

TRANSFORMING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The **NEA Talking Points** below address the main elements of the agreement reached by eight leading education organizations in May 2012: the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Council of the Great City Schools, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, and the U.S. Department of Education.

- ▶ **A culture of shared responsibility and leadership.** The best-performing schools operate by “collective leadership” — principals involve teachers, parents, and others in decision-making, according to the most comprehensive study to date of effective instructional leadership. Moreover, **collaboration among teachers strengthens the “professional community” and raises student achievement.** Conversely, rapid turnover of principals lowers student achievement. (Source: [Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Student Achievement](#), Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, 2010)
- ▶ **Top talent, prepared for success.** In the 1970s, Finland was in much the same position as the United States today: a diverse student population — more than 60 languages and cultures — with yawning achievement gaps highly correlated with socioeconomic status. Finland’s successful approach to raising overall student achievement and closing gaps was **the opposite of the business model driving “education reform” in the United States today** — less testing of students, more local control, giving teachers autonomy, and treating teachers with respect. (Source: Linda Darling-Hammond, [Steady Work: How Finland Is Building a Strong Teaching and Learning System](#), Annenberg Institute for School Reform, *Voices in Urban Education*, Summer 2009)
- ▶ **Continuous growth and professional development.** Every new teacher should receive targeted support and participate in an **induction and mentoring program.** Novice teachers need more time for planning than experienced teachers and should have opportunities to observe experienced teachers at work. (Source: [Teacher Assessment and Evaluation: The National Education Association’s Framework for Transforming Education](#), 2010)

The National Research Council’s 2008 report, “Assessing Accomplished Teaching: Advanced-Level Certification Programs,” produced in response to a request from Congress, documents the positive effects of **National Board Certification** on teacher practice, professional development, and student achievement. For details, see www.nbpts.org/resources/research/impact_of_certification#bottom.

- ▶ **Effective teachers and principals.** Teacher assessment and evaluation should be part of a comprehensive system that includes **continuous professional development and targeted support.** To realize the ultimate goal — improved teaching and learning — such systems need to help educators master content, refine their skills, and critically analyze their own performance and that of their students. (Source: [Teacher Assessment and Evaluation: The National Education Association’s Framework for Transforming Education](#), 2010)

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- ▶ **A professional career continuum with competitive compensation.** The United States can learn from the examples of the top-scoring nations on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) such as Singapore, Finland, and South Korea. These nations **accord teachers great respect and pay them well**. Teacher training programs are rigorous and highly selective. Many prospective teachers already have a bachelor's degree and 100 percent come from the top-third of their academic cohort, compared to 23 percent in the United States. In South Korea and Singapore, the average teacher earns more than a lawyer or an engineer. (Source: Byron Auguste, Paul Kihn and Matt Miller, [Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to careers in teaching](#), McKinsey and Company, 2010)
- ▶ **Conditions for successful teaching and learning.** It is widely assumed that parental involvement is important to student success. Research confirms it. **Parent, family, and community involvement correlate with better academic performance and school improvement** — specifically, higher grades, better attendance, lower dropout rates, aspiring to higher education, and enrolling in college. Moreover, this holds true at the elementary and the secondary level for students of all races, regardless of the parents' education, income or background. (Source: Annenberg Institute for School Reform, [Organized Communities, Stronger Schools](#), 2008)
- ▶ **Engaged communities.** We must meet the needs of **the whole child**. Kids who come to school hungry or sick are not ready to learn. Kids who don't have good role models at home nonetheless need to learn what it means to be a responsible citizen, why it is important to be on time, how to behave in different settings. For some kids, especially poor kids, the only hope of getting such help is schools with **wraparound services** — for example, after-school programs that provide enriching experiences; mentoring, counseling, and parent-education programs; on-site medical and dental care; and more. The acclaimed Harlem Children's Zone takes this approach. So can traditional public schools with sufficient funding and commitment to the goal: transforming not just a struggling school, but an entire community.