development, induction activities, and planning during the school day.
- Regularly assessing new teachers’ classroom performance and basing their professional learning directly on the results of this assessment.
- Increasing training, accountability, and support for school administrators, particularly in schools/districts with high teacher turnover.
- Implementing policies and providing funding to improve significantly the teaching and learning conditions in schools/districts with high teacher turnover. These conditions include class size, physical infrastructure, teacher input into school policies, and school safety.

3. Improving Teaching and Learning Conditions

Emerging research from across the nation demonstrates that school teaching and learning conditions—time, teacher empowerment, school leadership, professional development, and facilities and resources—are critical to increasing student achievement and retaining teachers. A safe and supportive environment with sufficient instructional resources is a necessity if teachers are to be successful with students. Districts need to work with local teacher unions to survey principals, teachers, and other school staff about their teaching and learning conditions. Such surveys can be powerful tools to obtain information that can identify improvements needed in schools throughout the district to help spur student

³ See, Ingersoll, R., (2005). “Teacher Shortages and Educational Inequality,” National Education Association Research Brief. <http://connect.nea.org/edstats/images/Ingersoll.pdf>

achievement. The New Teacher Center (www.newteachercenter.org/tlcsurvey/#survey) has been a leader in using teacher working condition surveys. States working with the New Teacher Center in 2008-09 included Alabama, Colorado, Fairfax County (VA), Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Vermont, and West Virginia. Texas is slated to do this work in 2010. Other states utilizing survey tools include Arizona, Nevada, Ohio, and Mississippi.

Teachers must be intimately involved in every phase of their ongoing training, with high-quality professional development programs focusing on pedagogy and helping teachers develop the deep understanding of how students learn. The information needs to be timely, research-based, and relevant—information that one can use immediately upon returning to the classroom.

NEA supports:

- Designing professional development programs in a collaborative fashion between school districts' leaders and local teachers to ensure that teachers—and other educators—receive professional development directly linked to their and their students' needs and tied to the school's and district's curriculum and instructional needs and strategies.
- Encouraging skills- and knowledge-based staffing arrangement environments. Programs should encourage collaboration between the school administration and the local organization representing teachers and other educators, as well as increased collaboration among teachers and between teachers and other education staff, to promote innovation in the way teachers' and support professionals' roles and responsibilities are defined.
- Continuing federal support for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to assist more teachers to obtain National Board Certification.
- Providing federal financial incentives for board-certified teachers to go to and stay in hard-to-staff schools.
- Assessing whether teachers believe their schools are good places to teach and learn and using that information to spur data-driven reform strategies.
- Reducing class sizes to improve student learning.

4. Improving the distribution of quality teachers in hard-to-staff schools

Greater support is needed for programs and policies that encourage quality teachers to stay in the classroom and to teach where they are needed most. To address teacher distribution in its totality, the government should work to understand the issues involved in teacher quality and to place teacher recruitment and retention at the forefront of policy agendas.

NEA supports:

- Providing financial incentives for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession.
- Funding programs that facilitate collaboration among school districts, teacher unions, and institutions of higher education for the development of programs that would facilitate the recruitment and retention of a qualified diverse group of teacher candidates.
- Ensuring all newly hired teachers quality induction and mentoring services from trained veteran teachers.

- Funding incentive grants to districts to develop peer assistance programs that focus on the improvement of staff knowledge and skills.
- Ensuring teacher involvement in every phase of their ongoing training, with high-quality professional development programs focusing on pedagogy and helping teachers develop a deep understanding of how students learn.
- Continuing to provide support for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to assist more teachers to obtain National Board Certification.
- Providing additional compensation for teachers who pass the demanding performance-based assessments of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and agree to teach in hard-to-staff schools, and/or take on additional roles such as mentoring, peer support, and other professional development activities.
- Encouraging skills- and knowledge-based staffing arrangements environments.
- Identifying and addressing teaching and learning condition issues that discourage teachers from staying in the profession or in hard-to-staff schools.

5. Strengthening Teacher Evaluation Systems⁴

No district-union contract in America states that “bad teachers can never be fired from their jobs.” Yet, too often, district-teacher union contracts are blamed for inadequate, ineffective, and misused teacher evaluation systems. New policies and funding should create or enhance standards-based teacher evaluation systems. Professional development and teacher learning programs should be aligned to meet the needs of both students and teachers – needs that are determined through local measures of student performance and teacher evaluations.

The most effective way to improve the quality of practicing teachers is to implement policies and funding that support standards-based teacher evaluation programs that have as their primary goal the improvement of teacher practice.

NEA supports:

- Using multiple measures to provide a full picture of teacher quality. For example, measuring teacher performance based on standards associated with student learning, and evaluation of teaching practices associated with desired student outcomes and achievement of school goals (collection of evidence about teacher planning and instruction, work with parents, etc.)
- Assessing all teachers regularly throughout their careers, for the primary purpose of improving teaching practice in ways that enhance student learning.
- Removing ineffective teachers within the context of a comprehensive assessment and support system that is developed in collaboration with teachers (via collective bargaining agreements in states that provide for such, or through the support of local teachers' organizations where bargaining does not exist).

⁴ Milanowski, A.T., Kimball, S.M., White, B. (2004) The relationship between standards-based teacher evaluation scores and student achievement. University of Wisconsin-Madison: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

6. Recognizing and Rewarding Teacher Skill and Knowledge

Rewarding (or punishing) teachers based on student test scores is a flawed approach to improving the quality of teaching or enhancing student learning outcomes. Providing teachers with job-embedded professional learning opportunities and creating systems for regular collaboration among educators within schools and districts have been proven to improve teacher practice and student performance.

a. Teacher Compensation⁵

Besides a parent, no other individual has as much influence on children and young adults as a teacher. And yet, teachers' salaries currently do not reflect the great work that they do every day to improve the lives of America's future generation. Too many teachers have been denied professional pay for too long⁶. Working in public schools should not be an act of charity—and teachers should not have to sacrifice their families' needs when they choose a career in public education. Education is complex, demanding work that extends beyond the hours spent in a classroom or working directly with students. To attract and retain more dedicated, committed professionals into the field, we need salaries that are literally “attractive.”

The intrinsic rewards of an education career are often used as a rationale to compensate for poor starting salaries. But, low teacher pay comes at a very high cost. Close to 50 percent of new teachers leave the profession during the first five years of teaching, and 37 percent of teachers who do not plan to teach until retirement blame low pay for their decision to leave the profession.

NEA supports:

- Ensuring a \$40,000 minimum salary for all teachers in every school in this country.
- Evaluating any proposed compensation system on whether it is designed to improve student learning through improved teacher practice rather than advancing short-term political goals. A comprehensive pay system must encourage the factors that make a difference in teaching and learning—such as skills, knowledge, and experience.
- Using creative ideas to enhance the single salary schedule, while ensuring that criteria used to determine whether education employees receive the additional compensation are clearly stated, subject to objective measurement, and related to the school district's educational objectives. Such ideas include:
 - Incentives to attract caring and qualified teachers to hard-to-staff schools. Local teachers, school boards, administrators, and communities know best how to provide those incentives.

⁵ See, Behn, R.D. (2000). Performance, People, and Pay. Bob Behn's Public Management Report; Harris, D.C. (2007). The promise and pitfalls of alternative teacher compensation approaches. Great Lakes Center for Education Policy & Practice; Heneman III, H.G., Milanowski, A.T., Kimball, S.M., (2007) Teacher Performance Pay: Synthesis of Plans, Research, and Guidelines for Practice (RB-46). University of Pennsylvania: Consortium for Policy Research in Education; Pfeffer, J (1998). Six dangerous myths about pay. Harvard Business Review.

⁶ According to a recent study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the teaching profession has an average national starting salary of \$30,377. Meanwhile, computer programmers start at an average of \$43,635, public accounting professionals at \$44,668, and registered nurses at \$45,570.

- Incentives for the achievement of National Board Certification.
- Incentives for teachers to mentor newer colleagues.
- Group incentives that offer teachers the opportunity to gain greater autonomy and discretion in all school matters and improve professional practice and student learning.
- Incentives for accepting additional responsibilities such as peer assistance or mentoring.
- Additional pay for extended contract years, extended days, and extra assignments.
- Additional pay for teachers for knowledge and skills gained that are directly related to the missions of their schools and/or their assignments.
- Additional pay for teachers who have advanced credentials/degrees directly related to their teaching assignments and/or the missions of their schools.
- Group or school-wide salary supplements/bonuses for improved student achievement.

b. Alternative Pathways to Professional Pay

NEA believes that specific guidelines must be followed to enhance the successful creation, implementation, and sustainability of pay systems with alternative routes to professional pay:

- **Base Salary. Start with a professional level base salary and salary schedule.** NEA supports a starting salary of at least \$40,000 for all teachers entering the classroom.
- **Current Salary. No teacher's current salary shall be reduced** as a result of the implementation of an alternative compensation system.
- **Funding. Alternative compensation models must have adequate funding,** both initially and ongoing with a sustainable source.
- **Resources. Time, relevant professional development, and opportunities for collaboration** must be available to teachers and support staff to ensure success.
- **Accessibility. Any alternative compensation system should be accessible to everyone** who is eligible with no quotas.
- **Collaboration. Alternative compensation should promote collaboration;** not competition.
- **Size of Incentives. Incentives must be large enough to make a difference.**
- **Phased in. The system should be implemented incrementally,** with proper training.
- **Classroom Teaching is Honored. Alternative compensation systems should be structured to attract and retain quality staff** and keep them in the classroom.
- **Association Involvement. The system must be negotiated as a collective bargaining agreement** or agreed to by at least 75 percent of the members in locations where there is no collective bargaining and allow for voluntary participation
- **There is no one plan. Proposed plans must be flexible** and structured for the context in which they will be implemented. Compensation may take many forms, including training and experience (steps and lanes), current extra compensation options, as well as other emerging pay opportunities.
- **Transparency. The system must be understandable to educators and the public.**
- **Objective Criteria. Criteria used to evaluate professional expertise must be objective, understandable, and predictable.**

- **Assessment.** There must be an annual assessment of the system to determine its effectiveness in improving teacher salaries, teacher practice, and recruitment/retention of quality staff, as well as its administrative cost-effectiveness.