

CHILDREN OF POVERTY DESERVE GREAT TEACHERS:

ONE UNION'S COMMITMENT TO CHANGING THE STATUS QUO

Center for Teaching Quality and the National Education Association



The National Education Association (NEA) is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, education support professionals, college faculty, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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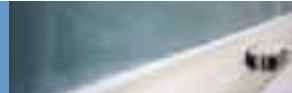
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The Center for Teaching Quality is a research-based advocacy organization dedicated to improving student learning and advancing the teaching profession by cultivating teacher leadership, conducting timely research, and crafting smart policy.

# Children of Poverty Deserve Great Teachers: One Union's Commitment to Changing the Status Quo



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## Executive Summary

### Great Teachers for Every Child

**G**reat teachers, with the right policy supports, are the ideal agents of meaningful and sustainable change in our most challenged schools. Accomplished and effective teachers help students learn at high levels. They also spread their expertise throughout the school on behalf of all students. This report lays out compelling evidence about the actions required to identify and develop teachers and to recruit and retain them for high-needs classrooms.

This report also presents one union’s commitment to advocate for principled changes in the status quo—signaling its determination to break ground for new teaching policy partnerships. It’s time for policymakers and education leaders, including teachers, to strike agreement on a balanced approach to closing student achievement gaps—an agreement that recognizes the tight correlation among school leadership, working conditions, and teacher effectiveness.

In the large-scale reform experiments of the past decade, the potential power of informed teaching policy to drive school improvement has been mostly ignored. As a result, children of poverty and those of color are far less likely to be taught by qualified, effective teachers than are students from more affluent families.

Seven years after the passage of NCLB, there is only limited evidence that low-income and minority students have any greater access to highly qualified teachers. A recent Education Trust report reveals that, nationwide, about 40 percent of all core subject area classes in high-poverty, high-minority middle schools are staffed by out-of-field teachers.

Our analysis and other key research make a compelling case for establishing—and enforcing—high standards for teacher quality and the working conditions that enable effective teaching.

The National Education Association has worked to both recruit National Board Certified Teachers for high-needs schools and “grow” them from within. In six state policy summits sponsored by the NEA, over 2000 NBCTs made clear the conditions that will attract and keep our most effective teachers in our most challenging schools:

- ▶ Good principals who both know how to lead and support teacher leadership;
- ▶ A commitment to creative teaching and inquiry learning, not scripted instruction;

- ▶ The opportunity to team with a critical mass of highly-skilled teachers who share responsibility for every student’s success;
- ▶ Sufficient resources to get the job done, including new technologies, classroom libraries and instructional supplies—and access and connections to social and health services.

The NBCTs agree that effective teachers need to be paid substantially more when they teach in high needs schools. But the right working conditions matter most.

**This report challenges school reformers to begin working with teachers—rather than trying to work around them.**

In the first years of the 21st century, the major focus of national school reform has been to marginalize teachers and “teacher-proof” curricula and instruction. This ill-advised strategy has wasted the expertise of accomplished teachers and failed to capitalize on the energy and motivation of successful educators who are eager to improve schools through collaborative leadership.

If we fail to invite effective teachers to become full partners in reform—if we fail to create the conditions that will ignite and sustain their passion to help every child succeed—then high-needs schools will continue to staff their frequent classroom vacancies with individuals who are inexperienced and poorly prepared—prolonging a chronic condition that is already undermining reformers’ attempts to improve teaching and learning.

**This report also:**

**...Begins by rejecting several myths with compelling evidence.**

- ▶ It challenges the conventional wisdom that by simply removing “barriers” to becoming a credentialed teacher, we can produce all the talented educators our high-needs schools require.
- ▶ It points out that dismissing incompetent teachers, while necessary, does nothing to assure a stable supply of well-prepared and highly effective professionals for nation’s 50,000+ high-poverty schools.
- ▶ It advocates for credible and consistent evaluation processes that could transcend the current debates about the role of tenure in the teacher development system.
- ▶ And it documents that financial incentives are not enough to attract and keep accomplished teachers in high-needs schools. Good working conditions matter much more.

**...Builds on the best research about staffing high-needs schools.**

A sizeable body of research underscores the need to determine the particular skill sets and working conditions required for new and experienced teachers to excel in high-needs schools. Researchers have found that the *same* teacher may look more or less effective in different kinds of schools or with different supports. Yet policymakers often overlook research on the supports and conditions that equip both teachers and students to succeed in the most challenging environments.

**...Argues that universities and school districts must do more to prepare teachers for success in our most challenging schools.**

Although universities are attracting more academically-able teaching candidates, most programs still do not adequately prepare teachers to perform effectively in high-needs schools. Indeed, many teacher education programs still fail to make meaningful distinctions about the work of teachers in different school settings.

By and large, 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. And few are partnering with universities and non-profits 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.

**This report describes four strategies** that will move us past the usual "either/or" thinking about the future of teaching toward research-driven policies that can transform every high-poverty school in America into a high-performing school, fully staffed by effective teachers.

- 1. Recruit and prepare teachers for work in high-needs schools.** One cannot be done well without the other.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. 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.

## NEA's Commitment

NEA will launch *The Turn Around for Great Public Schools Campaign* to focus its resources on advancing these four strategies. By committing \$1 million per year over six years, NEA will develop and support comprehensive strategies and policies to increase teacher effectiveness in high-needs schools. NEA will:

- ▶ Launch an outreach campaign to encourage NEA members to teach in high-needs schools and offer programs and supports, such as online virtual mentors and National Board Certification incentives, to support them.
- ▶ Promote expanded financial incentives for National Board Certification and support local and state affiliates that choose to partner in innovative incentive programs, such as the TIF grant program.
- ▶ Expand NEA's current working conditions project to survey at least 1,000 high-needs schools and disseminate data on specific working conditions that should be targeted in order to attract and retain teachers in these schools.
- ▶ Provide resources and strategies that support affiliate collaboration with school districts to develop memoranda of understanding, collective bargaining provisions, and similar “compacts” that provide increased flexibility in staffing high-needs schools. These efforts can include expanding the scope of collective bargaining to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in high-needs schools.

## Conclusion

President Obama, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, offers state and local policymakers as well as K–12 and higher education stakeholders unique opportunities to “elevate the teaching profession and help recruit and retain great teachers and principals for underserved schools and communities.”

However, history has shown us that a “one-size-fits-all” regulatory approach to teacher recruitment and preparation is a failed strategy. As policymakers look for answers to the question *How do we recruit and retain effective teachers for high needs schools?*, it's worthwhile to recall the words of H.L. Mencken:

*“There is always an easy solution to every human problem—neat, plausible, and wrong.”*

It's time to recognize the complexity of assuring every child a great teacher and work together to get it right.



## A DAUNTING REALITY

*[L]et's focus on the most important ingredient in the school, and that's the teacher. Let's pay our teachers more money. Let's give them more support. Let's give them more training. Let's make sure that schools of education that are training our teachers are up to date with the best methods to teach our kids. And let's work with teachers so that we are providing them measures of whether they're effective or not, and let's hold them accountable for being effective.*

*—President Barack Obama, "Open for Questions"  
online town hall meeting, March 26, 2009*

**F**rom the White House to local communities, our nation is recognizing teacher quality as a key factor for strengthening U.S. public schools for all children. Many influences, including home and community life, play a role in student achievement, but no school-based issue may be as critical and within our power to fix as the inequitable distribution of qualified and effective teachers.

Many highly skilled and dedicated teachers struggle daily to keep the ship of learning afloat in our most challenging schools. Nonetheless, children of poverty and those of color are far less likely to be taught by qualified, effective teachers than are students from more affluent families. This daunting reality hovers like an albatross over those who work daily, against the odds, to improve student achievement in our low-income communities.

The research is sobering:

- ▶ High-poverty schools are much more likely to have special education and math teaching vacancies<sup>1</sup> and are forced to staff classrooms with out-of-field and inexperienced teachers, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ In New York City's high-poverty schools, 20 percent of teachers have less than three years of experience, compared to only 11 percent in more affluent schools, according to a recent study. Furthermore, qualified teachers in high-poverty schools (credentialed, experienced teachers who are teaching in their field and who score well on tests of academic and teaching ability) are more likely to leave teaching than their less qualified peers in those schools.<sup>3</sup>

- Study after study has shown that teachers associated with high “value-added” student achievement gains and teachers who are National Board Certified are relatively unlikely to be teaching economically disadvantaged and minority students.<sup>4</sup>

Asking high-needs schools to rely on relatively inexperienced, poorly prepared teachers—or better qualified teachers who quickly exit their classrooms—creates a chronic condition that undermines long-term, school-based strategies to improve teaching and learning.<sup>5</sup> How can we make teaching the fully realized profession that our most challenged students deserve? We know what to do. We just have not developed the political will to do it.

## Effective Teaching Policy Left Behind

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation put pressure on school administrators to assure that high-needs schools would no longer have an oversupply of teachers who are inexperienced, unlicensed, or teaching out-of-field. However, several problems have thwarted NCLB’s stated goal, including weak definitions of the term “highly qualified teacher” (HQT); minimal enforcement of teaching standards; and lack of sound evidence for what works in high-needs classrooms. NCLB has raised public awareness of the unequal distribution of qualified teachers, but by and large it has not erased the outmoded policies that continue to leave millions of students underserved.

*NCLB is designed with 47 ways for a school site and a district to fail and only one way for them to pass.*

*—Christine Michele Alvarez  
Teacher, Visalia, California*

Even where reforms have been initiated, soft commitments and financial crises have stalled progress. Over several years, California’s highly qualified teacher provision substantially reduced the number of emergency certified teachers, from a high of

50,000 to only 10,000 in 2006.<sup>6</sup> In response to federal HQT policies, many of California’s new recruits were placed in internship programs, where they received more preparation and support than they would have received if they had entered teaching on an emergency permit. This undoubtedly helped to strengthen teaching in California’s highest-needs schools. But researchers are now documenting how massive budget shortfalls have triggered severe cutbacks in the teacher education budgets of state universities. The effect has been to gut California’s capacity to prepare new recruits—at a time when many baby boomer teachers are preparing to retire.<sup>7</sup>

Seven years after the passage of NCLB, there is only limited evidence that low-income and minority students have gained greater access to highly qualified teachers.<sup>8</sup> A recent Education Trust report reveals that nationwide, about 40 percent of all core-subject-area classes in high-poverty, high-minority middle schools are currently staffed by out-of-field teachers.<sup>9</sup> This analysis makes a compelling case for establishing—and enforcing—high standards for teacher quality.<sup>10</sup> And the California example shows how weak economic policies and a faltering tax base can quickly shift priorities away from the educational needs of poor and minority children.

Although universities have been attracting more academically able teaching candidates than in the past,<sup>11</sup> most programs still do not adequately prepare teachers to perform effectively in high-needs schools. And while the New Teacher Project and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform have made considerable progress in helping some urban school districts design more effective human resources systems, few school districts have yet learned how to grow and groom their own talent from within. How many school districts today are tapping into the pool of community members who might launch education careers by becoming teaching assistants or mentors for students? How many are assuring a steady supply of well-prepared teacher leaders through the creation of residency programs and other forward-thinking innovations?

In many ways, our nation's teacher development system still seems mired in the assumption that talented females are a captive labor pool and are willing to work for decades at below-market wages. School district recruitment and hiring practices rest on increasingly outdated, mid-20th century organizational assumptions about teaching, learning, and career mobility patterns. Policymakers often focus on individual teachers' formal qualifications, such as which college they attended or which degree they earned. Yet researchers have found that the *same* teacher may appear to be more effective or less effective depending on the school, the subject, or the grade assignment.<sup>12</sup>

Research points to the need for policies and practices that zero in on the specific working conditions and professional supports that teachers require in order to excel in specific learning environments. For example, what are the conditions necessary to convince talented recruits to accept jobs at the most challenging schools? What supports must be present for them to teach effectively once they've been recruited? Researchers have also clearly documented what it takes to encourage accomplished teachers to move to the schools that need them most.<sup>13</sup> How can policymakers promote conditions in high-needs schools that meet the expectations of these expert teachers and also maximize their effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of students?

Large-scale reform experiments of the past decade have mostly overlooked the potential power of effective teaching policy as a major driver of school improvement. The focus has been on marginalizing teachers or "teacher-proofing" curriculum and instruction, rather than recognizing that with the right policy supports, teachers can be the ideal agents of meaningful and sustainable change.

This report presents compelling evidence for what takes to identify, develop, recruit, and retain great teachers for high-needs schools. It also presents well-grounded strategies based on that evidence, along with the National Education Association's (NEA's) description of its commitment to change the status quo.

## Dispelling Myths and Advancing the Teaching Profession

The opportunity to act has arrived: Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has spearheaded a \$5 billion Race to the Top Fund to support new approaches for improving schools. The Department of Education has the

stage for innovative efforts, with a laser-like focus on achieving equitable distribution of effective teachers and “intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest performing schools.”<sup>14</sup> States, school districts, and non-profit organizations will receive funding to radically change the school reform landscape, and a lion’s share of the funding will focus on improving teaching.

To make the most of this opportunity, we need to understand what effective teaching in high-needs schools will require. It’s easy to think that if we could somehow attract “smarter” individuals to teaching, or if principals had more authority, or if school districts used merit pay systems, then hard-to-staff schools would become simple to staff, and student achievement would improve. The reality is more complex. We first need to dispel some common myths about the problem:

**Myth:** Too many barriers prevent talented individuals from becoming public school teachers.

**Fact:** Growing numbers of academically qualified individuals are entering teacher education programs and joining the teaching profession, but many of them are unwilling to work in high-needs schools and districts because of uncompetitive salaries and poor working

conditions. Short-cut alternative certification programs have also made it easier for people to enter teaching. But those who enter with too little preparation are likely to leave the profession much sooner than teachers who have a thorough grasp of the fundamentals of teaching.<sup>15</sup>

**Myth:** The key to improving high-needs schools is to remove incompetent teachers from them.

**Fact:** Removing poor performers does not ensure that talented and well-prepared teachers will be waiting in the wings to replace them. Many teachers who are ineffective have not been sufficiently prepared or supported to succeed in high-needs classrooms.

**Myth:** Teacher tenure rules make it impossible to get rid of poor teachers.

**Fact:** A recent study by the New Teacher Project clearly shows that the difficulty of removing ineffective teachers has much more to do with ill-trained administrators who have

few skills and inadequate tools to distinguish between excellent, average, and poor teaching.<sup>16</sup> Another report, from the Center for American Progress, concluded that poor evaluation procedures, not tenure, are most likely to account for a school district’s inability to fire poor performers.<sup>17</sup>

**Myth:** Teachers’ unions and their negotiations are a root cause of the maldistribution of effective teachers.

### Teaching in high-needs schools

The variety of students’ needs, on top of large class loads, make teaching difficult in high-needs schools. Shelly Hanahan, a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) from Upper Arlington, Ohio, has 22 years of classroom experience. In her words, “Teachers are faced with learners that are as diverse as ever, including those who do not speak English as their primary language and those with learning or emotional disabilities, hearing impairments, or those who are medically fragile. We must teach them all and knowing how to teach them is no simple matter.”

**Fact:** Many current district-union agreements do not fit modern realities of teacher labor markets. But recent studies have shown that collective bargaining can lead to a reduction in teacher transfer rates from high-poverty urban schools as administrators and unions work jointly to improve working conditions and salaries.<sup>18</sup>

**Myth:** Financial incentives are the key to attracting teachers to high-needs schools.<sup>19</sup>

**Fact:** It's true that resolving the shortage of well-prepared teachers in high-needs schools will require equalizing resources and providing equitable, competitive salaries. Many high-needs school districts pay beginning teachers about \$10,000 less than what their nearby suburban counterparts are paying. At the top of the salary ladder, the differences may reach the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range. But financial considerations are only part of the picture. In efforts to recruit and retain qualified and effective teachers, improved working conditions and preparation for teaching in high-needs schools may be even more powerful than financial incentives.<sup>20</sup>

**Myth:** Standardized tests now in place are invariably the most accurate means of assessing student progress and teacher effectiveness. Scores from these tests should be the primary metric for evaluating teachers and increasing accountability.

**Fact:** Today's "value-added" systems for measuring teacher effects can provide useful information, but the data are not reliable for making high-stakes decisions. (See sidebar on next page.) Assessments based solely on scores from tests currently in use are not designed to help teachers become more effective.

Too often, the debates over how to improve the teaching profession and close the teacher quality gap fall into unnecessary ideological divides based on either/or questions. Policymakers may pose the wrong questions:

- ▶ Should we offer financial incentives *OR* improve working conditions to lure teachers to high-needs schools?
- ▶ Should we use alternative licensing programs to quickly recruit more non-traditional teachers into high-needs schools *OR* concentrate on better preparing teachers for the complex challenges of teaching in these schools?

In place of an either/or approach, we need strategies that allow for multiple approaches. Public schools, higher education institutions, and policymakers need to work together to solve a shared problem. We need to recognize the complexity of educating students in the 21st century. Great teaching means helping students learn and apply content that is expanding geometrically, even as those students' brains are being rewired by digital media. If we are going to prepare the teachers who can make it possible for children of poverty to keep pace with the world, we have to consider what it means to teach today in complex urban environments and in isolated, economically impoverished rural communities.

As policymakers look for answers to the question, "*How do we recruit and retain effective teachers for high needs schools?*" it is worth recalling the following words of H.L. Mencken:

"There is always an easy solution to every human problem—neat, plausible, and wrong."

## Benefits and Limitations of Value-Added Measures

Over the past two decades, statisticians, labor economists, and education researchers have developed and refined value-added methodology (VAM), which uses complex statistical approaches to assess teachers' impact on student academic growth. VAM provides a way to determine which teachers help students learn most effectively, as defined by an annual standardized, multiple-choice achievement test. These data have proven useful for helping teachers understand student needs and for looking at groups of teachers for research purposes. But VAM has limitations that lead to serious questions about its use to assess *individual* teacher effectiveness.

1. Students are not randomly assigned to teachers. VAM measures cannot fully distinguish between teacher effects and the effects caused by differences in students' needs or preparedness.
2. The lack of properly scaled year-to-year tests make it difficult to evaluate gains at all points along the achievement continuum or to assess, for example, a physics teacher's effectiveness based on her students' previous scores in chemistry.
3. Assessment data are not available for all teachers. Because of the many subjects and teaching assignments in a large school, only 30 percent of elementary teachers and about 10 percent of high school teachers can have value-added standardized achievement test scores ascribed to them.
4. Many students in high-needs schools are highly mobile and do not complete a full year of instruction in a given teacher's classroom.
5. Many students are taught the same subjects by more than one teacher.
6. VAM models are unstable in distinguishing among teachers in the middle ranges of performance.
7. Depending on the VAM statistical model a researcher uses, the same teacher can be identified as effective or ineffective.
8. Researchers have found that the same teacher's effectiveness rating can change depending on the school in which he or she teaches.

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## STRATEGIES THAT WILL WORK

*[If] we want to attract the best and the brightest into teaching, you got to pay them more money. You got to give them more support, and most teachers who leave teaching, they do it in their first three, five years. So giving them a master teacher... [and] incentives to go back into schools that are the toughest to teach, those are very important.*

—Sen. Barack Obama, campaign speech,  
Martinsville, Va., August 20, 2008

Doing more research could help us figure out how best to find, prepare, develop, pay, and retain effective teachers for high-needs schools. But existing evidence already tells us that teacher education must change dramatically in our colleges, universities, and alternative certification programs. School districts will need to redesign their operations so that the most effective teachers can spread their expertise to others. Administrators and unions must create a new compact by overhauling evaluation and compensation systems and addressing the working conditions that impact student achievement.

There will be some steep hills to climb, but those hills *can* be climbed. Teachers are ready for change. Polling data suggest that the vast majority of teachers want a different system. Over 80 percent of the nation’s teachers believe that teachers who work in tough schools need to be paid substantially more.<sup>21</sup> In a 2009 survey of 15,000 teachers in four states, almost 60 percent said their districts were not doing enough “to identify, compensate, promote, and retain the most effective teachers.”<sup>22</sup> In a recent North Carolina survey, National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) overwhelmingly wanted more opportunity to lead teacher education and licensure reforms, improve their district’s professional development programs, and participate in virtual communities that could ramp up support for novice and underprepared teachers in high-needs schools.<sup>23</sup> However, in a survey of NBCTs in North Carolina and five other states, nearly 60 percent said their school administration makes no effort to help them lead, thus seeing “no role for them outside the classroom.”<sup>24</sup>

Over the last several years, the National Education Association (NEA) has worked with more than 2,000 NBCTs in six state summits (Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Washington). NEA asked the NBCTs to examine research through the lens of their own experience and expertise and then advise policymakers

on how to staff high-needs schools. Many of these NBCTs already teach in challenging schools, and others indicated under the right conditions, they would be willing to move to a high-needs school. But they made it clear that without classroom libraries, science lab supplies, Internet access, and other basic resources, going to a high-needs school would be an exercise in futility. It would be like asking a surgeon to operate without a scalpel.

Most important, the NBCTs participating in the state summits said they firmly believe that all students can achieve. At the same time, they recognized that teachers in high-needs schools require greatly increased support to help students succeed. They called for policies that can find, develop, and support the right teachers for such schools. Students, they said, are not widgets to be assembled on a conveyer belt. Well-trained teachers must be allowed to use their best professional judgment to ensure student success. They must have the means to connect their classroom teaching with community resources. They must have ready access to professional development and many opportunities to collaborate and share expertise among one another, on behalf of their students.

Many of the accomplished teachers who participated in the state summits were more than willing to teach in high-needs schools under the right conditions, with a coherent plan and specific strategies in place. The first step is to recruit and prepare teachers for high-needs schools.

### STRATEGY 1: Recruit and Prepare Teachers for High-Needs Schools

Policymakers must focus on coherent, well-funded programs to recruit and also prepare teachers for work in high-needs schools. They will need to get beyond the current debate over university-based teacher education versus alternative certification as they attempt to address the shortages of great teachers for high-needs schools.

In the early 2000s, California offered the Governor's Teaching Fellowship to 1,200 targeted recruits who earned a special credential through the state university system for learning to teach in high-needs schools. The recruits were paid a \$20,000 stipend and asked to remain in those schools for at least four years. A recent study found that thanks to this program, there was a 28 percent increase in the likelihood that the Fellows would enter and remain in the target schools.<sup>25</sup>

While the California fellowship program was relatively small and short-lived, its focus was exceptional. Too often, otherwise well-designed programs aimed at recruiting talented individuals into teaching are disconnected from the staffing crisis we see in many high-needs schools. North Carolina, for example, has offered teaching scholarships to bright high school students who enroll in a rigorous teacher education program and commit to four years of teaching, but a recent study shows that while the N.C. Teaching Fellows are far more likely to enter and remain in teaching than other recruits,<sup>26</sup> they are not specifically recruited, prepared or financially encouraged to work in high-needs schools.

Teacher education is a very large and complex enterprise, housed in over 1,200 universities across the nation. The quality of these programs varies, to say the least. In some states with



teacher surpluses, many universities prepare more than enough teachers for elementary school, physical education, and social studies. Meanwhile, math, science, and special education vacancies continue to beset school administrators in those states.<sup>27</sup> In a given state, any number of universities prepare a wide array of teachers, often with little attention to local labor market needs. Incentives for teacher education programs to prepare graduates specifically for high-needs schools are rare. And without incentives, few teachers take on the challenge.

In an environment where education schools are not supplying sufficient numbers of graduates ready and willing to teach in high-needs schools, alternative certification programs have expanded to meet the growing demand. Most of these programs have aimed to attract mid-career switchers and college graduates with non-education degrees to the nation's most challenging schools. Some 500 alternative certification programs recruited and placed about 57,000 teachers for the 2006–07 school year, an increase of more than 200 percent since 2000–01.<sup>28</sup> These numbers continue to grow. While such programs are attracting much-needed and sometimes talented recruits into teaching, they have yet to solve the problem of supplying teachers who are both well-prepared and fully committed to the profession.

This year, Teach for America expects to place about 4,000 recent college graduates in high-needs classrooms after selectively choosing from among more than 35,000 applicants.<sup>29</sup>

While the Teach for America program has excited many policymakers, its contribution to the teacher supply is relatively small. U.S. public schools need to hire about 250,000 new teachers annually.

Studies also show that recruits who enter teaching through alternative programs that short cut preparation are far more likely to leave teaching within their first few years, compared to their peers from traditional teacher education programs.<sup>30</sup>

More than 80 percent of Teach for America recruits leave the classroom by their third year of teaching, becoming part of the revolving door of novices who pass quickly through high-needs classrooms.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, one recent study found that entrants from strong teacher education programs stay in teaching much longer and achieve greater student achievement gains than either alternative route entrants or those from weak traditional programs.<sup>32</sup> Importantly, strong teacher education programs offer candidates access to new research knowledge about how students learn and give them substantial time to learn how to teach under the tutelage of expert teachers in K–12 schools.

High-quality alternative certification programs have proven they can tap into the talent pool of midcareer recruits and attract talented recent college graduates. Compared with university programs, such alternative programs are more often responsive to the specific labor market needs of school districts. They can provide an efficient pipeline into hard-to-

*I teach in a high-needs school. Since I started there, I've had 14 different administrators. Teachers come and go, especially ones with emergency or temporary certificates. They do not have the right training. We must do better—and I know we can.*

—NBCT Participant at 2006 Washington (State) Policy Summit

staff schools. The hurdle is preparation. Research clearly shows that the more extensive a teacher’s pre-service training, student teaching, and support during the induction years, the longer that teacher stays in the teaching profession.<sup>33</sup> Studies have also found that while academic ability and commitment to teaching in high-needs schools are clearly valuable, more is needed to ensure effective teaching. *Knowing how to teach* is also critical; programs that devalue the importance of “know-how” ignore a critical piece of the solution.<sup>34</sup>

At the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), research on working conditions for teachers has shown that several types of in-depth preparation are essential for effective teaching in high-needs schools. Teachers need preparation for working with special needs students and

*Policymakers need to earmark professional development funds so that more teachers can receive training in specific programs that are meaningful and relevant to their students’ needs. “A one-size-fits-all” approach in teacher preparation or in professional development does not serve us well in high-needs schools.*

—NBCT Participant at 2005 Oklahoma Policy Summit

with students who are learning English as a second language. They also need to acquire knowledge about how to manage reform mandates. CTQ research also suggests that teachers need increased preparation to work with a variety of support providers outside of the school.<sup>35</sup> The much-praised Harlem Children’s Zone in New York City offers not only good instruction for students in a high-needs community, but also early childhood programs, parent training and engagement, and social and health services.<sup>36</sup> If President Obama’s *Promise Neighborhood* proposals<sup>37</sup> are to be taken to scale, more teachers need to be prepared to work in

schools that offer such community services. More schools will need to have the capacity to make much needed connections between academic standards and the supports students need to meet them.

The Benwood Schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee offer compelling evidence of the preparation and support needed for effective teaching in high-needs schools. (See sidebar on page 11.) Initially, reformers assumed that teachers already working in the then-struggling schools were the problem, and the solution would be to recruit “better” teachers from elsewhere. Over time, however, some of the most impressive student achievement gains were associated with the growing effectiveness of teachers who had been at the Benwood Schools even before reform efforts began. With effective leadership, improved training, quality peer assistance, and a specialized master’s degree in urban education, these teachers were able to improve their teaching. Student performance rose accordingly. It taught a powerful lesson: *Great teachers can be cultivated from within high-needs schools, not just recruited to them.*

These findings suggest that current national efforts to create Urban Teacher Residencies (UTRs) may offer a powerful solution to staffing high-needs schools. UTRs are built on the best of university-based approaches—including programs at UCLA, Stanford University, Bank Street College of Education, and Alverno College—which thoroughly prepare recruits

to teach at high-needs schools. UTRs also draw on the recruitment and induction practices found in high-quality alternative certification programs.

UTRs pay recruits to train for a full year in a high-needs school with expert mentors. They specifically prepare the recruits to be change agents, using incentives and supports in place to keep them teaching long enough to make a difference. One of the most notable UTR efforts, the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) in Chicago, not only offers substantial incentives for recruits to be fully prepared, but also places them in schools with like-minded cohorts and effective principals.<sup>38</sup> After eight years, more than 95 percent of the program's recruits are still teaching. In addition, all of the schools that AUSL manages have seen steady increases in Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores. Dodge Academy, one of the schools where residents train, recently recorded the largest ISAT gain of any Chicago public elementary school.<sup>39</sup> By investing in teacher preparation and supportive working conditions, the high-needs schools in this initiative are becoming easy to staff and student achievement is rising.

Teachers in many other countries receive more thorough preparation than U.S. teachers and have far more opportunities to learn on the job from one another by collectively studying the effects of their classroom lessons. One recent report found that American teachers spend about 80 percent of their total working time teaching students, compared to about 60 percent for their peers in other countries. This means U.S. teachers have less time to collaborate and develop high-quality curricula and instruction.<sup>40</sup> School organizations in the U.S. are not doing enough to move effective teaching practices from one classroom to another. So far, they have done little to use digital technologies and the Internet to support novice and underprepared teachers in high-needs schools. Technological tools can boost the transfer of knowledge and expand opportunities to assess teaching effectiveness in ways heretofore unimaginable.

### The Benwood Initiative

In 2000, the Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga, Tennessee revealed that nine of the state's twenty lowest-performing elementary schools were in Chattanooga's own county school district. Only 12 percent of third graders in these nine schools were reading at or above grade level. In response, the Benwood Initiative (named after its major benefactor, the Benwood Foundation), was launched.

At the outset, the reformers sought to entice the district's most effective teachers (identified using value-added methodologies) to the nine Benwood schools by offering \$5,000 annual bonuses.

However, reform leaders soon found that few teachers were willing to transfer. Eventually, they realized that their initiative needed to:

- ▶ Prepare administrators to become more effective.
- ▶ Use multiple measures to assess teacher quality.
- ▶ Cultivate and capitalize on teacher leadership.
- ▶ Develop existing teacher talent from within the Benwood schools.

Not only did the program inspire teachers already working in the schools to grow professionally, but the opportunity to work with visionary principals and engage in collegial professional learning communities convinced many more Chattanooga-area teachers to move to high-needs schools and stay at those schools. And the annual bonuses became an important secondary incentive.

The number of third graders scoring "proficient" at the nine schools rose from 53 percent in 2003 to 74 percent in 2005. Fifth grade proficiency rose from 62 percent to 80 percent. Improvements in math scores were similarly impressive.

An Education Sector report concluded: "The Benwood Initiative was about much more than pay incentives and reconstitution; the district invested heavily in programs to train teachers, in additional staff to support curriculum and instruction, and in stronger and more collaborative leadership at the school level."

### *CTQ Ideas for Action*

States and districts should use ARRA funds, Teacher Incentive Fund grants and other resources to recruit and prepare new teachers and improve the effectiveness of current teachers in high-needs schools. Effective strategies include the following:

- ▶ Launch a long-range campaign to recruit and prepare teachers for urban and rural high-needs schools by offering high-quality residency programs. Recruit 20,000 to 40,000 new educators per year for 10 to 20 years, so that they will ultimately represent 10 percent of the national workforce. 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.
- ▶ Cultivate effective teachers from within the 5,000 schools targeted as highest need, growing National Board Certified Teachers in those schools and using Web 2.0 tools to spread content-specific and culturally-responsive teaching skills.

### NEA's Commitment

President Obama has proposed to turn around 5,000 of the nation's lowest-performing schools with \$5 billion in five years beginning in the fall of 2010. In July 2009, NEA leaders voted to develop and implement an action plan to support this effort which, among other things, will advocate the staffing of priority schools with fully licensed, experienced, and caring teachers, and providing high-quality professional development that includes National Board Certification. To address this charge, NEA will launch *The Turn Around for Great Public Schools Campaign*, an initiative focused on improving the quality of teachers in high-needs schools. NEA will commit \$1 million per year over the next six years to support and develop comprehensive strategies and policies to increase teacher effectiveness in high-needs schools. Through this campaign NEA commits to:

- ▶ Launch a major member outreach effort using its union advocacy and leadership position to encourage the most accomplished teacher-members to start their teaching careers in high-needs schools, remain teaching there, or transfer to high-needs schools.
- ▶ Support the establishment of locally-based recruitment and support programs that encourage teachers to devote at least five years of service to strengthening teaching in high-needs schools.
- ▶ Establish a national recognition program to support and publicize the efforts of teachers, schools, and districts to strengthen the quality teaching in high-needs schools.
- ▶ Work with the philanthropic community and with local, state, and national policymakers to expand the depth and breadth of NEA's initial investments.
- ▶ Support a virtual mentoring program for new teachers in high-needs schools, ensuring that every new teacher has a e-mentor who is National Board Certified and can offer a wide array of pedagogical supports, including the cultural competencies and literacy strategies needed to teach effectively in high-needs schools.

- ▶ Work in partnership with local and state affiliates to implement programs to grow National Board Certified Teachers in high-needs schools. This strategy is designed not to move talented teachers from one school to another but to grow teacher quality and teacher effectiveness from within each school.

## STRATEGY 2: Take a Comprehensive Approach to Teacher Incentives

Many proposals to staff high-needs schools call for increased pay for teachers at such schools, and many analysts looking for staffing solutions have examined other fields where employers offer financial incentives to those who take on hard-to-staff jobs and perform them well.<sup>41</sup> But it remains unclear how much financial incentive would be enough to help recruit and retain excellent teachers for high-needs schools.

What is clear is that policymakers need to consider carefully the various assumptions underlying the array of performance pay plans now proposed or underway. For example, state plans in Texas and Florida, as well as a district plan in Houston, focus primarily on motivating teachers to help boost

their students' standardized test scores. Other districts have sought to create more complex systems that offer teachers new career paths and reward high performance in multiple ways. For example, a district might offer teachers financial rewards for learning relevant knowledge and skills and for achieving individual and schoolwide performance goals. Denver Public Schools in Colorado and the Austin Independent School District in Texas offer teachers extra pay for helping students learn more. To measure student progress, they use teacher-developed measures as well as standardized tests.

Over the last several years, the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) has offered grants to 30 states, districts, and education agencies to implement performance-based compensation systems. The Obama administration is expanding this initiative by raising support from \$100 million to more than \$200 million this year and proposes to invest another \$400 million or more in 2010.

Many of the TIF grantees are drawing on the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) model. Nationally, there are 219 schools implementing TAP—an approach that includes student

*Ariel Sacks, an 8th grade English teacher in a Brooklyn, NY high-needs school, wrote about the importance of incentives to keep effective teachers in the classroom:*

*I recommend designing policies as soon as possible to keep strong teachers in the classroom. This will require more than bonuses for raising test scores, which fail to recognize the complexity of teaching and learning, or the need to compete with salaries and working conditions of other professions. Secretary Duncan has spoken optimistically about using test scores and “other measures” to design performance pay systems. It’s time to start developing –with teacher input–those important “other measures.”*

test scores in its assessment of teachers and teaching. On a larger scale, many school districts that have tried to enact performance pay using standardized tests as measures of teaching effectiveness have struggled to do so reliably and accurately.<sup>42</sup> As a result, a number of performance pay plans have morphed into more comprehensive teacher development systems.

While some reformers focus on increasing individual teachers' pay for raising test scores, many teachers say performance pay makes a difference when it focuses on "building a collaborative workplace culture to improve instruction."<sup>43</sup> As Education Week recently reported, "Educators in TAP schools (first) agree on a common description of good teaching and institute a coordinated system of peer observation and feedback that helps teachers better exhibit those practices."<sup>44</sup>

The TAP experience mirrors what business and economics researchers have found: While performance bonuses are common in the private sector, merit pay represents a very small share of overall compensation and is generally not explicitly tied to simple measures of output.<sup>45</sup> Turning around low-performing organizations in the private sector takes more than

*I am always dismayed when the first thing mentioned to get good teachers to teach in high-needs schools is money. If there aren't positive working conditions, I don't want to teach there for an extra \$10,000 a year – not even for an extra \$20,000.*

—Rachel Peters, NBCT  
2006 Washington (State) Policy Summit

performance monitoring; it requires support systems for professionals who grow in competence and gain greater latitude for making choices.<sup>46</sup> Turning around low-performing schools will require innovation and risk-taking by the teachers and administrators in those schools. Thus, any special compensation plan will need to encourage and support these behaviors.<sup>47</sup>

At least 30 states offer financial incentives for those who teach in schools or subject areas that are hard to staff. More than 30 percent of the nation's 50 largest school districts are

offering bonuses for such teachers. The bonuses are typically in the \$1,000 to \$5,000 range, but about 30 percent of these districts offer teachers between \$5,000 and \$10,000.<sup>48</sup>

There is still much to learn about what kinds of incentives are needed—and to what extent they are needed—to address specific staffing issues. Current research findings vary widely. One study in North Carolina found that a \$1,800 bonus for math, science, and special education teachers to teach in hard-to-staff, low-performing schools would reduce teacher turnover by 10–12 percent. Although researchers found that the incentive made a statistical difference, policymakers and practitioners found that it made no practical difference, and the programs was soon disbanded.<sup>49</sup> Other studies have found that a 15–50 percent salary increase would be needed to entice teachers to move to hard-to-staff positions in the most challenging schools.<sup>50</sup>

The NBCTs who took part in the NEA-sponsored policy summits called for effective teachers to be offered an additional stipend of 20 percent (or a minimum of \$10,000) per year to teach in high-needs schools—and to offer even more to those who help other teachers

succeed in such schools. The NBCTs also made it clear that pay incentives alone are insufficient. A decade ago, when South Carolina set out to recruit “teacher specialists” to work in the state’s weakest schools, an \$18,000 bonus attracted only 20 percent of the 500 teachers needed in the program’s first year and only 40 percent after three years. Deterrents included location, lack of administrative support, poor working conditions, and a need for better preparation.<sup>51</sup> More recently, Palm Beach School District in Florida eliminated its \$7,500 high-needs school stipend after it failed to attract enough teachers. In Dallas, an offer of \$6,000 to entice accomplished teachers to move to challenging schools generated little interest, so the district is now offering \$10,000 plus job security. In both Palm Beach and Dallas, teachers cited issues similar to those revealed by the South Carolina experience: Working conditions matter a great deal.

### *CTQ Ideas for Action: Take a Comprehensive Approach to Teacher Incentives*

States and districts should use ARRA funds, TIF grants, and other resources to address the specific incentives that matter most in growing, attracting, and retaining effective teachers for high-needs schools.

- ▶ Compensation systems, including performance pay systems, must include financial incentives designed specifically to attract and retain as well as grow effective teachers in high-needs schools. Incentives should be designed to not only encourage teacher transfers and new hires but to energize existing faculty and support their professional growth through opportunities like National Board Certification and the NBPTS *Take One!* program.
- ▶ Per the advice of NBCTs who attended the state summits, incentive systems should pay at least \$10,000 for accomplished teachers to work in high-needs schools. Pay incentives, however, will always be a partial solution. Incentives tied to working conditions and professional opportunities will be at least as important, if not more so. A menu of incentives should include, at a minimum: reduced class size or student load, increased planning and collaboration time, graduated teaching loads for novice teachers, and additional opportunities for proven teachers to lead initiatives and share expertise.

### **NEA’s Commitment**

- ▶ The NEA will continue to support and promote incentives for National Board Certification as an essential tool for improving teacher quality and staffing high-needs schools.
- ▶ The NEA will support local and state association development of appropriate incentives through collective bargaining (where available) and through other state/local policy avenues. NEA will also support state and local affiliates who are legitimate partners in pursuit of innovative incentive and compensation programs (through funding streams such as the TIF grant program).

### STRATEGY 3: Improve Working Conditions

In the words of Tom Vander Ark, former executive director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “Teachers have long worked in isolated conditions and often put up with inept leadership. Teachers must have competent school leaders, time to collaborate, quality development, and the resources they need to succeed.”<sup>52</sup>

Without a doubt, teachers’ salaries remain too low to attract and retain enough talented, well-prepared professionals to fill our nation’s high-needs classrooms. Five years ago, Lou Gerstner, former IBM CEO and chair of The Teaching Commission, called for raising teacher salaries 10–30 percent at an estimated price tag of 30 billion.<sup>53</sup>

However, teachers who choose not to teach in high-needs schools don’t base their decision on salaries alone. They often focus on working conditions, such as weak support from school administrators, lack of teacher influence over decisionmaking, and concerns about student discipline and motivation.<sup>54</sup> In 2005, a six-state survey of NBCTs found that factors such as strong principal leadership, a collegial staff with a shared teaching philosophy, access to adequate resources, and a supportive and active parent community prove to be far more powerful determinants than salary. The survey, which examined the impact of NBCTs in low-performing schools, also found that some administrators were threatened by the possibility of teacher leadership.<sup>55</sup>

A 2005 report published by the Learning First Alliance calls for raising student achievement in high-needs schools through increased faculty leadership, improved principal evaluations, and professional development for administrators that targets the skills and knowledge needed for effective leadership in schools that serve many high-needs students.<sup>56</sup> In a recent discussion among members of CTQ’s Teacher Leaders Network virtual learning community, Mike, an NBCT with 12 years experience, described the conditions under which he would accept a position in a high-needs school:

*I would move [to a high-needs school], but I would want to see social services for parents and children, accomplished leadership, adequate resources and facilities, and flexibility, freedom and time.... One of the single greatest factors in school success is principal leadership. Effective administrators are magnets for accomplished teachers.*

Raising the quality of teaching and boosting student achievement in high-needs schools requires an intensive focus on other working conditions as well: appropriate teaching assignments; adequate time to work with colleagues and students; professional development that focuses on systemic, sustained, and collective study of student work; access to information, materials and technology; and helpful feedback on teaching.<sup>57</sup>

One recent study found that students achieve more in mathematics and reading when they attend schools characterized by higher levels of teacher collaboration for school improvement.<sup>58</sup> At the NBCT policy summits, teachers were clear on this point: In high-needs schools, teachers need no less than a continuous three-hour block each week for teacher-led collaboration to improve student learning. Such collaboration would focus on student



learning, including group analysis of lessons, multiple opportunities to observe accomplished teachers, joint development of classroom assessments, and time to work closely with parents and families. Contrast this advice from expert teachers with the results of a recent survey in Washington State. Statewide, more than 83 percent of teachers reported that they have less than two hours per week to devote to learning with their colleagues.<sup>59</sup>

In South Korea, Japan, and Singapore, teachers spend only about 35 percent of their time teaching students. The other 65 percent is spent preparing and critiquing lessons, observing colleagues, grading papers, tutoring students, and working with parents and colleagues. They do most of their planning with fellow teachers, with whom they share responsibility in teaching students.<sup>60</sup>

Teaching in a high-needs school is often a frenetic experience. Many teachers need to put more than 60 hours a week to manage multiple interventions, meet the social and emotional needs of their students, mediate conflicts when out-of-school turmoil spills over into the classroom, cope with the complexity of teaching highly mobile students, and deal with the constant pressure to prepare for high-stakes tests. Many teachers in high-needs schools also struggle to find resources they can use to differentiate instruction among students with varying academic needs, including the growing number of students who are learning English as a second language. The human price, all too often, is professional burnout. A former TFA recruit, Sarah Fine, said she resigned from teaching because administrators “steadily expand[ed] the workload and work-day” while “more and more major decisions were made behind closed doors, and more and more teachers felt micromanaged rather than supported.”<sup>61</sup>

Working conditions are important in all high-needs schools, including the charter school where Ms. Fine taught. Although some charter school management organizations have had success in raising student achievement in high-needs schools, overall results have been mixed. In a recent 16-state study, only 17 percent of the charter schools outperformed their traditional counterparts on academic outcomes.<sup>62</sup>

Some charter schools have been very open about the superhuman effort they expect from teachers. Those expectations are one of the reasons why such schools have experienced some success. Leaders of other charter schools recognize that a dysfunctional teaching environment can undermine teacher and student performance. Teachers in a number of high-needs charter schools have recently sought union support because of poor working conditions. They cite unmanageable course loads, extraordinarily long hours, and serious disagreements with administrators about how to teach. One recent study found that charter school teachers are more than twice as likely as their traditional public school counterparts to leave the profession.<sup>63</sup> Class size and pay have not been the main issues. Teachers say they want the freedom to make decisions and influence how their schools are managed. They want to make professional development decisions and curriculum choices.

### Promoting teacher leadership

High-needs schools improve when administrators capitalize on the knowledge, skills, and leadership of their best teachers. In the words of Mary McClellan, an NBCT and K–12 science coordinator from Issaquah, Washington, “The work needed to be done to provide all students the highest level of learning is huge. I think that one of the pieces that would facilitate getting this task done for students would be a culture shift that would actually promote teacher leadership... that accomplished teachers would actually be seen by administrators and school board members as teacher leaders and instructional experts—vital parts of the leadership of schools and districts.”

At the Ohio policy summit, one NBCT asserted quite bluntly:

*As an accomplished teacher, my greatest fear is being assigned to a hard-to-staff school and not being given the time and the flexibility to make the changes that I believe are necessary to bring about student achievement. I constantly hear about the pre-packaged curricula that are in place in many hard-to-staff schools, and I cringe.*

### **CTQ Ideas for Action: Create the Right Working Conditions**

- ▶ To effectively identify levers of change for high-needs schools, policymakers need to work with researchers to identify the working conditions that matter most for recruiting and retaining effective teachers and improving student learning.
- ▶ Policymakers need to promote innovative efforts to prepare administrators who can create and sustain school improvement by creating the right working conditions. Ultimately, it comes down to hiring and supporting principals who will understand what it means to promote teaching quality and distributive leadership in the unique contexts of high-needs schools.

### **NEA's Commitment**

- ▶ The NEA currently partners with other national organizations to survey teachers and other school staff about working conditions in states and districts. NEA will revise and refocus the current working conditions surveys and conduct comprehensive, targeted surveys of teachers in high-needs schools to understand the conditions necessary for effective teaching. NEA commits to surveying at least 1,000 high-needs schools over the next two years and widely disseminating data on the specific working conditions that should be targeted to help attract and retain teachers in high-needs schools.
- ▶ The NEA will encourage and support affiliate collaboration with school districts to develop memoranda of understanding, collective bargaining provisions, and similar “compacts” that will provide increased flexibility in staffing high-needs schools. Through these compacts, school districts and teacher associations will be able to review district policies, school working conditions, and negotiated contracts to assess the extent to which they may inhibit or enhance teacher distribution.

## **STRATEGY 4: Define Effectiveness Broadly and Cultivate Accomplished Teachers**

All too often, debates over teaching effectiveness nose-dive into a scuffle over whether or not to use standardized tests to judge teachers. Today's value-added models are far less reliable for judging *individual* teachers than for assessing *whole grades and schools*.<sup>64</sup> An over-emphasis on standardized tests for evaluating students and teachers runs the risk of focusing too much on a narrow definition of basic skills—or the results of once-a-year standardized tests—at the expense of preparing students for college, careers, and future job market

success. Evidence continues to grow that high-stakes testing narrows the curriculum, especially in high-needs schools that serve large numbers of poor children and children of color.<sup>65</sup> From a recent Education Sector report:

*[Most of the current high-stakes tests] don't measure more advanced skills, such as expository writing or an ability to think creatively or analytically, and they sidestep history, art, music, and other subjects. As a result, they can't capture a teacher's skill in energizing students to learn astronomy or in scaffolding a series of lessons that draw students into the life of a novel.*<sup>66</sup>

In addition to guarding against over-reliance on high-stakes testing, we need to go beyond the current system of teacher evaluation. A recent report from the New Teacher Project discusses how broken our teacher evaluation systems are and the fact that teachers are often treated as “widgets,” rather than professionals.<sup>67</sup> Instead of focusing on student learning, teacher evaluation systems often rely on cumbersome and ultimately empty rules for teachers and administrators. Administrators are often expected to assess teachers without having the appropriate skills or knowledge. Given limited time, they make ephemeral visits to the classroom and must rely on simplistic checklists and other tools that cannot capture how teachers think and respond to students. As a result, teachers seldom get constructive feedback or support that can help them grow professionally.

Teaching is too complex to be judged by a single metric. Lee Shulman, president emeritus of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has said, “One of the most dangerous ideas in assessment is the myth of a ‘magic bullet,’ some powerful test with psychometric properties so outstanding that we can base high-stakes decisions on the results of performance on that measure alone.”<sup>68</sup> Teaching effectiveness must be defined broadly and measured with a variety of tools. And we need new evaluation tools and processes to measure what teachers do and how they think about their practice and help students learn.

*Other options need to be explored, such as “growing your own” National Board Certified Teachers in low-performing schools. This is indeed a win-win situation. Candidates for National Board Certification would have authentic opportunities to use their expanding expertise to solve problems of teaching and learning in their very own schools. And at the same time, they can achieve certification and become a leader grown right within the ranks.*

—Carole Moyer, NBCT  
2006 Ohio Policy Summit

Drawing on successful teacher-quality improvement efforts like the Benwood Initiative, we need to develop new methods that use a variety of measures to identify and spread teaching effectiveness. Only by adopting appropriate methods can we ensure educator accountability and dissemination of best practices. Some researchers are calling for a range of tools and

metrics to measure teacher effectiveness based on evidence of the following: (1) student learning, including evidence drawn from classroom assessments and value-added student achievement test scores, where appropriate; (2) teacher performance; and (3) measures of teacher knowledge, skills, and practices associated with student learning.<sup>69</sup> The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently launched a major research and development initiative to design multiple ways of measuring teaching effectiveness. It aims to devise methods that teachers as well as researchers can agree on, which are fair, powerful, and reliable.<sup>70</sup> The Foundation's recommended methods are likely to include value-added student achievement data, teacher observations, careful analyses of videotaped teaching, and evidence of student work and student engagement.

Performance assessments are also a promising teacher evaluation tool. In the Performance Assessment for California Teaching (PACT), new teachers are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of content and how to teach it in real life circumstances and context. PACT is now spreading to other states. Seen as a valid measure of individual teacher competence,

*Until I completed the National Board process, I felt isolated from other educators as a special education teacher. Then I found my voice. I found myself using a keener sense of discernment about what works and what doesn't work, and what are considered "best practices" for students with disabilities. I learned to listen more to other teachers and experts in the field. And now my students continue to show progress, and I can show you the data.*

—Ann Nichols, NBCT  
2006 South Carolina Policy Summit

it is useful for teacher licensure and as a powerful tool for teacher learning and program improvement.<sup>71</sup> Such performance assessments have the potential of focusing teacher evaluation on student learning without the distortions caused by the singular use of standardized test scores.

New and increasingly sophisticated measures of teacher practices and student outcomes can help measure teaching effectiveness. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has created a reliable, rigorous performance

assessment that judges teachers on how they teach and how they analyze their students' learning. More than 75,000 teachers across the nation have now met National Board Certification standards. Even the candidates who do not attain Board Certification often claim it is the best professional development process they have experienced.

Although debates over the value of National Board Certification have sometimes been intense, the evidence in favor of it is compelling. Clearly, the assessment process helps teachers become more reflective about their teaching, and, it benefits students. In a 2008 study synthesizing the wide swath of NBPTS research, the National Research Council concluded that compared with teachers in general, NBCTs are more likely to improve student achievement.<sup>72</sup>

In a 2007 survey of nearly 8,200 NBCTs nationwide, more than 90 percent said that the NBC process improved their teaching. More than 82 percent claimed that it had taught them to more effectively select, adapt, or create curriculum materials for their students. And more than 80 percent reported that going through the process promoted more innovative teaching approaches or ideas.<sup>73</sup>

National Board Certification holds promise for strengthening teaching in high-needs schools. But given the frenetic pace and time-consuming demands of teaching in such schools, achieving certification is no simple matter. Beth Bley, NBCT from Putnam City Schools in Oklahoma, has noted:

*I was the second NBCT at my high-needs school. I was really lucky to have the help of a colleague who had already earned a certificate. In most high-needs schools, with all its demands, there just are not enough resources of people and time available for teachers to try to meet the standards of the National Board.*

The NBC process has already proven to be extremely powerful in boosting teacher effectiveness in some high-needs schools. One of the best examples is Mitchell Elementary School in a low-income neighborhood of Phoenix, Arizona. Twenty of the school's 34 teachers are either National Board Certified or currently pursuing certification. And the school serves a community where fewer than 25 percent of adults have a high school education. Ninety-six percent of students at Mitchell are Latino; more than 50 percent are learning English as a second language; and 96 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school had been in NCLB corrective action, but it now meets all of its AYP goals year after year.

The school district did not recruit expert teachers to Mitchell Elementary School; it cultivated them from within. In fact, most of the school's NBCTs have roots in the local community. The majority are Latino, like the students they teach.

Mitchell teachers say the insights they gained through the NBCT process transformed their teaching and given them newfound opportunities to take more control over their professional development. With support from the Arizona K-12 Center, teachers are using the National Board process to better understand how their teaching collectively affects student achievement. Working together, the teachers are learning more about how to work with students who have special needs, and how to work more closely with parents. "We believe in the National Board Certification process as an alternative approach to improving student performance and closing the achievement gaps," said Suzanne Zentner, associate superintendent of the local school district.<sup>74</sup> Teacher turnover is no longer a problem at Mitchell Elementary School in inner-city Phoenix.

Great teachers do more than just help students learn. They cultivate more great teachers by sharing their expertise. We need to look beyond policy debates about teacher assessment and evaluation that have been mired in a rewards-and-punishment framework. By focusing

on overall teaching effectiveness and not just measuring individual teacher expertise, we can cultivate great teachers as Mitchell Elementary School has done.

### *CTQ Ideas for Action: Define Effectiveness Broadly to Cultivate Great Teachers*

- ▶ Work with researchers to precisely define effective teachers and teaching by using multiple measures that include evidence of student learning, teacher performance, and teacher knowledge and practices that lead to valued academic outcomes for children.
- ▶ Work with teachers and teacher associations to: (1) transform teacher assessment and evaluation systems into effective instruments for helping teachers to improve their practice; and (2) integrate these systems into individualized professional development programs based on the needs of teachers and students.

### NEA's Commitment

- ▶ The NEA will develop resources and strategies to help its affiliates expand the scope of collective bargaining to collaboratively pursue multiple measures of student learning and teacher quality at the bargaining table. Through this effort, affiliates will work to explore alternative methods for teacher evaluation and assignment, including proactive ways in which to use seniority or other contract provisions to promote the equitable distribution of effective teachers throughout a school district.
- ▶ The NEA will identify and support 10 to 20 local affiliates who will work with their school district partners to develop new compacts that address teacher effectiveness and the distribution of accomplished teachers.

### CONCLUSION

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President Obama offers unique opportunities for state and local policymakers as well as K–12 and higher education stakeholders. The Act offers opportunities to focus on identifying, preparing, and rewarding teachers in ways that “elevate the teaching profession and help recruit and retain great teachers and principals for underserved schools and communities.”<sup>75</sup>

History has shown, however, that a one-size-fits-all regulatory regime for teacher recruitment and preparation is unreasonable.<sup>76</sup> As Stanford University Professor Linda Darling-Hammond has noted, staffing and supporting high-needs schools with truly highly qualified and effective teachers, will require the equivalent of a Marshall Plan for teaching.<sup>77</sup>

It is time to listen to our teacher leaders, learn from them, and go beyond current “either/or” policy thinking in favor of multiple approaches to teaching quality. Renee Moore, Mississippi’s 2001 Teacher of the Year, offers a widely-followed blog, *TeachMoore*. Recently, she wrote admiringly about a high-needs elementary school in Georgia where half the faculty is pursuing National Board Certification: “[It is] a school where teachers hold

themselves to the highest standards available for measuring teaching quality; where the administration values teacher voice; and where students benefit from an uncompromising commitment to quality.”<sup>78</sup> Moore, who is African American, grew up in Detroit, worked as a journalist, and then moved to the Mississippi Delta with her minister husband. She pursued a teaching career and ultimately became a Milken winner, Carnegie Scholar, and the first practicing teacher on The Carnegie Foundation Board of Directors.

For Moore, the take-away lesson from the Georgia school’s story is how adult educators took action from *within* their challenged school to improve their own skills and knowledge and improve teaching quality issue. She wrote:

*The social and economic problems facing many of our students today are real and deserve to be aggressively attacked. But I am convinced the best way for us educators to confront these problems is with highly effective teaching of meaningful curriculum within a highly collaborative and supportive learning environment. It’s the quality of our work that gives us the moral high ground in the battle for real school reform.*

Our nation has the capacity to make sure every child in every high-needs school has great teachers. President Obama has called for the nation to “treat teachers like the professionals they are while also holding them more accountable.”<sup>79</sup> Doing so means not only looking carefully at the research evidence, but also listening to our most accomplished teachers and acting on their advice. As the president has suggested, they are ready to “lift up their schools.”<sup>80</sup> They are ready to maintain the promise of great public schools for our nation. It is time to hear their voices and embrace their ideas for recruiting, preparing, rewarding, and supporting great teachers—the teachers that all students deserve.





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