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Edwards

# Certification hurdles trip talented teachers

By Patrick Welsh

The Alexandria, Va., school system, where I teach, certainly knows how to save money. I wonder how many other school systems could boast of having a dedicated, dynamic Yale graduate, who is loved and respected by students and parents, teaching 141 kids for \$90 a day — the pay of a long-term substitute.

That's what my colleague Anne Peacock got paid for her services last month. And she's supposed to feel lucky, because if the personnel office had its way, she wouldn't have a job at all.

Peacock's problem: As of the beginning of the school year, she hadn't been officially certified by the state of Virginia, even though this past summer she finished all of the education courses required. So after three years of stellar teaching under a provisional certificate, Peacock was told by our assistant director of human resources that she couldn't be rehired. She was advised to take a job she was offered in the District of Columbia schools and sent an official letter of termination. Were it not for the intervention of our principal, we would have lost Peacock. She finally received her official certification this month and was put on the regular pay scale.

For me, Peacock's case is just another maddening reminder of how the education bureaucrats in my school district — like others across the country — are so wedded to their phony credentialing systems and so

blind, or even at times indifferent, to the highly talented prospects who want to teach. The myth that people who are "uncertified" shouldn't be allowed to teach is turning away many of the brightest, most idealistic young people.

At the heart of the obsession with certification is a misunderstanding of what constitutes good teaching.

Take David Keener, perhaps the most highly respected of about 1,000 Alexandria teachers. Last year, Keener was the Virginia winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. On last year's Advanced Placement test in biology, 74% of his students — 39 out of 47 — received grades of 5, the highest possible. The national average for 5's on the biology test is 17%.

But Keener's notion of what goes into good teaching is at odds with that of the gatekeepers at the state and local level. To Keener, who first taught for 10 years in Catholic schools without being certified, "the most crucial thing is to have people who know and love their subjects . . . who can communicate that love and excitement to their students . . . who care about young people. We should hire those types, whether they are certified or not, and then have experienced teachers within the school train them."

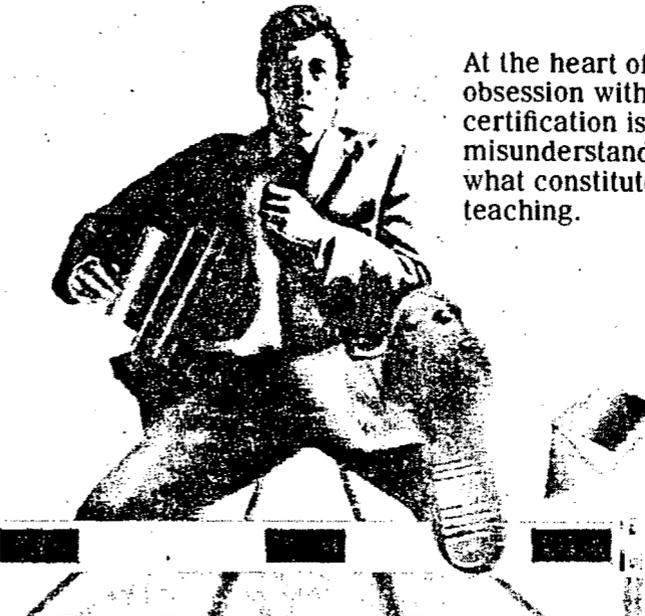
Though our school bureaucrats like to boast about the test scores Keener's students achieve and the awards he has won, they don't get his idea about teaching.

Anne Peacock is just the kind of teacher Keener is talking about. When she was hired three years ago, Peacock wasn't sure if teaching was for her. But after two very successful and happy years as a social studies teacher and coach of softball and basketball, she became hooked, as many bright young people do once they are given the chance to teach.

The way this talented young woman was treated makes me wonder whether school bureaucrats prefer to hire unthreatening graduates of mediocre colleges — the same kind of institutions many of them come from — instead of top minds from the best universities.

The treatment of Caitlin Riley only supports my suspicion.

Riley is a 25-year-old woman with a bachelor's degree in urban sociology from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's in education from Harvard. Like Peacock, she didn't go to college with the idea of being a teacher. But in her senior year at Penn, she got a Ford Foundation grant to study school reform in Philadelphia. After visiting many inner-city schools, she decided that teaching was for her. Her Harvard program got her certified to teach in Massachusetts, and Alexandria hired her, saying that the state would inform her during the year whether she had to take any extra courses for Virginia certification. In the middle of the year, the state



At the heart of the obsession with certification is a misunderstanding of what constitutes good teaching.

By Suzy Parker/USA TODAY

told Reilly that she needed 33 credits to be certified in Virginia.

After arguing back and forth with state officials, to no avail, Riley wrote Gov. James Gilmore, explaining her educational background and making it clear that if Virginia insisted on 33 hours, she was going to another state

to teach or to a private school. A few weeks later, she got a letter from the state certification "experts" cutting the requirements from 33 hours to six.

"It breaks my heart to see so many talented prospects turned away because of these bizarre requirements

and the lack of flexibility and understanding," Riley says.

The experiences of Riley and Peacock illustrate what I've long believed: that administrators see teaching positions as just slots to be filled with a warm body — a certified body, of course. The disrespect of administrators for teaching is obvious when one of them gets demoted. There is no worse fate for a bureaucrat than to be "sent back to the classroom." Many choose retirement rather than suffer that indignity.

It would be wonderful news for kids and parents and American education in general if school systems went out and tried to lure the brightest and most dynamic young people into teaching, regardless of certification, and then, as David Keener suggests, trained them in individual schools. The most promising prospects could be given signing bonuses in return for a commitment of at least three years.

But don't expect that to happen too soon. The gatekeepers on the state and local level have too much invested. So do many of the minor-league education schools, which would have to shut down. Until their stranglehold is broken, we will see more and more talent turned away from public education, and the mediocrity of our schools only deepen.

Patrick Welsh is an English teacher at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Va. He also is a member of USA TODAY's board of contributors.

# 'Cloning' your child sends what message?

By Robin Marantz Henig

The Web site has a photo of an elegant young girl, 11 or so, with a perfect oval face and long cascades of glistening light-brown hair. She cradles a doll she says has not left her side since it arrived in her life Christmas morning. "I think she is the most beautiful doll I have ever seen," she croons.

Well, of course. The doll looks exactly like her.

That's the whole point of My Twinn dolls, which can be yours for about \$140 now (more as Christmas gets closer). Based on a child's photo and self-description, each is crafted to have the same shade of skin, hair color and eye color (eight shades of brown eyes alone) as the girl who will own it. The doll's face matches the child's, with nose and lips shaped like hers, hair cut to order and freckles hand-painted where she has them.

These are not simply dolls. These are clone dolls.

Clone dolls once were available only to those willing to invest thousands of dollars in a custom-crafted personalized doll. They are becoming more commonplace as better technology comes to the doll factory — and to the Web. In November, a Dream Doll Designer will be online, which will let you choose your doll's face shape, coloring, skin tone, "rouge pattern" and personal history. Designing a clone is not this product's stated intent, but the preteen on the home page holds a doll every bit as blonde, fair-skinned and Cupid's bow-lipped as the girl herself.



Two of a kind: My Twinn doll

is so fabulous that she's worth replicating? That this is a chance to undo all of the mistakes made in the original version? That the person most worth loving is the one most like her?

The same fears that spark our debates on human cloning stir in me as I leaf through these catalogues or click through these Web sites. What would I be telling my daughter if I were to buy her such a doll? That she

## Claire One, Claire Two

"You could be your doll for Halloween," says my 6-year-old neighbor Claire, captivated by the idea of a doll she could name Claire Two. No, you couldn't, insists her sister Rose, 8, because "you would already be your doll." The intermingling of two identities seems not to worry her in the least. She and Claire occupy themselves, instead, with trying to decide which available hair color is closest to Rose's strawberry blonde.

Both girls say playing with a clone doll wouldn't feel like playing with a best friend or a twin or a surrogate daughter. It would be, they say, like holding a 23-inch version of yourself.

My Twinn outrages my daughter Jess, who at 19 already looks back on her childhood with nostalgia. "Don't these people give kids credit for having any imagination?" she fumes. "Don't they think you can love a doll that doesn't look just like you?"

In recent years, the toy industry has diversified the dollhouse, creating dolls with facial features and skin tones closer to those of Asian, Hispanic and African-American girls. Mattel Inc. says its line of 20 American Girl Today dolls "represents the individuality and diversity of today's girls and reflects their wide variety of lifestyles and interests."

Experts see such doll diversity mostly as a good trend. It grounds kids in reality, says Maryland therapist Sally Madden, and makes them feel they are important enough, unique enough, to warrant this special effort to create a miniature likeness. Madden considers it similar to the ability of today's kids to do what no other generation could: to watch themselves on television, via home video, engaged in activities they performed moments earlier. Such constant visual feedback helps children form a complete self-identity, she says. She thinks clone dolls can do the same.

## Look, but do not touch?

Given their cost, however, My Twinn dolls are more likely to become what the industry calls "collectibles" than actual playthings. According to Stevanne Auerbach, a San Francisco writer who uses the pen name Dr. Toy, these dolls are not intended to be the ones kids actually play with in imaginative games. They are gift dolls, meant to stay on the shelf and serve as 3-D mementos of how a child looked at a particular age.

I wonder: What child could resist playing with herself?

In the Brave New World in which our daughters will come into childbearing, we need to be careful about what their playthings teach them. If clone dolls were truly nothing more than variations on family snapshots, I would not be too concerned. But they are realistic, irresistible creatures that give special power to a form of directed reproduction. The clone dolls just might be teaching a child that manipulating her offspring, whether metaphorical or real, to make them just the way she wants them — maybe even exactly like her — is perfectly OK.

Robin Marantz Henig, a freelance writer in Takoma Park, Md., is a member of USA TODAY's board of contributors.

# Gati cleared in leak; harassment probe continues

By Bill Geritz  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Toby Gati, the assistant secretary of state for intelligence, said yesterday that an inspector general's probe of allegations that she leaked classified information was "an ordeal," and she denounced whoever made the charges.

"What I experienced was an ordeal, and what was written about me was malicious," Mrs. Gati told the Senate Intelligence Committee. "And I do not wish sadness that it could happen to anyone, but note with great pleasure that thanks to the inspector general and to your bipartisan agreement, that the conclusions were valid. My case is closed."

The State Department later clarified Mrs. Gati's remarks.

Spokesman Glyn Davies said Mrs. Gati was referring only to allegations that she leaked secrets and improperly obtained a security clearance.

Other allegations that Mrs. Gati and other officials harassed a State Department intelligence official have not been resolved, Mr. Davies said. "That issue is broader-based, and it is not focused on Toby Gati alone," he said. "It is still ongoing."

The charges grew out of an ongoing discrimination complaint filed by career State Department intelligence analyst Frank Foldvary before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Mr. Davies said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee declined to release Inspector General Jacquelyn L. Williams-Bridgers's report, a spokesman said yesterday. As a result, it is not clear who made the allegations or how the inspector general determined they were not true.

The Washington Times reported Nov. 14 that the State Department inspector general was investigating Mrs. Gati for questionable foreign contacts and improperly seeking top-secret documents linking her husband and a family friend to Hungary's spy service.

A copy of Mrs. Gati's security form, reproduced by The Times, showed it was incomplete. There was no signature by a security officer, which is required to prove proper clearance for access to highly classified intelligence.

A committee spokesman said Mrs. Williams-Bridgers explained the lapse by saying a completed form was on file at CIA headquarters.

But the spokesman could not explain why the incomplete form was on file at the National Security Council, where Mrs. Gati signed it before moving to the State Department.

# NEA changes course, vows to lead way on school reform

By Carol Innerst  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The day after President Clinton asked for \$51 billion in education spending, the teachers union that helped put him back in the White House announced that it would "reinvent" itself and take the lead in the school-reform debate.

"We know we can do it because we did it once before," National Education Association President Bob Chase said yesterday in a speech at the National Press Club. "In the 1960s we took a rather

quiet, genteel professional association of educators and we reinvented it as an assertive — and, when necessary, militant — labor union."

The traditional, industrial-style teacher unions brought major improvements to public education but "adversarial tactics simply are not suited to the next stage of school reform," he said.

"After much soul-searching and self-criticism within NEA, we know that it's time to create a new union — an association with an entirely new approach to our mem-

bers, to our critics and to our colleagues on the other side of the bargaining table."

Echoing Mr. Clinton's remark that "we should quickly and fairly remove those few [teachers] who don't measure up," Mr. Chase conceded: "There are indeed some bad teachers in America's schools, [and] it is our job as a union to improve those teachers or — that failing — to get them out of the classroom."

"The fact is that, in some instances, we have used our power to

block uncomfortable changes — to protect the narrow interest of our members, and not to advance the interests of students and schools," he said.

Myron Lieberman, chairman of the Education Policy Institute and a union critic, said: "The NEA has been successful in identifying the union interest with the public interest. I'd like to know how they can take money from a teacher for dues and then not defend a teacher who is accused of not being competent. It's a lot of rhetoric."

The Washington Times  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1997

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This is a huge concession on their part, and it's because the President has talked about it for the past year.  
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Teachers Unions

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# Army stands by mixed-sex training

## No review planned unless scandal panels request one

By Rowan Scarborough  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Army has no plans to review its 2-year-old policy of mixed-sex recruit training, a spokesman said yesterday.

But the Army will consider a re-evaluation if either of two investigative bodies recommends a study as part of reports on the Army's sexual-misconduct scandal, said Maj. Mike Galloucis, a spokesman for Gen. Dennis J. Reimer, the Army chief of staff.

Some confusion on that issue followed a hearing Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee. The committee was exploring why the Army has a problem of male drill instructors sexually harassing and assaulting female trainees.

Gen. Reimer and Army Secretary Togo D. West Jr. repeatedly testified they do not believe the policy of putting male sergeants in control of female recruits is responsible for the problem. They also repeatedly said they have no plans to change the policy.

But Gen. Reimer, after being pressed by Sen. Rick Santorum,

Pennsylvania Republican, said the Army would at some point review the policy.

The general said at the hearing's outset the Army had no such plans. Later, he testified that now is not the time to re-evaluate.

"There are currently no plans in the Army, nor has General Reimer given any guidelines to anyone, to do a separate study of the training bases on this issue of gender-integrated training," Maj. Galloucis said yesterday.

He said the only circumstance that could change that stance is if either the Army inspector general or a special sex-scandal task force recommends an evaluation. He added that neither investigative body was asked to look at the issue of mixed-sex training.

Maj. Galloucis said Gen. Reimer only "veered" from that message once during his testimony after being pressed by Mr. Santorum.

"What my boss has said all along is he does not think any of the problems we have seen at the training bases are related to this gender integration at all," Maj. Galloucis said.

Among Gen. Reimer's answers

Tuesday to numerous questions on mixed-sex training:

- "Some have suggested that we take a look at that, and I'm sure that if that's what the [Senate] committee recommends, we will take a look at that. . . . I believe that gender-integrated training certainly will work well for us. That's not the issue here."

- "If that's one of the things that they [task force members] come back and say, 'This is something that has contributed to this,' then I think we have to evaluate that. My own opinion is that that's not the cause of this problem. It's not a policy issue; it is a right-or-wrong issue, as far as I am concerned."

- "Some of the reports that I have seen said that this improves the performance of female soldiers in the gender-integrated training; others have said, no, it causes a problem. So I think we have to lay that all out and look at it and make a determination as to what is best for the United States Army."

- "I don't think addressing it at this point in time, with all the emotion surrounding this particular case, is the right time to do it."

**The Washington Times**  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1997

*Educ  
Teachers*

## **Summary of Riley Press Club Speech:**

### **What is Wrong with the system**

- too many teacher education programs are focused on theory and not enough on clinical experience
- cumbersome certification process
- sink or swim for new teachers
- call for induction/mentoring program for new teachers

### **Creating a National Partnership**

- announce ED will issue a bi-annual Report on Teacher Quality in December
- announce national conference on teacher quality and recruitment with VP

### **Improving Recruitment**

- support Feinstein/Boxer to provide Pell Grants for 5th year of college for teacher ed
- push Congress on 35,000 teachers
- acknowledge loan forgiveness program for teachers
- call for extension of DOD Troops to Teachers program
- support creation of national clearinghouse for teacher recruitment
- call for "serious look" at portability of credentials, years in service and pensions

### **Challenges to Higher Education Community**

- basic skills test to students enterin teacher education
- endorse Bingaman teacher ed accountability provisions
- teachers should major in subject they are going to teach
- teacher prep focs more on teaching skill than on theory
- call for Congressional action on reading bill--teacher training
- teacher ed programs pay more attention to special ed and LEP
- teacher ed programs develop closer links with local schools

### **Challenges to State Government and Local School Districts**

- challenge states to create "demanding but flexible" certification process
- stronger focus on assessing knowledge and skills of future teachers, and support rigorous alternative pathways to teaching
- challenge every state to eliminate emergency certificates within 5 years
- states/districts end practice of teaching out of field

### **Incentives for Veteran Teachers**

- call for investing in quality professional development programs
- call for "knowledge and skill-based pay" in which teacher are paid for what they know and can do (like National Board)
- call for fair and competitive salaries for teachers
- teachers should teach in first class buildings--urge Congress to pass school modernization initiative



*Ed  
Teachers*

## ATTRACTING AND PREPARING TOMORROW'S TEACHERS: INVESTING IN QUALITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

*To have the best schools, we must have the best teachers...and, we should challenge more of our finest young people to consider teaching as a career.*

-- President Clinton, 1997 State of the Union Address

Today President Clinton proposed a \$350 million initiative to attract talented people of all backgrounds into teaching at low-income schools across the nation, and to dramatically improve the quality of training and preparation given to our future teachers. This new initiative will help bring nearly 35,000 outstanding new teachers into high-poverty schools in urban and rural areas over the next five years. In addition, it will upgrade the quality of teacher preparation at institutions of higher education that work in partnership with local schools in inner city and poor rural areas. The President's initiative will help recruit and prepare teachers nationwide to help our neediest students succeed in the 21st century.

### **A NATIONAL CHALLENGE: RECRUITING AND PREPARING THE BEST TEACHERS FOR THE CLASSROOMS THAT NEED THEM THE MOST.**

**Nationally, two million teachers must be hired over the next decade to accommodate rapidly growing student enrollment and an aging teaching force. The most severe shortages will occur in high-poverty urban and rural schools, which must hire 350,000 teachers over the next five years.**

**Urban and rural schools serving high percentages of poor students face especially serious challenges in their teaching forces, with many teachers arriving without the qualifications or preparation needed to succeed and with high rates of attrition. In urban districts, up to 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. In high poverty schools across the U.S., one-third of students take math from teachers with neither a major nor a minor in mathematics. Meeting our national challenge requires providing a sufficient number of well-prepared teachers to fill the expected vacancies in urban and rural schools.**

### **MEETING THE CHALLENGE: RECRUITING NEW TEACHERS INTO HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS AND IMPROVING THE PREPARATION OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN THOSE SCHOOLS**

**Teaching Fellowships to Help Talented People from All Backgrounds Teach in High-Poverty Schools.** The President's initiative will provide five-year competitive grants to institutions of higher education with high-quality teacher preparation programs, in partnership with local schools and others, to offer scholarships and other support to prepare prospective teachers who commit to teach in under served urban or rural schools for at least 3 years. Scholarships could cover costs of tuition, room, board, and other expenses of completing the teacher preparation program -- as well as

some costs of mentorship or additional preparation for scholarship recipients in their first two years of teaching. The President's proposal will help recruit nearly 35,000 teachers over five years, meeting nearly 10% of the need for new teachers in high poverty urban and rural communities.

**Scholarships for young people and adults making a career change into teaching.** Eligible scholarship recipients would include undergraduate and graduate students, former military personnel, education paraprofessionals or teacher aides desiring full teacher certification, and other mid-career professionals looking to enter into the teaching profession.

**A commitment to bringing outstanding new teachers into high-poverty schools.** Eligibility would be limited to those making a commitment to teach in high-poverty schools for at least three years. Scholarship recipients who do not complete the full three years would repay the institution of higher education from which they received their teaching credentials.

**Support for Institutions of Higher Education to Strengthen Preparation of Future Teachers in High-Poverty Schools**

**Improving teacher training in institutions of higher education placing graduates in high-poverty schools.** The initiative will provide competitive five-year grants to 10-15 national "lighthouse" models of excellence -- institutions of higher education that operate the highest quality teacher education programs. Each institution receiving a "lighthouse" grants will use a majority of these resources to help 8-15 other institutions of higher education improve their teacher preparation programs, helping to improve the preparation of future teachers at 150 institutions of higher education across the nation. These institutions must place a large number of graduates in high-poverty urban or rural schools.

**Drawing on research and best practices, and holding institutions of higher education accountable for performance.** Grant recipients would draw on research and best practice for preparing future teachers, including such critical strategies as: forging strong links between schools of education and their universities' departments of arts and science, providing future teachers with mentors and structured opportunities for teaching in elementary and secondary school classrooms, and incorporating the use of educational technology into teacher preparation. Continuation grants will be given to institutions making demonstrable progress toward clearly defined objectives.

## High Standards for Teachers

The President's speech to the North Carolina legislature provides an ideal opportunity to outline his vision and plan for rewarding good teachers, getting incompetent or burnt-out teachers out of the classroom, and for getting talented and dedicated teachers into every classroom in America. The major announcement would be calling on state legislatures around the country to enact major pay incentives for master teachers who become certified by the National Board (such as the 12% bonus Governor Hunt has proposed to the North Carolina legislature), and explaining how the President's budget will help set this new national standard of excellence in teaching -- a standard which has already gained wide, bipartisan acceptance.

But the President can also use this announcement to stipulate that our students will not reach national standards without outstanding teachers, and to lay out -- in greater depth than he has so far -- his vision for raising teacher quality. The President can issue an appeal to honor and reward good teachers while refusing to tolerate failing teachers, challenge talented young people and other mid-career professionals to enter into teaching and give them the highest-quality preparation, and speak directly to parents and grandparents, asking them not to discourage their young family members from going into what will be the noblest and most important career of the information age. With 2 million teachers to be hired in the next ten years, the President can challenge the nation to immediately establish policies and an ethic for the teaching profession that will affect the quality of our children's education for decades.

For three reasons, the address to the North Carolina legislature will be an ideal opportunity for the President to focus on teacher quality. First, Governor Hunt has been spearheading a state and national effort to focus on raising teacher quality, providing a sensible context for the President to applaud Hunt's work in North Carolina, cite Hunt's proposal to provide a 12% bonus (serious \$) to national board-certified "master teachers" as the basis for a national challenge, and describe the President's vision in context of a hard-hitting report on teaching released last fall by a bipartisan commission co-chaired by Hunt. Last week's announcement that North Carolina had the nation's largest increase in math scores can underscore the effectiveness of focusing on good teaching.

Second, a presidential focus on high standards for teaching is a natural immediate next step after addresses on challenging standards and tests for students. The public intuitively understands that the key to raising standards is good teachers, and the President can use this address to help show how to address this challenge. Timing is also ideal, coming the day after a North Carolina meeting on teaching that can foreshadow and generate interest in the President's speech. That meeting will be televised to educators around the state, and will include Governor Hunt, teachers, university leaders, and -- by satellite, at 4pm the day before the President's address -- Secretary Riley.

Third, the national board teaching standards -- championed by Hunt -- provide the best possible concrete illustration of how the President and his budget will help make high standards for teachers real. The President's budget contains \$100 million over 5 years to help the national board complete its assessments in all major academic areas, and to provide seed money to help teachers undergo the board's intensive review. The board already has bipartisan endorsements from such leaders as Hunt and Voinavich, and unusual support from education groups who have traditionally opposed efforts to distinguish among teachers at different levels of quality.

Components of announcements/ major policy address on teaching standards:

- ▶ Call on state legislatures around the country to enact major pay incentives for master teachers who become certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (such as the 12% bonus Governor Hunt has proposed to the North Carolina legislature).
- ▶ Explain how the President's \$100 million budget will help set this new national standard of excellence in teaching -- i.e., support for completion of teacher assessments in all academic areas and seed capital for master teachers to undergo an intensive board review, leading to a master teacher for every school in the nation within 10 years. Call on Congress to enact this budget.
- ▶ Invite "our nation's best teachers" -- the 50 state teachers-of-the-year and others -- to the White House South Lawn for a celebration of good teaching and announcement of the new national teacher-of-the-year during the week of April 15th (The scheduling office confirmed today that this event will take place, but it has not yet been made public). Call for a national day of recognition that day for America's best teachers.
- ▶ Announce details of a national forum on recruiting and preparing teachers to take place the day after the White House event. This forum will provide an opportunity for 50 teachers-of-the-year to discuss with higher education leaders how to do a better job at recruiting and preparing the highest quality teachers. Also announce opportunity for communities around the country to participate in the event by satellite, and to organize local discussions with their best teachers and university leaders about how to recruit and prepare outstanding teachers. (USA Today and other papers gave considerable coverage to the Secretary's announcement of this forum last month, but no details have yet been made public.)
- ▶ Challenge talented young people and mid-career professionals to go into teaching. Speak directly to parents and grandparents, asking them not to discourage young people from entering teaching.
- ▶ Announce national forum that would take place later in the year on rewarding good teachers and weeding out those teachers who are incompetent or burnt-out.
- ▶ Issue broad new challenge such as calling on states and communities to raise teacher salaries generally, or to offer tax incentives for young people who teach in high-need areas. Alternatively, challenge school districts and teacher unions to examine their contracts and find new ways to reward good teachers and weed out incompetent or burnt-out teachers quickly, fairly, and less expensively.

# THE PUBLIC AGENDA FOUNDATION

Education -  
Teachers



February 14, 1996

Mr. Bruce Reed  
Domestic Policy Council  
Old Executive Office Building- Room 213  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Reed:

Over the past half dozen years, Public Agenda has examined attitudes toward the public schools among the general public, parents with children in public schools, and community and education leaders. A missing and important voice has been that of public school teachers, so several months ago we undertook a study of the views of black, white and Hispanic teachers. The result is *Given the Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today*, and I have enclosed a copy for your review.

*Given the Circumstances* explores teachers' attitudes on how well public schools are doing and what children need to learn. We also seek their opinions on the "values wars" some communities face and on the importance of education itself.

While teachers and the public agree on many issues, such as the need to restore order and discipline in the classroom and in essential elements of the curriculum, they have very different perspectives on the performance of today's public schools. Given the obstacles they face, teachers say, they're doing a good job, and that public schools in which they teach deserve high marks. The public disagrees.

Recent Public Agenda research, outlined in *Assignment Incomplete*, identified a public skeptical of the value of high academic achievement. No doubt to the dismay of many readers of *Given the Circumstances*, public school teachers also are not fierce champions of rigorous academic learning and should not be counted on as the leading force for higher academic standards.

Coupled with our past research, I think *Given the Circumstances* may be useful to the ongoing discussion of how to improve the public schools.

Sincerely,

Deborah Wadsworth  
Executive Director

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## **A Summary of Findings From *Given the Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today***

### **CHAPTER 1: DO PUBLIC SCHOOLS WORK?**

■ **Finding: Contrary to Most Other Americans, Teachers Give Solidly High Ratings to Local Public Schools**

Earlier Public Agenda research reported that the public and community leaders have deep reservations about the performance of their local public schools, with initial expressions of approval crumbling at the slightest probing. Teachers, in contrast, give the public schools in their communities high ratings. They believe that their local public schools generally outperform private schools -- even on such specific criteria as high academic standards and preparation for college.

Teachers say that given societal pressures and a lack of parental involvement, the schools are doing as well as possible. They routinely criticize the "bad news bias" of the media and say that comparisons to other nations or to private schools are not useful.

■ **Finding: Teachers Say Schools Need More Money, Smaller Classes, and Far More Discipline and Order**

Teachers from across the country and at every level express concerns about three problems in their own local schools: inadequate funding; overcrowded classes; and disorder. Overwhelming majorities of teachers say their schools do not get enough money to do a good job, that their classes are too crowded, and that disruptive students are now absorbing most of their attention.

Teachers' "big three" concerns differ somewhat from those of the public. Both groups express serious concerns about order, but teachers express less concern than the public about how well schools teach basic academic skills or maintain student safety. Consequently, teachers and the public have different starting points. Teachers start with money, class size, and then order. For the public, safety, order, and the basics are the most serious problems.

■ **Finding: Both Teachers and the Public Cite Lack of Order as a Top Problem and Back Similar Measures to Address It**

As noted above, large majorities of teachers and the public name restoring order in schools as a top priority. What's more, they share an agreed-upon agenda on how to accomplish this. Teachers and the public strongly support removing persistent troublemakers from class. Both overwhelmingly support keeping students on campus during lunch and banning smoking. And, although teachers downplay the threat of violence in their own schools, they are even more decisive than the public in supporting a proposal to ban kids caught with weapons or drugs from their schools' campuses. Support for these measures, among both teachers and the public, cuts across different racial, economic, regional groupings and district-types.

At the same time, both teachers and the public are ambivalent about the need for dress codes, and both overwhelmingly reject reintroducing corporal punishment. Finally, both strongly support an environment that fosters self-esteem and makes learning enjoyable.

### **CHAPTER 2: THE ACADEMIC AGENDA AND HIGHER STANDARDS**

■ **Finding: Teachers and the Public Agree on What Should Be Taught**

Beyond agreeing on prescriptions to improve safety and order, teachers and the public have remarkably similar academic agendas for the nation's students. They both agree by nearly unanimous percentages that teaching basic academic skills is critically important. Strong majorities of both teachers and the public also think it is essential to teach computer skills. And, by similar majorities, both consider a grounding in science and American geography and history essential components of the curriculum.

■ **Finding: Teachers, Like Much of the Public, Favor Traditional Approaches to Education**

Teachers are often as wary as other Americans when it comes to teaching innovations now being tried in many school districts. A strong majority of teachers, including math teachers, reject the early use of calculators in mathematics instruction. Heterogeneous grouping -- mixing slow and fast learners in the same classroom -- is also controversial, with most teachers as unenthusiastic as the public.

Teachers' views are at least partly determined by the grade level they teach. Elementary school teachers are far more supportive of heterogeneous grouping than are high school teachers. They are more likely than high school teachers to favor concentrating on creative writing and expression in the early grades, instead of focusing on correct spelling and grammar.

■ **Finding: Teachers Support Higher Standards, But Raising Them Is Not Their Most Urgent Goal**

Teachers broadly support proposals to raise standards. In decisive numbers, they oppose granting diplomas to students who have not mastered English. A solid majority wants to insure that students master academic material at each grade level before they are promoted. Teachers expect higher standards to improve their student's academic performance and show little interest in "watering down" standards for youngsters from the inner-city or other disadvantaged youth. In these areas, the overall attitudes of teachers and the public are closely aligned.

But even though large majorities of teachers voice support for higher standards, they do not generally see low standards -- or youngsters finishing school without basics -- as widespread or urgent problems. Teachers are generally satisfied with public schools' performance in teaching academic skills. In contrast, the public and community leaders are significantly less pleased, and their dissatisfaction gives their support for higher standards an urgency and an edge. Although teachers' support for higher standards is genuine, it is less intense than the public's and less dominant in their thinking. Classroom teachers are receptive -- even interested -- but it is questionable whether they will be the driving force behind higher, more rigorous academic standards.

● **Finding: Teachers Are Lukewarm About the Value of Advanced Learning. They Do Not Believe That Top-Notch Academic Attainment is Especially Important to Success**

Teachers are not ardent advocates of especially rigorous education. Only a small percentage think a high quality education is the most important determinant of career success -- a percentage lower than that of the general public. Teachers appear more concerned with their students' social skills and adjustment than with their attaining top grades and test scores. Half of teachers view highly educated people with some misgiving, seeing them as either "book smart" and impractical or as elitist snobs. In addition, few teachers see traditional high-level academic subjects -- from literary classics to advanced mathematics -- as essential components of the curriculum, even when they themselves teach in that area.

### **CHAPTER 3: TEACHING VALUES:**

■ **Finding: Teachers and the Public Agree on What Values Should Be Taught -- Honesty, Responsibility, and Respect for Others**

Teachers are strong believers in passing mainstream values along to students, and like the public, they consider this an important part of education. Hard work, personal responsibility, and honesty are high on the list of these mainstream values, as are tolerance and diversity. When it comes to divisive issues such as sex education, however, teachers become more cautious.

● **Finding: Teachers Believe in Teaching Democracy and Helping Newcomers Adopt a New Way of Life**

Strong majorities of teachers and the public favor teaching that democracy is the best form of government and promoting habits of good citizenship such as voting. Both groups overwhelmingly reject separate schools for children from different cultural backgrounds. Clear majorities of teachers and the public want public schools to help new immigrants assimilate as quickly as possible, by learning America's language and culture.

### **CHAPTER 4: SPECIAL FOCUS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND HISPANIC TEACHERS:**

■ **Finding: Minority Teachers Are Less Satisfied With Their Schools' Performance**

■ **Finding: African-American and Hispanic Teachers Are More Concerned About Violence and Ineffective Teaching of Basics**

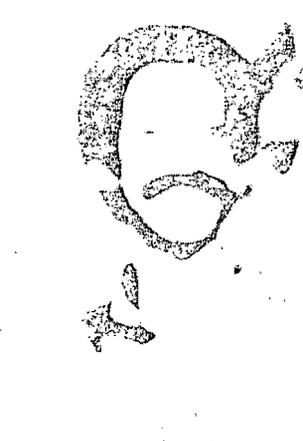
■ **Finding: Minority Teachers Strongly Support a Variety of Measures to Restore Safety and Order in the Schools**

■ **Finding: Minority Teachers Share the Same Agenda as White Teachers, but Want More Emphasis on Social Problems**

■ **Finding: Minority Teachers Also Wary of Teaching Innovations**

■ **Finding: African-American and Hispanic Teachers Express Support for the Principles of Higher Standards**

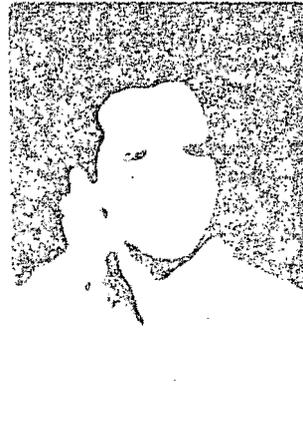
■ **Finding: Minority Teachers, Like Whites, Want Schools to Teach Honesty, Responsibility and Respect for Others**



# GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES

## Teachers Talk About Public Education Today

A Report from Public Agenda



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# **GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES**

## Teachers Talk About Public Education Today

A Report from Public Agenda

By Steve Farkas and Jean Johnson

With  
Will Friedman  
Ali Bers

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Founded over a decade ago by public opinion analyst Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Public Agenda works to help average citizens better understand critical policy issues and to help the nation's leaders better understand the public's point of view. Public Agenda's in-depth research on how average citizens think about policy forms the basis for extensive citizen education work. Its citizen education materials, used by the National Issues Forums and media outlets across the country, have won praise for their credibility and fairness from elected officials from both political parties and from experts and decision-makers across the political spectrum.

The authors of this report would like to thank the following people for their integral contributions to this project:

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Over the past six years, Public Agenda, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization focusing exclusively on public policy issues, has looked closely at Americans' attitudes toward the public schools. In a series of in-depth studies, we have reported on the views of the general public, public school parents, and leaders from such sectors as business, government, media, and higher education.

What has emerged is a deeply disturbing picture of an American public and community leadership frustrated and angered by the state of public education. Mounting public concerns — documented by Public Agenda and other opinion researchers — have prompted increasingly frank, sometimes soul-searching, discussions among educators and concerned reformers based in government, business, and leading educational think tanks. Indeed, recent polls show that education has jumped to the top of the list of public concerns, the focus of what is in effect a national conversation on how to improve the public schools.

But discourse on how to improve public education that does not include the concerns and ideas of classroom teachers is incomplete and probably dangerously inadequate. In their daily interactions with students, teachers play the starring role in education. Most of us remember teachers who could excite us about learning and make us do our best, and we count them among the major influences in our lives.

In addition, those sincerely interested in improving America's public schools cannot afford to discount the views of the classroom teacher. Teachers have first-hand experience with what really happens, day-in and day-out, in the nation's classrooms. Thus, making good judgments requires weighing teachers' testimony along with that of others.

Perhaps most important, many substantive elements of education reform — from higher standards to revamped curricula to new kinds of tests — will be toothless and ineffectual unless teachers understand them, believe in them, and make them work. Teachers may be allies, untapped resources, demoralized and beleaguered foot soldiers, or subversives undermining reform at every turn; but whatever their perspectives, they need to be understood and taken seriously.

*Given the Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today* is Public Agenda's effort to do just that. Our aim is to capture the voices of teachers in school districts across the country, spell out their concerns about the schools, and learn more about their perspective on various aspects of education reform.

*Given the Circumstances* is based primarily on results from two national telephone surveys of public school teachers conducted by Public Agenda in 1995. One survey, conducted as part of Public Agenda's *Assignment Incomplete* study, measured the views of 237 teachers and was completed in May. A second, completed in December for this report, surveyed 800 teachers from grades four through twelve, as well as "oversamples" of black teachers and Hispanic teachers (see Methodology for full details). Both surveys asked teachers about issues covered in Public Agenda's previous studies of Americans' views on public education: *First Things First* (1994) and *Assignment Incomplete* (1995).

The project's intent was two-fold. First, the surveys give voice to the classroom teacher's perspective on education issues, issues that are provoking debate nationwide. How are public schools performing? What do children need to learn? What will help children learn better? What do schools need to be effective? What are the best strategies for change? Second, the surveys compare the views of teachers with those of the public, parents, and community leadership, uncovering areas of agreement and shared concerns, along with areas where teachers' concerns and judgments differ.

**Discourse on how to improve public education that does not include the concerns and ideas of classroom teachers is incomplete and probably dangerously inadequate.**

As with other Public Agenda reports on education, we draw on our entire body of research over the past six years, attempting to synthesize what we have learned over time, rather than confining our report to findings from a single study. This body of work reflects over a dozen separate reports on education issues (see Related Publications, page 49), and well over 100 focus groups.

*Given the Circumstances* reports its findings in four chapters. Chapter One lays out teachers' judgments about how well public schools in their communities are performing and about specific changes to make them more effective. This chapter focuses particularly on teachers' concerns about discipline and order — an area where teachers' concerns are closely aligned to those of the public.

Chapter Two turns to academic issues. What, in the view of teachers, do children need to learn in school today? What is absolutely essential, and what less so? This chapter also looks closely at teachers' views on what is perhaps the key element of the nationwide reform movement — the drive to raise educational standards. Do classroom teachers support this movement? Are they champions of higher standards, or opponents? Or, does their commitment to higher standards lie somewhere in-between?

Chapter Three examines teachers' perspectives on what some have called the "values wars" surfacing in many communities nationwide — heated debates over which textbooks to use in a multicultural society and what values to emphasize when schools take on the tasks of sex education and AIDS prevention. This chapter also looks at the public schools' role in the acculturation of children new to the United States, a matter of increasing importance in school districts across the country.

Chapter Four is a special focus on the perspectives of African-American and Hispanic teachers currently working in public schools. Do black and Hispanic teachers share the concerns and judgments of teachers in general, or do they have distinctive points-of-view? To our knowledge, this special focus on the views of minority teachers is a first-of-its-kind study, one that we believe adds another important and too-often missing voice to the discourse on how to improve public schools.

**Are teachers champions of higher standards, or opponents? Or, does their commitment to higher standards lie somewhere in-between?**

From Monday through Friday, for nine months of the year, some two-and-a-half million public school teachers serve on the front lines of education. How well, from their perspective, are the nation's public schools doing? What changes would teachers make to improve public education? What, in their view, would help them do their jobs? In Chapter One, Public Agenda describes teachers' judgments about the performance of local public schools and their priorities for change. This chapter pays particular attention to discipline and order — an issue which commands the concern of both teachers and the public, and an issue to which both respond in similar ways

■ **Finding: Contrary to Most Other Americans, Teachers Give Solidly High Ratings to Local Public Schools**

Earlier Public Agenda research reported that the public and community leaders have deep reservations about the performance of their local public schools, with initial expressions of approval crumbling at the slightest probing. Teachers, in contrast, give the public schools in their communities high ratings. They believe that their local public schools generally outperform private schools — even on such specific criteria as high academic standards and preparation for college.

Teachers say that given societal pressures and a lack of parental involvement, the schools are doing as well as possible. They routinely criticize the "bad news bias" of the media and say that comparisons to other nations or to private schools are not useful.

**More than three-fourths of teachers think their local public schools outperform the private ones, compared to just 33% of the public and 29% of community leaders.**

In *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda's 1995 survey of how Americans view public education, the public's initially positive evaluations of their local public schools disintegrated when people were asked about specifics.<sup>1</sup> Majorities said that in their communities the private schools were outperforming the public schools, especially in the areas people consider most critical: School safety, higher standards, and order. Most parents with children in public school acknowledged they would move them to private school if they could afford to. But what do teachers think? Are they equally critical of how their schools are performing? And if not, why not?

**High Grades From Teachers**

Public school teachers firmly believe their local schools deserve good marks. Despite numerous commissions and reports questioning the performance of the public schools, mounting public disaffection, and increased discussion of private school alternatives, teachers hold fast to this conviction: Their communities have good public schools.

Eighty-six percent of teachers say public schools in their own communities do an excellent or good job, a view shared by a much smaller 55% majority of the public and 53% of community leaders.<sup>2</sup> And while most Americans' evaluations of local public schools plummet when they compare them to private schools, teachers hold firm. More than three-fourths of teachers (76%) think their local public schools outperform the private ones, compared to just 33% of the public and 29% of community leaders.

Unlike the public, teachers stick with their positive evaluations even through specific, head-to-head comparisons between local public and private schools. Asked about a range of areas such as academic standards, order, and preparation for college, teachers say that public schools outperform private schools in 6 of 13 areas and equal them in 2 other categories (Table 1). In contrast, the public believes that public schools outperform private schools on just 2 of 13 measures.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, data for the "general public" or "Americans" and for "teachers" comes from the Public Agenda surveys conducted for *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools* (1994) and *Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform* (1995). Data for "teachers" comes from the surveys conducted for this report and for *Assignment Incomplete*.

These conflicting evaluations are often dramatic and occur in pivotal areas. When asked which schools are more likely to provide higher academic standards, teachers point to the public schools by a two-to-one margin (50% to 24%). The public holds an exactly opposite assessment, favoring the private schools by a 53% to 24% margin. Asked which schools are more likely to prepare young people for college, teachers choose the public schools by a 52% to 20% spread. Again, the public takes the opposite view — 45% to 27%. Asked which schools are more likely to provide safety and security, teachers are divided: About a third say public schools, another third say private schools, and 24% say they are the same. But the public clearly feels private schools are safer, with 51% picking private schools and only 20% picking public schools.

#### *Some Private School Pluses*

Teachers do believe that private schools excel in several important areas: Smaller class size, for example, as well as discipline and order (Table 1). Both teachers (60%) and the public (67%) believe private schools have the edge when it comes to smaller class size. By a 49% plurality, teachers say private schools are more likely to provide discipline and order in the classroom. The public concurs, but by a greater margin (61%).

Although they give credit to the private schools in a few areas, teachers usually stand fast behind the public schools. Why do their evaluations differ so dramatically from those of the public and community leaders? Focus groups conducted by Public Agenda for a number of education studies suggest several explanations for the good grades teachers give their schools.

#### *Loyalty Under Siege*

For one thing, it is perhaps natural for employees to defend the institution they work for, especially when it seems to be under siege. For many teachers, work is not merely a job but a calling which they answer. In their view, they face Herculean challenges and far too much uninformed criticism. Teachers often complain that the schools — and, by extension, they themselves — are unfairly blamed for problems beyond their control, and victimized by the media's bad-news bias.

**Teachers often complain that the schools are unfairly blamed for problems beyond their control, and victimized by the media's bad-news bias.**

"I see the community blaming the teachers — we're just battered in the newspapers," said one teacher in Connecticut. "Every time there's a problem, it's the teachers' fault." A Minneapolis teacher voiced a similar sentiment: "Teachers have a real bum rap. Every single thing that happens in the system is the teachers' fault."

With so many outside critics "sniping" at the schools, many teachers seem fearful about supplying more ammunition. At the beginning of focus groups conducted by Public Agenda, many teachers were apprehensive about the sponsorship of the research and nervous about how their comments might be used. Some feared that any negative remarks they made would be taken out of context and used to expose schools to even more criticism. Some perhaps feared that negative remarks could lead to reprisals from "above." A teacher from Arkansas explained her misgivings about just who exactly was behind the research: "When we were young, we used to say: 'Don't trust anybody over 30.' Now it's: 'Don't trust anybody downtown; don't trust any administrator.'"

#### *Not Bad, Given the Circumstances*

Teachers in focus group discussions also justified their positive assessment of public schools by itemizing the many obstacles that stand in their path: Failing families, declining communities, inadequate resources, fractured school boards, and top-heavy bureaucracies that soak up their resources. One teacher from Connecticut said, "All the social problems of our communities have been thrown at the teacher. You have to be a psychologist, you have to be a nurse, you have to be a baby-sitter, and I've done all those jobs and more." "The school system isn't broken," said a Seattle teacher. "Society is broken."

The sense of "teaching under fire" leads some teachers to dramatically redefine their notion of success. "It's a success if I can get a child to bring a pencil to class — that's a success," said one teacher in Birmingham. "There are some kids, if they bring a pencil and paper I'll write a note home bragging on them. That's a big deal."

#### *Absentee Parents*

Another barrier frequently identified by teachers is lack of parental involvement. Teachers think that parents are the decisive factor in any child's educational success. They also think that in too many families parents are abdicating this responsibility. Asked to name the single most important thing public schools need to help students learn, the top response from teachers (31%) is "involved parents." When asked why students with high grades do so well, two-thirds (67%) of teachers say it is because their parents stress education.

"The single most important factor in a child's success in education is the parents," said a teacher in Grand Rapids. "After that, it's the teacher, but only after the parents. Time and time again, my students who aren't doing well — I'll never see their parents at conferences." Seven in 10 teachers (71%) and about 6 in 10 members of the public think that a student from a stable and supportive family attending a poor school is more likely to succeed than a student from a troubled family who attends a good school.

Teachers think that the lack of parental support and involvement affects far more than academic success. From the perspective of educators, some parents even undermine their effort to impart the standards of behavior and civility that a child needs to be a successful student or a successful adult. As one teacher from San Diego said: "When I have difficulty with a youngster, I know I'm going to have difficulty with the parent." A school principal interviewed for another Public Agenda project recounted a story about a father who wanted to cover the costs of his son's vandalism by simply writing a check. The father could not understand the principal's insistence that the student be disciplined as well.

Many teachers believe that troubled families, distracted parents, and indifference to learning at home have become disturbingly commonplace. Asked where young people generally face the most pressure and stress today — at home, at school, among their friends, or in their neighborhoods — most teachers (56%) say "at home because of troubled families." The perspective of parents is less clear cut: Only 22% of parents and 27% of the general public point to the home as the place where kids face most stress. Eight in 10 teachers (80%) say that parents do a worse job today than when they were in school, while 55% of the public agrees. "Parenting is like an endangered species," said a Seattle teacher.

**"Time and time again, my students who aren't doing well — I'll never see their parents at conferences."**

— Grand Rapids Teacher

#### *Comparing Apples to Oranges*

Given the challenges public schools face in today's American society, many teachers believe that comparing public school performance to that of private schools — or to schools in other countries — is simply unfair. Private schools can pick and choose the best applicants, teachers say, while public schools cannot turn anybody away.

"In Middletown, there are two Catholic schools," said one Connecticut teacher, "and the public schools get the bad rap all the time. [They say] we're just not as good as the private schools, and that bugs me. I see great programs at both schools, and I also see the same problems. But when the private schools have a problem child, they have an option. We don't have an option — we're here to teach *all* the kids." In this study, the small number of teachers (10%) who believe that in their community private schools are better than public schools generally think this is because the private schools are more selective about which students they take in (58%). Only 3 in 10 (31%) say private schools are better because they educate more effectively.

Comparisons of American students to those of other industrialized nations often provoke a similar response. "These comparisons are totally meaningless," said a Seattle teacher. "You start using countries like Sweden and France, you're talking about very homogeneous countries, and in the United States, we are such a diverse society. I think you're comparing apples and oranges." Perhaps this explains why only 28% of teachers say they would be "very concerned" if "international test scores showed that American students were doing poorly," compared to more than half (56%) of the public and 63% of community leaders.

## Views Not Easily Shaken

Critics of public education have their own rebuttals to each of the explanations advanced by teachers, and the debate will probably continue for some time. What is clear from the research is that public school teachers have taken their stand firmly. They are extremely reluctant to criticize public schools, even when pressed on specific comparisons. And teachers are not the only educators that rally to public schools' defense. Results from a survey conducted for the 1995 *Assignment: Incomplete* study show that school administrators (principals and superintendents) are also upbeat about the performance of their communities' schools.<sup>3</sup>

### ■ Finding: Teachers Say Schools Need More Money, Smaller Classes, and Far More Discipline and Order

Teachers from across the country and at every level express concerns about three problems in their own local schools: Inadequate funding, overcrowded classes, and disorder. Overwhelming majorities of teachers say their schools do not get enough money to do a good job, that their classes are too crowded, and that disruptive students are now absorbing most of their attention.

Teachers' "big three" concerns differ somewhat from those of the public. Both groups express serious concerns about order, but teachers express less concern than the public about how well schools teach basic academic skills or maintain student safety. Consequently, teachers and the public have different starting points. Teachers start with money, class size, and then order. For the public, safety, order, and the basics are the most serious problems.

Public Agenda's 1994 study of public attitudes, *First Things First*, showed that Americans nationwide believe that three components are essential for sound education to take place: Safe schools, order in classes, and effective teaching of academic basics.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, most Americans think the public schools fall short in precisely these areas. Majorities of the public believe drugs and violence are a problem in their local schools, that teachers are not doing a good job dealing with discipline, and that a high school diploma is no guarantee that a student has learned the basics.

Where do teachers stand on these issues? And how different are their concerns from those of the general public? Teachers have a different view of the most pressing problems facing local schools (Table 2). They start with concerns about the lack of resources and crowded classrooms, followed closely by concern about order. For teachers, school safety and effective teaching of the basics, while obviously important, are not at the top of their agenda for change.

**Even 64% of teachers who work in schools with more affluent student populations say money is a serious problem in their community.**

### Bigger Job, Dwindling Resources

Eight in 10 teachers (80%) say their own community's public schools are not getting enough money to do a good job. This concern about money extends to teachers across the country — in high, middle, and low-income communities. Teachers simply do not believe they have the resources they need, given the challenges they face. "Society expects us to be able to handle all kinds of problems, but our resources just get smaller and smaller and smaller," complained a teacher in Minneapolis. "If we're going to take on the role of being everything to children, we've got to have the money to do it." Even 64% of teachers who work in schools with more affluent student populations say money is a serious problem in their community.

In addition, about two-thirds of teachers (65%) say that classes in their schools are too crowded. Overcrowding seems to be a particular worry for teachers who work in urban or inner-city districts: 83% say overcrowded classes are a problem in their local schools.

The emphasis teachers place on funding and class size — two interrelated issues — emerged repeatedly in focus groups. To teachers like this one from San Francisco, there is a direct relationship between smaller class size, a better classroom environment, and improved performance: "Having smaller class sizes, that is going to solve so many problems right there. I can go so much faster with 15 — more than twice as fast with 15 kids — as I can with 30."

The public is not entirely dismissive of the concerns teachers have over funding or class size, but its "first-things-first" agenda makes them less compelling or immediate. For example, 58% of the public agree with teachers that local schools are not getting enough money, and another 50% think classes are too crowded. But in the public's mind, funding issues follow rather than precede the problems schools face with violence, order, and the basics.

### Money or Discipline?

And there is some disagreement even among teachers about the relative importance of having more money. Asked what will do more to improve student achievement, more money and smaller classes or higher standards and more discipline, 57% of teachers opt for more resources, but as many as 4 in 10 (39%) say standards and discipline.

Furthermore, in focus groups teachers were often skeptical that more money will actually find its way to their classrooms. Many suspected the schools' money is wasted by their school boards and central office administration. As one Birmingham teacher put it, "Anything that the administration or the board wants, they get. At the Board of Education, they have all type of equipment. . . you go into the schools, they have nothing. True enough, there needs to be more money in the schools, but it needs to be managed better, and it needs to be spent on the children instead of administration."

### ■ Finding: Both Teachers and the Public Cite Lack of Order as a Top Problem and Back Similar Measures to Address It

Large majorities of teachers and the public name restoring order in schools as a top priority. What's more, they share an agreed-upon agenda on how to accomplish this. Teachers and the public strongly support removing persistent troublemakers from class. Both overwhelmingly support keeping students on campus during lunch and banning smoking. And, although teachers downplay the threat of violence in their own schools, they are even more decisive than the public in supporting a proposal to ban kids caught with weapons or drugs from their schools' campuses. Support for these measures, among both teachers and the public, cuts across different racial, economic, regional groupings and district-types.

At the same time, both teachers and the public are ambivalent about the need for dress codes, and both overwhelmingly reject reintroducing corporal punishment. Finally, both strongly support an environment that fosters self-esteem and makes learning enjoyable.

The emphasis on order is one area where the top concerns of teachers overlap with those of the public. Fully 81% of teachers say that the worst behaved students get the most attention in school. In focus groups, teachers regularly talked about the one or two unruly children who are so disruptive that they siphon off the teacher's time and keep other students from learning. "There's a lack of discipline, a lack of self-control that a lot of the children are coming in with," said a Connecticut teacher. "A lot of my time is wasted with behavior problems instead of actually teaching."

One teacher from Minneapolis reflected on her first three years of teaching: "What really threw me at the beginning was the lack of respect, the harassment. I was just overwhelmed by the disrespect students have for one another. The name-calling, it just flows off the tongue like they're saying 'Good morning, have a nice day.' That shocked me. I just didn't know it was that bad."

### Discipline and Self-Control — Prerequisites for Life

Order and discipline are especially important to both teachers and the public because neither believes teaching or learning can occur without those preconditions in place. For teachers, children who are habitually disruptive — who talk out loud or out of turn or who have trouble sitting still — also lack the patience and discipline necessary to learn to read, write, add, and subtract, let alone to become responsible workers and citizens. As one teacher from Grand Rapids said, "You have to have structure in that classroom. If you let them come into that classroom any way they want to, you won't be able to get anything done." A Connecticut teacher made his resentment plain: "I see a lot of kids who are thugs who run the schools."

**"I was just overwhelmed by the disrespect students have for one another. The name-calling, it just flows off the tongue like they're saying 'Good morning, have a nice day.'"**

— Minneapolis Teacher

Moreover, both teachers and the public believe that the schools' mission goes beyond academic instruction to teaching codes of conduct and behavior that benefit students in school and in a career. About 8 in 10 members of the general public and 9 in 10 teachers agree it is absolutely essential for the schools to teach "good work habits such as being responsible, on time, and disciplined" (Table 5).

#### *This One Kid...*

When it comes to prescriptions, both groups want school policies to focus on the handful of students deemed truly troublesome. Almost 9 in 10 teachers (88%), as well as 73% of the public, think academic achievement would improve substantially if persistent troublemakers were removed from class (Table 3). As one Bridgeport teacher said, "I've been in the classroom, in the trenches, for 28 years. A great deal of my day is taken up with discipline. I have a lot to give. The other kids have a lot to give, and they have a lot to receive. And we get bogged down with this one student."

Eight in 10 teachers would require students to remain on school grounds during lunch, a measure supported by 73% of the public (Table 6). An even greater number of teachers (94%) would ban student smoking anywhere on school grounds, and the public once again agrees (83%). Teachers would even curb romantic behavior among students, with 7 in 10 (69%) favoring a ban on kissing and hugging on school property. A smaller majority (56%) of the public concurs.

#### *Civility, Not Military Discipline*

What emerges repeatedly in the views of both teachers and the public is a strong desire to recreate a civilized atmosphere in the schools, an atmosphere where students respect rules of behavior and are in turn treated with respect and even caring. Despite their intense interest in order and discipline, neither teachers nor the public seem to want their schools to become carbon copies of military schools. Teacher opinion is divided, for example, over the wisdom of dress codes (Table 6). Forty-seven percent favor, and 51% oppose, requiring students to dress in standard clothing; the public also splits over the issue by a similar 49% to 50% margin. Fifty-two percent of teachers favor "requiring teachers to dress like professionals, with male teachers wearing jackets and ties," but 45% oppose that suggestion. Similarly, 56% of the public supports the measure while 42% are opposed. Only 13% of teachers and 28% of the public support allowing "educators to paddle or spank students."

"If anyone wants to get to youngsters and help them develop, that person has to show respect for them, and some way of helping that youngster direct himself," said a veteran teacher from the San Diego area.

Teachers and the public also believe learning will be enhanced when it is enjoyable and when students feel that adults care about them. Three of four teachers (76%) — and about 9 in 10 members of the general public — want the schools to put more emphasis on making learning enjoyable and interesting to students. Nearly two-thirds of teachers (65%) would put more emphasis on building student self-esteem, and they are joined by about 8 in 10 members of the public.

#### *Is Violence a Problem?*

Teachers are less likely than the public to say that violence is a serious problem in their local public schools (Table 2). While 7 in 10 Americans (72%) say "too much drugs and violence" is a problem in local schools, only half (47%) of teachers agree. In focus groups, teachers often complained that media coverage of violent incidents in the schools is overblown. "When there's one gun in a high school, the average citizen starts to believe there's one in every school," said a San Diego teacher. "The same with drug busts. They believe what they see on T.V."

While several recent studies have suggested that — for the most part — American students are generally safe within public school walls, many Americans may not be assured by this survey's finding: Almost half of America's teachers say violence and drugs are a problem in their schools.<sup>5</sup> Focus group discussions with teachers and the public suggest they may have different thresholds for tolerating violence. Many teachers may have come to view one or two violent incidents over several years as expected and routine, rather than shocking.

One Hartford teacher, for example, seemed to have adjusted to a new reality: "We've had some violence in the high school, so now we have security guards. . . I feel very safe there; I don't have a problem with security guards." For members of the general public, on the other hand, the existence of security guards and metal detectors in public schools is all the evidence they need to drive the seriousness of the problem home. Rather than reassuring them, the presence of security guards may only serve to remind most Americans of how bad things have become.

#### *Decisive Action Warranted*

But while teachers express less concern than the public over violence and drugs in their schools, they are even more supportive of proposals to curb the problem. Fully 84% — compared to 76% of the public — think "permanently removing kids caught with drugs or weapons" will improve academic achievement (Table 3).

One teacher from Savannah voiced his frustration with what he saw as his community's unending patience with "problem kids." "I don't know why the school system is so tolerant," the teacher said. "In high school, a kid might be suspended five or six times in a nine-week period, but we can't legally get rid of them."

**"When there's one gun in a high school, the average citizen starts to believe there's one in every school. The same with drug busts. They believe what they see on T.V."**

— San Diego Teacher

**"We've had some violence in the high school, so now we have security guards... I feel very safe there; I don't have a problem with security guards."**

— Hartford Teacher

In Chapter Two, we turn our attention to teachers' views about academic issues: What subjects should be taught, how they should be taught, and how much should schools expect from kids. This chapter reports on the subject areas teachers view as absolutely essential and those they consider less critical. Special attention is paid to how teachers respond to the principles and policies implied by the nationwide standards movement. Finally, this chapter raises questions about whether teachers are likely to be strong advocates of higher standards and discusses their attitudes about the intrinsic value of education and advanced knowledge.

### ■ Finding: Teachers and the Public Agree on What Should Be Taught

Beyond agreeing on prescriptions to improve safety and order, teachers and the public have remarkably similar academic agendas for the nation's students. They both agree by nearly unanimous percentages that teaching basic academic skills is critically important. Strong majorities of both teachers and the public also think it is essential to teach computer skills. And, by similar majorities, both consider a grounding in science and American geography and history essential components of the curriculum.

Which subjects do teachers and the public believe are absolutely critical for every child? To map their priorities, this study presented teachers with a list of 16 subjects and asked which were "absolutely essential," which were "important but not essential," and which were "not that important" (Table 5). The list was designed to be diverse, including academic subjects ranging from basic skills to advanced mathematics, practical skills such as computer literacy, and social skills and norms such as good work habits or honesty.

The teachers' "bottom line" on where public schools should focus their energies is virtually indistinguishable from the public's. It is pragmatic, basic, and intended to give children functional preparation for the world they will one day face. In the foreground stand reading, writing, and math skills, which are almost unanimously seen as absolutely essential. Computer skills, along with American history and a grounding in science, follow. Subjects such as classic works of literature, and the history and geography of other areas of the world, fall near the bottom of the list.

#### The "Basics"

Standing at the pinnacle of academic priorities are the basics. There is simply no doubt in the minds of teachers or the public that teaching "the basics" is critical to the mission of the schools. An overwhelming 98% of teachers — and 92% of the public — say it is absolutely essential for local schools to teach basic reading, writing, and math skills. Without mastery of the "3 R's," teachers say, students cannot succeed in jobs or higher education. "The very least amount that we should require from our graduates," said a Cincinnati teacher, "are the basic educational factors — that they be able to read, that they be able to write legibly, that they be able to speak, and that they be able to do math."

#### Computers: The New Basic

The *Assignment Incomplete* study showed that computer skills had emerged for the public as a new basic requirement, and teachers seem to wholeheartedly agree. A strong majority of teachers (72%) joins the 80% of Americans who view teaching computer skills and media technology as "absolutely essential" components of today's academic curriculum (Table 5). "They're going to be more technically oriented in the future," said a teacher from Savannah. "That's where the money is going. Somebody has to be able to work these computers, and the curriculum needs to reflect that."

Other academic subjects are also viewed as essential. About 7 in 10 teachers (72%) see American history and geography as an "absolutely essential" part of the curriculum, a somewhat higher number than the general public (63%). Almost two-thirds of teachers (64%) add history, chemistry, and physics to the list of required subjects; 59% of the public agrees.

Although some educators protest the additional burdens schools face because of modern social problems, teachers seem to endorse their need to do so. Six in 10 teachers (61%) and 64% of the public say it is "absolutely essential" that schools teach children "how to deal with social problems like drugs and family breakdown." Many teachers are willing to go even farther by providing social services at the school itself. Almost 6 in 10 teachers (58%) think the best way for schools to help children from troubled backgrounds is to "give them social services such as drug and child abuse counseling at school." Only 31% think it is better for schools to "shelter youngsters from social problems and keep them focused on their studies."

### ■ Finding: Teachers, Like Much of the Public, Favor Traditional Approaches to Education

Teachers are often as wary as other Americans when it comes to teaching innovations now being tried in many school districts. A strong majority of teachers, including math teachers, reject the early use of calculators in mathematics instruction. Heterogeneous grouping — mixing slow and fast learners in the same classroom — is also controversial, with most teachers as unenthusiastic as the public.

Teachers' views are at least partly determined by the grade level they teach. Elementary school teachers are far more supportive of heterogeneous grouping than are high school teachers. They are more likely than high school teachers to favor concentrating on creative writing and expression in the early grades, instead of focusing on correct spelling and grammar.

*First Things First* identified the widespread lack of enthusiasm among the public toward some teaching innovations that have been at the center of many reform efforts — early use of calculators, mixing students with different skill levels in the same classrooms, and focusing first on creative writing in the early grades instead of rules of grammar and spelling. Unfortunately for supporters of such proposals, teachers often express the same wariness.

#### Math-by-Hand First

Many reform proponents say that rather than memorizing facts, students should learn how to find the right answers whenever the need arises. In teaching math, this involves having children use calculators in early grades. Proponents believe that early use of calculators allows teachers to focus on math concepts and problem-solving. But, as Public Agenda's research shows, 86% of the public rejects the use of calculators in early grades, preferring that students first memorize multiplication tables and learn to do math by hand. In the public's mind, math skills already in decline will only plunge further if students become dependent on mechanical devices.

A strong majority of teachers stand with the public on this point: 73% want students to memorize the multiplication tables and do math by hand before using calculators. Only 23% think that using calculators from the start helps students better understand math concepts. "Once they get that math memorized, nobody can take it away from them," said one teacher from Grand Rapids. "They need those basic skills, and they just have to sit down and work hard at it."

Associations of math educators generally support the early use of calculators as an important component of instructional reform. But this support has apparently failed to win over even front-line math teachers, since 73% of them want students to memorize the multiplication tables before relying on calculators.<sup>9</sup>

#### Heterogeneous Grouping

The proposal to mix slow, average, and fast learners in the same classroom — heterogeneous grouping — has been another centerpiece of reform in many schools. Proponents argue that slow learners will learn from fast learners, and fast learners will learn by helping their classmates. They also argue that grouping children by ability stigmatizes youngsters with poor skills. In the *First Things First* survey, only 34% of the public endorsed heterogeneous grouping as a way to improve learning (Table 3).

*"The faster kids go on and the slower kids just fall behind. I think this is why so many of them drop out — they just can't keep up."*

— Grand Rapids Teacher

Heterogeneous grouping receives at best a lukewarm reception from teachers. Four in 10 teachers think that mixing slow and fast learners will improve student performance; 31% are equivocal; and 28% think it will not improve learning. Focus groups suggest that teachers and the public share similar concerns: They fear that high achievers and average students will be held back while teachers attend to the needs of low achievers; or that students with difficulties will never get the attention they really need. One Grand Rapids teacher put it this way: "That's what I have now — these kids are just kind of all put together. The faster kids go on and the slower kids just fall behind. I think this is why so many of them drop out — they just can't keep up."

#### *One Key Factor: The Grade They Teach*

Support for heterogeneous grouping varies strongly with teacher grade level. Six in 10 elementary teachers think heterogeneous grouping will improve academic achievement compared to only 3 in 10 high school teachers (27%). In focus groups, elementary school teachers worry that children will be pigeonholed too early. "When you track kids, and you keep them in that track for four years," one early-grade teacher said, "you are going to kill them, especially the lower level kids who just need some pushing. I wholeheartedly agree with mainstreaming kids — even those kids with behavior problems — and keeping them in regular classrooms as best as you can and having the faster learners work with the slower learners."

By contrast, teachers in higher grades often want to tailor academic instruction so that high achievers fulfill their potential and low achievers are not neglected, a twin goal they believe is far more difficult in a heterogeneous setting. Secondary teachers also express concerns about keeping order in heterogeneous groups. One middle-school teacher said: "I have some classes where the kids are just so gifted academically, and then I've got a couple of kids who are behavioral problems. [They are] in special ed because they are behavioral problems, and then they're mainstreamed into those classes. They're very disruptive. And what do I do? Do I sacrifice the whole class for this one individual? It's very, very hard."

**"When you track kids, and you keep them in that track for four years, you are going to kill them, especially the lower level kids who just need some pushing."**

— Elementary Grade Teacher

#### *Replace Multiple Choice Tests?*

Many reformers think that new kinds of assessments — including a greater use of essay tests and portfolios of student work — are better measures of true learning than are traditional multiple choice tests. All too often, reformers say, standardized tests measure rote memorization and even guesswork. In the *First Things First* study, the public mildly endorsed using essays or portfolios instead of multiple choice tests (54%). But as a strategy to improve learning, this approach is far less compelling to most Americans than, for example, removing habitually disruptive kids from class.

Teachers are divided over moving away from standardized multiple-choice exams. Forty-seven percent say that such a change will improve learning (Table 3). About one-third (35%) are equivocal, and 16% think it will not improve learning. One Seattle teacher voiced his support, saying: "I don't think they [multiple-choice tests] are accurate measures of what's going on, nor are standardized tests. I think much of it is trivia, it's first level — regurgitation of knowledge, comprehension maybe." But the teacher next to him had qualms: "I have a terrible time grading written papers. Do I grade the grammar; do I grade everything? And then I get hung up because if I do it properly it takes me so many hours, and then I get frustrated. And by the time I get to the last papers, I'm not doing a very good job of it."

#### *Creative Writing vs. Grammar and Spelling*

Teachers are divided when they are forced to choose between two views of how to teach writing in the early grades. One view is that students should be encouraged to write creatively from the start, with less emphasis on grammar and spelling rules, so they will not be turned off to writing. The other view is that teachers should stress the rules of spelling and grammar from the very beginning. On the face of it, the public and teachers seem to stand on opposite sides: While 60% of the public wants to emphasize proper grammar and spelling from the start, 56% of teachers want to focus on expressiveness and creativity first. Perhaps surprisingly, English teachers are even more supportive than other teachers of departing from the traditional emphasis, with 64% opting for the expressive writing option.

"Grammar and spelling are important," said one English teacher in San Francisco, "but to me when I think of someone who writes well, grammar and spelling are not on the top of my list. What I want is a child who is fluent, can express himself or herself, and can get it out on paper. Once a child feels comfortable getting his or her thoughts down, then I'm going to start telling them, 'Let's work on your grammar, let's work on your spelling.'"

But the picture actually is more cloudy than it seems since elementary teachers again hold views rather different from colleagues in higher grades. While 74% of elementary grade teachers want to encourage students to write creatively before concentrating on grammar and spelling, only 45% of high school teachers agree. And although English teachers seem to support the more innovative approach, exactly half of the high school teachers surveyed say that unless students are taught grammar and spelling rules from the beginning, they will never be good writers. In focus groups, many high school teachers voiced frustration at the poor writing skills of their students. By the time students get to them, they said, it is too late to raise their basic skills to the requisite level. Social studies teachers form a notable pocket of resistance to the creativity-first approach: 57% of these teachers want correct grammar and spelling emphasized from the beginning.

#### *Reform du Jour*

While some teaching innovations are more acceptable to teachers than others, teachers often take a wait-and-see attitude toward reform proposals. Previous Public Agenda research has shown that many teachers have grown fatigued with the very concept of "reform." As past reform efforts have been abandoned in favor of newer approaches, and as key policies are repeatedly upended in several-year cycles, front-line teachers often adopt a "this too shall pass" perspective.

One teacher related her "survival strategy" for dealing with reform cycles. She had seen many school superintendents come and go, and their reform agendas along with them: "When you've been in the district 20 years or so, you just learn to go with the flow. It doesn't really matter who's doing what down there. You just kind of go with it."

#### *The Checkered Past of Reform*

Some teachers describe teaching innovations that they feel have hurt their students and failed the test of time. For example, a teacher in Savannah complained about the impact of changes in reading instruction: "They change so often from one series or method to another one. We have a group of children... All they did was give [them] words. Well, some of it would soak in, but some of them couldn't even respond to you. Children who are taught how to sound out words, how to read phonetically, those children do much better."

Other teachers distrust reformers who, in their view, are disconnected from the world in which they live: "I'm getting tired and frustrated trying [out the ideas in] people's master's and doctoral theses just to see if they work," said a Seattle teacher. And in the same group, another teacher pointed out that innovations have other, more political, hurdles to clear: "The few teachers who are trying to be creative catch flak all the time from parents saying, 'Wait a minute, we're trying to get Johnny to Harvard, and he has to reach these objectives, and you're trying to bring in something like thinking skills?'"

To reformers committed to these teaching innovations, the ambivalent reception from teachers has to be worrisome. Such changes will be difficult, if not impossible, to implement without teacher support. Moreover, teachers and the public may reinforce each other's suspicions, as each group responds to the anxieties of the other.

**"I'm getting tired and frustrated trying [out the ideas in] people's master's and doctoral theses just to see if they work."**

— Seattle Teacher

## ■ Finding: Teachers Support Higher Standards, But Raising Them Is Not Their Most Urgent Goal

Teachers broadly support proposals to raise standards. In decisive numbers, they oppose granting diplomas to students who have not mastered English. A solid majority wants to insure that students master academic material at each grade level before they are promoted. Teachers expect higher standards to improve their students' academic performance and show little interest in "watering down" standards for youngsters from the inner-city or other disadvantaged youth. In these areas, the overall attitudes of teachers and the public are closely aligned.

But even though large majorities of teachers voice support for higher standards, they do not generally see low standards — or youngsters finishing school without basics — as widespread or urgent problems. Teachers are generally satisfied with public schools' performance in teaching academic skills. In contrast, the public and community leaders are significantly less pleased, and their dissatisfaction gives their support for higher standards an urgency and an edge. Although teachers' support for higher standards is genuine, it is less intense than the public's and less dominant in their thinking. Classroom teachers are receptive — even interested — but it is questionable whether they will be the driving force behind higher, more rigorous academic standards.

The movement to raise academic standards has been spearheaded by committed reformers, educators, and members of the business community. As *First Things First* suggested, and *Assignment Incomplete* confirmed, the American public is very receptive to tougher grading, withholding diplomas until students master required skills, and establishing clear guidelines about what students should learn and teachers should teach. But what about the teachers who must make higher standards a reality?

This study suggests that teachers support a variety of approaches to raising standards, and they support these measures in very large numbers. But reformers who have made higher, more rigorous standards the centerpiece of their efforts to improve education might be well advised to pause before cheering too loudly. Teachers' support for higher standards comes with several important caveats.

### *Teachers and the Standards-Based Reform Agenda*

A defining element of the standards movement is that all participants — teachers, students and parents — understand the school's educational objectives, measure progress along the way, and subscribe to the consequences of success

or failure. Teachers join the public and parents in accepting the need for each of these elements. Eight in 10 teachers support setting "very clear guidelines on what kids should learn and teachers should teach in every major subject so the kids and the teachers know what to aim for," a level of support that is almost identical to that of the public (82%) (Table 3).

What's more, teachers think that higher standards must carry consequences. More than 8 in 10 teachers (83%) support withholding high school diplomas until students "clearly demonstrate they can write and speak English well." Eight in 10 teachers say that toughening their grading and being more willing to fail high school students is a good or excellent idea. Even in elementary grades, where some believe children need a gentler hand, 61% of teachers support a tougher approach to grading and a willingness to fail children who don't learn, although elementary teachers are somewhat less likely to agree to this approach.<sup>4</sup>

### *Rejecting Social Promotion*

A teacher from the Seattle area spoke out against automatic promotions. "When you have a policy that there's no failing, of course kids find out. [They think] 'I don't have to do anything to get through here.' Then they run into some difficult tests in high school, and it is panicsville." A Hartford teacher also testified to the need for higher standards: "The thing right now is to have our students achieving at a higher level. The last mastery tests, our kids really did come in quite low. Now the question is how can we help our students achieve a higher level, reach the level of excellence everyone is talking about."

Some teachers think that they — as a group — have relaxed standards and allowed some degree of grade inflation. A Birmingham teacher reported that he and a colleague were the only ones in their school to ever fail students. Most of his colleagues, he said, promoted any child who regularly showed up. Yet the vast majority of teachers responding to this survey reject that approach. Only 17% say students should be

passed on to the next grade simply because they attend class regularly and work hard. Almost 8 in 10 (78%) want students to be promoted "only when the students show they have learned the knowledge and skills" expected of them.

### *Lower the Hurdle for Disadvantaged Children?*

Some observers fear that higher standards will be inherently unfair to inner-city youngsters and others with significant disadvantages. But if teachers had their way, there would be no watering down of standards for any student. Seventy-three percent of teachers think schools should expect inner-city children to achieve academic standards that are as high as the standards for affluent youngsters. Only 22% think the schools need to make allowances because these children come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Similarly, most teachers (59%) also reject tailoring curricular material to students' background, such as using street language to teach inner-city children (Table 3). Resistance to the idea of accommodating standards to the background of students is broad-based and holds constant for teachers from different demographic groups as well as those who work in different school settings.

### *Will Higher Standards Turn Students Off?*

Teachers are even optimistic about the results of raising standards. Three out of 4 teachers think that children will pay more attention and study harder as a result. Even more importantly, the same percentage think students would learn more with higher standards in place. There is one negative trade-off in the view of some teachers: Almost half (49%) think more children will drop out of school as a consequence of higher standards. On the other hand, 68% of teachers reject the view that "more kids will dislike education and resist learning as a result."

### *An Uncertain Trumpet: Will Teachers Lead on Standards?*

These findings suggest that there is a potential alliance among teachers, the public, and the reform movement for raising academic standards and putting some teeth behind them. But, these hopes should be tempered by serious caveats. While teachers are receptive to higher standards, this does not mean they will be forceful advocates leading the charge on their behalf. There is an enormous difference between receptivity and action, and between intellectual support and intense commitment to a cause. Many reformers regard higher standards as the centerpiece of their agenda: Raise standards, they believe, and education will be profoundly improved. But for most teachers, higher standards are a more peripheral proposal: A good idea, but one that does not address their immediate priorities.

As we saw earlier, teachers focus on what they consider the foremost needs of their public schools — pressures of social problems, lack of funding, overcrowded classes, and lack of parental involvement. Given all these problems, higher standards may seem nice but beside the point. One Seattle teacher responded in just that way to a standards-type proposal: "What do you mean by higher national standards? What about Head Start so that all children start school with a full stomach? What about giving them homes that are drug-free? Are those part of your national standards?"

### *The Public's Views Are More Intense*

This may explain why teachers' support for some key components of higher standards is significantly less intense than the public's. Overwhelming majorities of both teachers and the public say students should not receive high school diplomas unless they demonstrate a clear command of English (Table 3). But while 76% of the public gives this measure the highest possible approval rating (a five on a one-to-five scale of support), only 54% of teachers do so. Another 29% of teachers give this measure a milder positive rating of "four."

Similarly, both teachers and the public support "raising the standards of promotion from grade school" and requiring kids to pass a test showing they've achieved those standards (Table 3). But while almost half the public (49%) gives this measure its highest approval rating, only one-third (33%) of teachers do. The

**"What do you mean by higher national standards? What about Head Start so that all children start school with a full stomach? What about giving them homes that are drug-free? Are those part of your national standards?"**

— Seattle Teacher

public (61%) is significantly more likely than teachers (51%) to say that in their local schools "standards are too low and kids are not expected to learn enough." What's more, the public is much more likely to say this is a "very serious" problem (by a 33% to 17% margin.)

### The Performance Difference

The greater urgency which the general public and community leaders express for higher standards is driven by strong doubts about how well the schools teach the subjects that are absolutely essential — especially the basics — and how they stack up to private schools. But teachers firmly believe they have the basics — and other essential subjects — well in hand and that their schools outdo the private schools in important areas.

While teachers agree with the public on what subjects and skills *should* be taught, they are far more satisfied than other Americans about local schools' success in actually teaching them. In evaluating how good a job their schools are doing at teaching each of the 16 subject areas they were asked about, teachers give their schools better marks than the public in every category, sometimes by 20 percentage points or more.

The most troubling difference, ironically, is in the area that both groups agree — virtually unanimously — is the most important. While a majority of the public (60%) believes the schools are *not* placing enough emphasis on the basics, most teachers (66%) believe they do. Almost half (47%) of the public, and 63% of community leaders, believe that "a high school diploma is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics;" only 3 in 10 teachers (31%) share that belief. A majority of the public (52%) thinks that students are not taught enough math, science, and computers; most teachers (57%) think they are.

### Doing the Best We Can

The differing perceptions of teachers and the public echo a recurring theme from this study: Teachers often agree with other Americans about the public schools' mandate but part company over how well the schools fulfill it. In this case, teachers agree with the public on the subjects the schools must teach. Both groups, to name the most obvious example, put the basics at the very top of their lists. But teachers routinely dispute the public's contention that these subjects are getting short shrift, or that schools are somehow negligent in teaching them.

One explanation for these differing perspectives may be that many teachers consider it inevitable, given the troubled backgrounds of so many students they teach, that some will be educational failures who slip through the cracks and graduate without basic skills. Ordinary citizens, for their part, may expect a higher standard of performance. Most Americans may only occasionally encounter a high school graduate who cannot make change or write a complete sentence, but any such experience shocks them. "You would think *no* kids would get passed when they don't go to school half the time," said one Cincinnati-area resident. "You *know* they don't know the basics. They should be failed."

Most Americans may approach the public schools much as consumers approach companies whose products they purchase. Consumers have little patience when a product proves defective or when a company explains that the overall failure rate is low. Similarly, when it comes to teaching students the basics — just as with safety in the schools — the public may have an extremely low tolerance level for failure.

Moreover, the public's frustration with the state of the public schools appears to be deepening. Another recent Public Agenda survey asked Americans to select the one area out of five areas of government responsibility (crime, foreign policy, elections, welfare and public education) that most urgently needed change. People put reforming the schools in a first-place tie with welfare reform. Most Americans simply do not want to "live with" the status quo.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, many teachers strongly believe that, given the circumstances they face, both they and the public schools do pretty well — about as well as can be expected. It seems reasonable to question, therefore, whether classroom teachers are likely to become the engine propelling the higher standards so many reformers have called for. Moreover, as we will see in the next section, teachers are surprisingly

dispassionate about the importance of academic achievement to a person's success. When it comes to defining top-notch academic performance and how far to push children on academic attainment, teachers' judgments almost exactly match — but do not transcend — the public's views.

### ■ Finding: Teachers Are Lukewarm About the Value of Advanced Learning. They Do Not Believe That Top-Notch Academic Attainment Is Especially Important to Success

Teachers are not ardent advocates of especially rigorous education. Only a small percentage think a high quality education is the most important determinant of career success — a percentage lower than that of the general public. Teachers appear more concerned with their students' social skills and adjustment than with their obtaining top grades and test scores. Half of teachers view highly educated people with some misgiving, seeing them as either "book smart" and impractical or as elitist snobs. In addition, few teachers see traditional high-level academic subjects — from the literary classics to advanced mathematics — as essential components of the curriculum, even when they themselves teach in that area.

Public Agenda's *Assignment Incomplete* study reported that the public places a premium on educating well-rounded, socially-adept young people who know how to get along with others. The public also shows some disdain and discomfort with "too much" book learning. Somewhat surprisingly, many teachers echo these sentiments.

### A Love of Learning?

On the surface, there seems to be a gap between how teachers and the public view the pursuit of knowledge. Teachers are more likely (by 76% to 57%) to say that it is absolutely essential to transmit "curiosity and a love of learning" to students (Table 5). And more than half the teachers (54%) say teaching children to be life-long learners is more important than teaching them practical skills for the job market, compared to 4 in 10 members of the general public.

As one Connecticut teacher put it, "I think one of the goals of education should be to instill in a person a desire to love to learn. I learned as a child that your education will never let you down. [Once] it is in you, no matter what you do with it, you are successful."

### Teachers Do Not Put Education on a Pedestal

But a closer look shows that teachers are surprisingly dispassionate about how important a role education can play in a person's life and career. Of four factors that might determine career success, teachers place an excellent academic education a distant third, with only 21% saying it is the most important factor (Table 7). Persistence and inner drive, and knowing how to deal well with people, rank first and second, respectively. The public is slightly more convinced than teachers (by a 27% to 21% margin) that a quality academic education can determine career success.

"I know academics are important," said one teacher in Birmingham, "but I also know that the number one reason people get fired from their jobs is not how smart they are but their inability to get along with their co-workers. Social skills are important."

Teachers also seem to have their doubts about whether school is important because of what students actually learn or because it is a method of certification sought by employers. Only a third (34%) say school is important because students acquire knowledge and skills that will help them on the job. Close to 6 in 10 teachers (57%) say school is critical to getting a good job because employers are reluctant to hire people who lack a high school diploma. Nor are teachers forceful in believing that high academic achievement will translate into better jobs. Only about one-fourth (27%) think "A" students are "much more likely" to get good jobs, while 46% say they are "somewhat more likely" to do so.

### Fear of the Nerds?

One startling finding is that the public is more concerned about academic stragglers than are teachers. Teachers tend to worry more about students who succeed academically but struggle socially than about students who struggle academically but succeed socially. Half the teachers surveyed (53%) would worry

Only about one-fourth of teachers (27%) think "A" students are "much more likely" to get good jobs, while 46% say they are "somewhat more likely" to do so.

about an "A" student with two or three friends while only 3 in 10 (29%) would worry about the "C" student with many friends. This is especially startling when contrasted with the views of the general public: Here a plurality (45%) of the public worries about the popular "C" student while 38% worry about the more shy "A" student.

In *Assignment Incomplete*, the public expressed deep misgivings about people who paid so much attention to academic learning that they lack good judgment or, worse, put on airs. These widespread public views enjoy a surprising resonance among teachers as well. About half the teachers (52%) say, "People who are highly educated often turn out to be book smart but lack the common sense and understanding of regular folks." Half of teachers (52%) also say that those who are highly educated "often think they are better than others." To be sure, the general public subscribes to both these views in greater numbers (about 7 in 10), but the fact that half of America's teachers join them is telling.

#### Advanced Subjects: Important, Not Essential

The curricular priorities of teachers and the public offer little comfort to humanities professors or to those who would like to see a return to traditional liberal arts education. Only about one-fourth of both groups believe teaching "classic works from such writers as Shakespeare and Plato" is absolutely essential (Table 5). Even teaching more contemporary works — the writing of modern American authors such as Steinbeck and Hemingway — is seen as absolutely essential by only about one-quarter of teachers and the public. And although teaching American history and geography was viewed as critical by majorities of teachers and the public, teaching the history and geography of such places as Europe and Asia is seen as secondary. Only 4 in 10 teachers (41%) and 35% of the public regard these areas as absolutely essential to teach.

It is not that either teachers or the public reject these subjects entirely. After all, teachers and the public were asked to choose among what was "absolutely essential" to teach students, what was "important," and what was "not important." When the "absolutely essential" response category is combined with the "important" response category, no subject area receives the support of less than three-quarters of teachers or the public. These evaluations may best be understood as a sober, practical judgment on where to focus the schools' scarce energies and what is essential to prepare students for the real world.

It may also be useful to contrast these findings with the widespread agreement that teaching computer skills is "absolutely essential." Teachers and the public may believe that for most students the consequences of not knowing Shakespeare or Plato are less than the consequences of not understanding

computers — and they may be right. It is also worth noting that sports and athletics are absent from the "critical to teach" lists of both teachers and the public. In focus groups, people sometimes voice passionate support for sports because they keep some children in school and teach teamwork, the discipline of practice, and the value of hard work. But when asked if sports are an "absolutely essential" component of what their schools should teach, only 23% of the public and 14% of teachers respond affirmatively.

#### Teachers vs. Other Professionals

These evaluations reflect a broad consensus between the public and teachers — and even among community leaders — on the essentials of education. But they also suggest that teachers, even the specialists among them, are not ardent advocates of advanced education or of high academic achievement. Other professionals, such as those in law or medicine, seem to hold their own work in the highest esteem, and often evoke powerful images to describe their efforts — the pursuit of justice or the preservation of life.

Journalists, to take another example, are staunch defenders of the value and role of a free press in a democracy. But math teachers are not more likely than other teachers to say advanced mathematics are absolutely essential to teach students. Social studies teachers are not more likely than their colleagues to say that the geography and history of Europe and Asia are absolutely essential to teach. And English teachers do not rally to the cause of teaching the classics or modern American writers in numbers much greater than other teachers.<sup>15</sup>

Teachers do not seem to be forceful advocates of advanced learning and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. In fact, their viewpoint is remarkably similar to the public's. And while this suggests that the public and educators — at least in this area — are on the same wave length, one might have expected teachers to more vigorously champion the value of advanced knowledge.

This section examines teachers' views on values-related issues that drive a growing number of school district controversies — issues concerning race relations, sex education, personal ethics, and political beliefs. What values do teachers consider appropriate for schools to impart through lessons and textbooks? What areas do they want schools to shun? What role do they think public schools should play in fostering a common American identity, for both regular students and new arrivals?

#### ■ Finding: Teachers and the Public Agree on What Values Should Be Taught — Honesty, Responsibility, and Respect for Others

Teachers are strong believers in passing mainstream values along to students, and like the public, they consider this an important part of education. Hard work, personal responsibility, and honesty are high on the list of these mainstream values, as are tolerance and diversity. When it comes to divisive issues such as sex education, however, teachers become more cautious.

News from the education front often features controversies over values: Disputes over sex education and AIDS prevention strategies, for example, and controversies over how to present history and which textbooks to use. Sometimes these debates consume so much of a district's energy and good will that the education of children seems to take a back seat. Yet, as *First Things First* pointed out, most Americans do not consider these issues to be especially pressing — at least compared to issues such as safety, order, and the basics. Moreover, Americans agree by overwhelming majorities on the core values they want their schools to teach.

This study shows that teachers are strikingly similar to the public in supporting the school's role in teaching such core values as tolerance, honesty, hard work, and respect for diversity. Teachers also join the public in wanting to avoid lessons which promote divisiveness, intolerance, and discord. Thus, while the "value wars" which pop up in school districts around the country are real, and certainly important to the parties involved, they do not reflect broad or fundamental divisions between the public and teachers.

#### Teaching Values: A High Priority

Teachers do not discount the importance of teaching mainstream values. In fact, approximately half of America's teachers (51%) say that values are more important to teach than academics, with another 9% finding values and academics equally important. *First Things First* found that an even higher percentage of the public (71%) believes that it's more important to teach values than academics. Thus, it would seem that arguments over value-free curricula have little applicability to the public or teachers. Of greater interest is which values to teach and whether there is common ground between teachers and the public on this question.

#### Top-Tier Values: Work Hard, Be Responsible, Tell the Truth

Americans often complain about a declining work ethic and expect the schools to help in countering this trend. Teachers reflect such concerns as well, believing that the lack of a work ethic severely limits students' accomplishments. "Apathy is the operative word," said one teacher from Westchester County, New York who taught in an affluent community. "The vast majority of students are difficult to motivate, and they are not driven to succeed on their own."

Teachers and the public alike place a premium on instilling good work habits in students. About 9 in 10 teachers and members of the public want schools to emphasize such habits as "being on time, responsible,

English teachers do not rally to the cause of teaching the classics or modern American writers in numbers much greater than other teachers.

"Apathy is the operative word. The vast majority of students are difficult to motivate, and they are not driven to succeed on their own."

— Westchester (NY) Teacher

and disciplined" (Table 3). Eight in 10 teachers (83%) think it is absolutely essential to teach the value of hard work, a sentiment shared by 78% of the public (Table 5).

This Michigan teacher's comments reflect the feelings of the public as much as those of teachers: "You still need to get some blisters on your hands to appreciate some things from good, old-fashioned hard work. You have to learn to put your effort toward something." One teacher in Savannah praised the effect that a business mentor had on his kids: "It gives them a chance to see what this man went through, the hard work, the dedication. School is not just about math and reading; it's also about teaching you responsibilities."

As many teachers and members of the public view the world, learning self-discipline and a strong work ethic is even more important than acquiring a good education. When asked about the most important factor in determining career success, twice as many teachers pick persistence and inner drive as choose a quality education (Table 7). About the same plurality of the general public — roughly 4 in 10 — agrees that persistence matters most.

When it comes to "honesty and the importance of telling the truth," there's no issue at all. Some 95% of teachers and the public, believe such values should be included in the classroom (Table 4). "We don't tell lies in our class," said one elementary school teacher in Savannah. "The children have to learn that there are certain things that they can do and certain things that they cannot do. I think you have to take a stand as long as they're with you."

#### More Top-Tier Values: Tolerance Amid Diversity

Tolerance is among the most vaunted of American traditions. Especially when compared with other countries, the U.S. has a reputation for accepting people from different backgrounds and assimilating them into American society. When it comes to having the public schools foster and reinforce such values, both teachers and the public are unequivocal.

Virtually all teachers (96%) think it is appropriate to teach "respect for others regardless of their racial or ethnic background;" a similar percentage of the public (95%) concurs. Teaching values that include "tolerance of others" gains the support of 82% of teachers and 74% of the public.

When differences do arise between people, Americans want them resolved in a peaceful manner. Almost all teachers (95%) and 93% of the public want schools to assume the job of "teaching kids to solve problems without violence." Clearly, civility is a prized national asset.

But how firm are these sentiments? Do they amount only to reflexive incantation of popular clichés or do they hold up in concrete situations? This study tested the resolve of teachers and the public, by presenting them with three scenarios. What should a teacher do, we asked, when passing a group of students in a public school playground and those students are teasing a child about his race? Or his religion? Or the fact that his mother or father is homosexual? In all three scenarios, teachers wanted not only to stop the teasing but to teach tolerance as well.<sup>11</sup>

Fully 85% of the teachers surveyed opted for the most active response to teasing about race: Breaking up the situation and teaching the students that teasing about race is wrong. Only 13% would stop at simply breaking up the situation, and only 2% would let the children work the problem out themselves. A similar percentage of teachers (82%) would opt for the most active response when the teasing was about religion while a slightly smaller majority (73%) would do so when the teasing involved a homosexual parent.

#### Avoid Discord and Divisiveness

It is important to note that neither teachers nor the public define tolerance to mean that anything goes within the confines of the classroom. Both groups generally prefer to avoid divisive lessons. For example, 86% of teachers would not invite a guest speaker who argues that the Holocaust never happened while 8 in 10 teachers would reject a guest speaker "who advocates black separatism" (Table 4). Three in 4 teachers (75%) consider it inappropriate to teach "that Columbus was a murderer because his explorations led to the mass destruction of Native Americans." Black and Hispanic teachers oppose each of the above lessons in similar numbers, as does the general public.

There is little enthusiasm among teachers for another theme that touches upon racial matters: Only 13% think it is appropriate to argue that "racism is the main cause of the economic and social problems blacks face today," a proportion even lower than the 29% of the public who found it appropriate to do so. Black teachers are only slightly more likely (22%) to consider this an appropriate theme to teach.

It is understandable that teachers are reluctant to take sides on controversial issues. Whereas most citizens can say "how things should be" with little consequence, teachers must be concerned with alienating parents and significant groups within their community. Teachers have a built-in exemption for delegating the most troublesome, potentially divisive topics: They can argue that some things are best left for parents to deal with at home, and few would disagree with them.

#### A Cautious Approach to Sex Education

This may explain why just 44% of teachers, compared with 61% of the public, favor "teaching respect for people who are homosexual" (Table 4). The context here is important: As seen above, most teachers would intervene in a reactive situation in which a child is teased about a parent's homosexuality. But proactively teaching respect for homosexuals may be seen as advocacy, and a large number of teachers may be wary of provoking the controversy this might attract.

The same dynamic may be at play on family issues. While 52% of the public considers it appropriate for textbooks and lesson plans to teach that "two-parent families are the best way to raise children," only 26% of teachers agree. With the growth in single-head households, teachers may be reluctant to advocate more traditional family roles for fear of giving offense.

Like the public, most teachers would prefer that schools avoid making moral arguments involving sex outside marriage. Only 2 in 10 teachers (19%), and 1 in 4 members of the public, want sex education classes to "teach that sex outside the marriage is always wrong." Four in 10 teachers favor the approach that "sex outside marriage is something that people have different views on, and there is no single right answer." Roughly the same proportion want to "teach only health and reproductive issues and not deal with moral judgments at all." This is an area where many teachers apparently would not mind a more limited mission. "In Savannah, the community is handing us the responsibility for things like [students'] sex life," said one teacher. "Where did we become responsible for what they do at 10 o'clock at night?"

Some of the most bitter and well-publicized controversies in public education have been tied to sex education issues. But, as we saw in *First Things First*, such controversies are not consuming the public's attention. Only about one-fourth of Americans say that the "schools are too graphic and explicit when teaching sex education." Teachers responding to this survey are even less concerned: only seven percent say their schools have gone too far (Table 2).

#### Disagreement Over Religion

Finally, both teachers and the public split on religious issues. While 36% of teachers say it is appropriate to teach in a science class that, "The biblical view of creation and Darwin's theory of evolution are equally valid," 42% say it is not. Of the public, 38% say such lessons are appropriate and 36% disagree (Table 4). Science teachers hold only slightly different views: 40% think it is appropriate to teach the two views in a science class, while 48% think it is inappropriate to do so.

#### ■ Finding: Teachers Believe in Teaching Democracy and Helping Newcomers Adopt a New Way of Life

Strong majorities of teachers and the public favor teaching that democracy is the best form of government and promoting habits of good citizenship such as voting. Both groups overwhelmingly reject separate schools for children from different cultural backgrounds. Clear majorities of teachers and the public want public schools to help new immigrants assimilate as quickly as possible, by learning America's language and culture.

*"In Savannah, the community is handing us the responsibility for things like [students'] sex life. Where did we become responsible for what they do at 10 o'clock at night?"*

— Savannah Teacher

The previous section highlighted the priority teachers and the general public place on teaching mainstream values. In this section teachers and the public go further: They want public education to actively promote democratic ideals and cultural assimilation. Articulating broad cultural mandates for the public schools may not come naturally to citizens. But, almost instinctively, the public joins teachers in defining the mission of the schools to include imparting democratic values and practices to students.

#### *Teach the Democratic Tradition*

Some commentators complain that moral and political relativism are so prevalent among American educators that young people's faith in the nation's democratic tenets is being undermined. But teachers and the public do not seem hesitant about teaching democratic values and habits in school. About 7 in 10 teachers and members of the general public approve of "stressing that democracy is the best form of government," rating this a four or five on a five-point scale of appropriateness (Table 4).

Support for teaching the democratic tradition goes beyond affirming its ideals. Americans want the public schools to educate youngsters to put these ideals into practice. Almost 8 in 10 teachers (77%) approve of teaching "habits of good citizenship, such as voting and caring about the nation," two-thirds of the public agrees (Table 5).

#### *A Strong Preference for Assimilation*

As outlined earlier, teachers and the public are unequivocal in wanting public schools to foster and reinforce tolerance among students for people of diverse backgrounds. But how do teachers respond when preserving the unique cultural heritages of students is weighed against the concept of America as a "melting pot?"

**Almost 8 in 10 teachers (78%) approve of teaching "habits of good citizenship, such as voting and caring about the nation."**

Several experimental public schools today exclusively serve unique demographic segments of the student population, the theory being that their backgrounds require specialized instruction in a specialized setting. States such as New York, California and Texas have opened "newcomer" schools which serve new immigrants and tailor instruction to the many languages and nationalities that are represented. Several heavily African-American districts in Baltimore and Detroit have experimented with single-sex schools and classes. Many of these schools have been embroiled in controversy, with critics charging that they isolate their youngsters from the mainstream.

Americans generally oppose providing separate educational facilities to children from different backgrounds. Only 6% of teachers and 9% of the general public think that "kids who come from unique backgrounds and cultures should be taught in separate public schools that better understand their needs." Instead, 92% of teachers and 86% of the general public want "kids from all backgrounds taught in the same public schools so that they learn to get along with each other."

While some Americans live in neighborhoods populated by people with cultural backgrounds similar to themselves, and this practice often results in "segregated" public schools, people seem to object to active, formally-sanctioned separation of students. Children — and adults — do enough of this on their own, the public appears to feel, without the schools' help. The notion of separate schools also works against one of the few areas where Americans think the public schools do a better job than the private schools — teaching students how to live together in a diverse society (Table 1).

#### *What About Immigrants?*

The championing of common public schools for all students extends to new immigrants. Teachers and the public want the schools to hasten the assimilation of new arrivals, even at the cost of neglecting their original culture. Seventy-three percent of teachers and 68% of the public think the public schools' primary goal should be to "help new immigrants absorb language and culture as quickly as possible, even if their native language and culture are neglected." Only 20% of teachers and 24% of the public prefer the opposite approach: "Help new immigrants maintain their own language and culture even if it takes them longer to absorb America's language and culture."

This trade-off might be artificial to education experts who argue that the old and new cultural identities of students can thrive simultaneously. But in the face of a potential tradeoff, teachers and the public want to err on the side of assimilation. Whatever their motive, Americans think that basic language skills are an essential prerequisite to life in mainstream society, and they look suspiciously at anything which endangers those skills.

Teachers see public schools as an indispensable institution that levels the playing field from one generation to the next and facilitates acculturation. Almost two-thirds of teachers (64%) say that "to ensure a common American culture and identity it is essential that most kids in our society attend the public schools and not the private schools." The American public, however, is equivocal on this point: 42% agree with teachers, but another 38% say "our common American culture and identity would not be endangered if most kids attend private schools," and a relatively high 18% are not sure.

The public's lack of consensus on this point should not be surprising. Ordinary citizens do not typically evaluate the role of schools in broad sociological terms. Rather, they assess the schools' performance on more straightforward criteria — teaching basic skills in an orderly, safe environment, or preparing young people for college. What's more, at the current time, they say private schools are more effective in precisely the areas needed to reinforce the common culture — teaching all youngsters basic skills and sharing mainstream values.

To this point, this study has examined the attitudes of public school teachers in general. But what about African-American and Hispanic teachers? Where do they stand on these issues? We conclude this report with answers to those questions.

**Seventy-three percent of teachers and 68% of the public think the public schools' primary goal should be to "help new immigrants absorb language and culture as quickly as possible, even if their native language and culture are neglected."**

This section revisits many of the issues addressed earlier from the perspective of African-American and Hispanic teachers. The emphasis is on comparing the views of minority teachers to those of their white colleagues. What do minority teachers see as the critical problems facing their schools? How would they respond to these problems? What are their views toward higher academic standards? And do they want the schools to promote the same values as white teachers?

To summarize: Black and Hispanic teachers struggle with the same issues as their white colleagues. Their list of top concerns is longer than that of white teachers, and they seem somewhat more dissatisfied with the performance of their schools. But for the most part, they share the same prescriptions, the same support for higher standards, and the same values as other teachers.

There are areas where the views of minority teachers seem to diverge from the views of whites. But these differences may be partly due to factors other than race and ethnicity, such as differences in school district type. Finally, although this study breaks out the views of black and Hispanic teachers throughout this chapter, it is interesting to note that they tend to converge on all but a few questions.<sup>12</sup>

#### ■ Finding: Minority Teachers Are Less Satisfied with Their Schools' Performance

**Thirty-eight percent of white teachers rate their schools as excellent; only 18% of black teachers and 17% of Hispanic teachers rate their schools the same way.**

In Chapter One, we saw that teachers are firm in their conviction that their schools perform well, while the public — and community leaders — are far more critical. African-American and Hispanic teachers are significantly less enthusiastic than white teachers about the performance of their local public schools, although most still give their schools good ratings. While 87% of white teachers say their schools do a good or excellent job, about two-thirds of black and Hispanic teachers (67% and 65%, respectively) support that assessment. Most of the difference occurs over how often they apply an "excellent" rating: 38% of white teachers rate their schools as excellent; only 18% of black teachers and 17% of Hispanic teachers rate their schools the same way.

Black and Hispanic teachers also give their own profession more equivocal marks than their white counterparts. Half (52%) of the white teachers surveyed say that teachers do a better job than when they were in school; 35% of black and 39% of Hispanic teachers agree. Twenty-two percent of black teachers, and 16% of Hispanic teachers, say teachers today do a worse job; 9% of white teachers agree.

#### ■ Finding: Black and Hispanic Teachers Are More Concerned About Violence and Ineffective Teaching of Basics

The top concerns of black and Hispanic teachers are a combination of those bothering their white counterparts and those bothering the public. Minority teachers agree with white teachers that school funding, overcrowded classrooms, discipline, and order are problems at their schools. But they also add safety and achievement of the basics to their list of priorities, concerns that are uppermost in the mind of the public. Concerns about classes and textbooks that stereotype minorities — while not insignificant — are far down the list of problems about which minority teachers worry.

#### *Shared Concerns Over Money, Class Size, and Order*

School funding is as important to black and Hispanic teachers as it is to white teachers. Seventy-seven percent of black teachers and 80% of Hispanic teachers say their schools are not getting enough money to do a good job, almost identical (80%) to the response of white teachers (Table 2). Minority teachers are

even more concerned about overcrowded classes: 80% of Hispanic teachers and 70% of black teachers said this was a problem in their schools, compared to 64% of white teachers.

Minority teachers join white teachers and the public in listing order and discipline as a top concern. Both see them as essential preconditions for teaching to take place. Strong majorities of black (72%) and Hispanic (75%) teachers say that the worst-behaved students are getting the most attention, and 82% of white teachers agree. In comparison with these problems, concerns about stereotyping in textbooks again are down the scale, although they do exist: 39% of black and 29% of Hispanic teachers say this is a problem in their schools.

#### *Far Greater Concern About Crime and the Basics*

Minority teachers express far greater concern about the threat of crime in their schools than do white teachers. Six in 10 black teachers (61%) and 7 in 10 Hispanic teachers (71%) say that drugs and violence are a problem in their schools (Table 2). In contrast, only 47% of white teachers identify drugs and violence as a problem. Black and Hispanic teachers are thus closer to members of the general public, 72% of whom thought crime was a problem in their local schools.

Black and Hispanic teachers are also closer to the public view that students are not mastering the academic basics. Forty-four percent of black and 46% of Hispanic teachers say a high school diploma is no guarantee that students have acquired basic skills, numbers comparable to the public's 47%. In contrast, only 31% of white teachers voice that view.

#### ■ Finding: Minority Teachers Strongly Support a Variety of Measures to Restore Safety and Order to the Schools

In Chapter One, we saw that strong majorities of the public and of teachers support proposals to create a safe and orderly atmosphere in their schools. Both black and Hispanic teachers join them, offering similar levels of support.

Decisive majorities of black and Hispanic teachers support a measure to permanently remove from school grounds students caught with drugs or weapons, with about three-fourths of both groups saying this would improve academic achievement (Table 3). Eighty-five percent of white teachers, and 76% of the public, agree.

Black and Hispanic teachers both support a series of specific measures to foster order in the schools and do so by majorities comparable to those of white teachers and the public. Strong majorities of black and Hispanic teachers favor removing persistent troublemakers from the classroom, requiring students to stay on school grounds throughout the school day, and banning student smoking on school property. Minority teachers also support a ban on hugging and kissing in numbers close to those of their white counterparts (Table 6).

#### *Minority Teachers Go Further*

Black and Hispanic teachers go even further, being somewhat stronger proponents of dress codes for themselves and their students than their white colleagues or the public. They are also strong supporters of making learning an enjoyable experience and building students' self-esteem.

Sixty-four percent of black teachers and 60% of Hispanic teachers favor requiring their students to dress in standard clothing (Table 6). Seventy-two percent of black teachers and 60% of Hispanic teachers favor requiring teachers to dress like professionals, with male teachers wearing jackets and ties. The broad sample of teachers and the public are evenly divided on the desirability of these policies. It is noteworthy that African-American parents surveyed in the *First Things First* study are also stronger supporters of dress code policies than white parents.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, minority teachers are even more supportive than white teachers of making learning enjoyable — 86% of black teachers, 79% of Hispanic teachers, and 76% of white teachers support this philosophy. They are also more responsive to the notion of building students' self-esteem, with 82% of black teachers, 80% of Hispanic teachers, and 64% of white teachers in agreement with this principle.

## ■ Finding: Minority Teachers Share the Same Agenda as White Teachers, but Want More Emphasis on Social Problems

In Chapter Two, we saw that teachers and the public converge around an academic agenda that is pragmatic, basic, and intended to prepare students for the "real" world. While black and Hispanic teachers share this perspective, they place more emphasis on helping students deal with social problems. Black teachers place a higher premium on teaching practical job skills.

Black and Hispanic teachers' hierarchy of "absolutely essential" subjects is virtually indistinguishable from that of white teachers and the general public (Table 5). Basic academic skills lead, with a nearly unanimous percentage of minority teachers endorsing them as absolutely essential. The basics are followed by computer skills, then by American history and geography, and then by science subjects such as biology and chemistry. The percentages of black and Hispanic teachers saying these subjects are absolutely essential do not vary from those of white teachers or the public by more than a few percentage points.

Minority teachers also match other teachers and the public in the subjects they see as less critical: The history and geography of other areas of the world, for example, or classic literary works, or sports and athletics. Once again, black and Hispanic teachers do not diverge by more than several percentage points from the views of the other groups.

### *Some Differences Exist*

Minority teachers do differ in two important respects. One is the greater emphasis they place on teaching children how to deal with social problems such as drugs and family breakdown — 76% of black and 71% of Hispanic teachers say these are absolutely essential to teach, compared to 60% of white teachers and 64% of the public (Table 5). The other is the particular interest of black teachers in practical job skills — 74% say these skills are absolutely essential to teach. Here, 54% of white teachers agree, as do 61% of Hispanic teachers.

While race and ethnicity may explain these special concerns, school locale may help explain them as well. Minority teachers in our sample are more likely than white teachers to work in urban or inner-city settings — 50% of black and 41% of Hispanic teachers surveyed work in urban/inner-city districts, compared with 18% of white teachers. Minority teachers are also more likely to work with economically disadvantaged student populations — 54% of black

and 45% of Hispanic teachers surveyed say they work in schools where all or most of the students are poor, compared with 30% of white teachers.

Black and Hispanic teachers are not nearly as critical of how their schools teach "absolutely essential" subject areas as are the public and community leaders. However, minority teachers do provide somewhat lower ratings than white teachers. Majorities of black and Hispanic teachers still maintain that their schools do an excellent or good job of teaching such subjects as basic academic skills and American history and geography, but their positive evaluations are usually 10 or more percentage points below those of white teachers.<sup>14</sup>

## ■ Finding: Minority Teachers Also Wary of Teaching Innovations

Minority teachers are often as wary of teaching innovations as their fellow teachers and the public. Minorities are "traditionalist" in choosing between doing early math by hand or using calculators. Both black (79%) and Hispanic (74%) teachers think students should memorize the multiplication tables and learn to do math by hand before using calculators. Seventy-two percent of white teachers and 86% of the general public concur. Like white teachers, minority teachers split on whether replacing multiple-choice tests with essay questions will improve learning: 48% of both black and Hispanic teachers, and 47% of white teachers, think that it will (Table 3).

Minority teachers do differ from other teachers in two areas. One, they are modestly more likely to opt for teaching the rules of grammar and spelling before going on to creative writing. And two, they are more supportive of heterogeneous grouping of students. Half of the black teachers surveyed and 46% of the Hispanic teachers say students should be taught the rules of grammar and spelling from the beginning.

before they go on to creative writing. This compares to 39% of white teachers. About half the teachers who are black (53%) or Hispanic (48%) think mixing fast and slow learners in the same class will improve student achievement, compared to 40% of white teachers.

While race and ethnicity may count for the difference in opinion over heterogeneous grouping, another explanation is that minority teachers in our sample are more likely to work in the elementary grades. As we saw in Chapter Two, elementary grade teachers are more supportive of heterogeneous groupings. Forty-five percent of black teachers and 54% of Hispanic teachers responding to our survey work in the elementary grades, compared to only 27% of white teachers.<sup>15</sup>

## ■ Finding: Black and Hispanic Teachers Express Support for the Principles of Higher Standards

As reported in Chapter Two, teachers support higher standards and expect higher standards to raise the academic achievement of their students. Minority teachers support higher academic standards in percentages that are comparably high. And like other teachers, they want standards to be backed up with consequences and reject lowering the academic hurdle for inner-city students.

Eighty-five percent of black teachers and 79% of Hispanic teachers support establishing "very clear guidelines on what kids should learn and teachers should teach in every major subject so the kids and the teachers know what to aim for" (Table 3). They agree with the 8 in 10 white teachers who think that this approach will improve their students' academic achievement.

As with other teachers, minority teachers want to "put some teeth" behind academic standards and firmly resist lowering the standards for inner-city children. Approximately three of four Hispanic and black teachers would not allow youngsters to graduate from high school "unless they clearly demonstrate they can write and speak English well."

Minority teachers are also clear in rejecting social promotion. Eighty percent of blacks and 71% of Hispanics say students should be promoted only when they've learned the knowledge and skills required; fewer than 20% say students should be promoted because they attend class regularly and work hard. A proposal to raise the standards of promotion from grade school to junior high and require students to pass an exam that measures their achievement on those standards gains the support of about 6 in 10 black, Hispanic, and white teachers.

Black and Hispanic teachers, who tend to work in inner-city districts, want inner-city students to face the same academic expectations as other students. Seventy-one percent of black teachers and 77% of Hispanic teachers believe inner-city children should be expected to achieve academic standards that are as high as children from affluent backgrounds. No more than one-fifth of both groups want allowances made because inner-city kids come from disadvantaged backgrounds. And, like their white colleagues, black (67%) and Hispanic (56%) teachers reject the notion of using street language to teach inner-city children.

### *Raising Standards: How Urgent?*

In Chapter Two, we questioned whether teachers feel a sense of urgency on higher standards, given that half (49%) do not think low standards are a problem in their districts. Minority teachers are also divided over whether academic standards are too low. Black teachers split about evenly, with 51% saying low academic standards are a problem and 48% saying they are not. A slight majority of Hispanic teachers (56%) thinks standards are a problem in their schools (Table 2). Minority teachers may have another reason to hesitate. With a longer list of problems troubling them, including the threat of violence, the pursuit of higher standards may appear less urgent.

**Minority teachers are also clear in rejecting social promotion. Eighty percent of blacks and 71% of Hispanics say students should be promoted only when they've learned the knowledge and skills required.**

## ■ Finding: Minority Teachers, Like Whites, Want Schools to Teach Honesty, Responsibility and Respect for Others

Minority teachers are even more attuned to the importance of teaching values in the schools than are white teachers. Almost two-thirds (65%) of black teachers and 62% of Hispanic teachers say values are more important to teach than academics. This compares with 50% of white teachers. Interestingly, minority teachers are also more likely to cite the schools for failure to teach religious values: 40% of black teachers, 32% of Hispanic teachers, and 19% of white teachers say this is a problem (Table 2).

Once again, these differences may be partly driven by demographic factors other than race or ethnic identity. Half the black teachers and 38% of Hispanic teachers are from the South, where affinity for traditional and religious values is often stronger; by contrast, only 20% of white teachers surveyed are from the South.

Teaching respect for others, regardless of race and ethnicity, receives the nearly unanimous support of black, Hispanic, and white teachers (Table 4). Teaching honesty and tolerance of others is approved by overwhelming majorities of black (88%), Hispanic (79%), and white (82%) teachers. Whereas 73% of white teachers favor teaching that democracy is the best form of government, somewhat lesser majorities of black (64%) and Hispanic (60%) teachers concur.

### Ill-Advised Lessons

The different teacher groups also agree on the lessons they view as ill-advised. Their guidelines seem to reflect a desire to avoid introducing extremist views that have the potential to inflame and divide. Fully 85% of blacks, 76% of Hispanics, and 80% of white teachers say it would be inappropriate to invite a guest speaker who advocates black separatism. Strong majorities of the three groups likewise reject bringing in a guest speaker who argues the Holocaust never happened. And at least 7 in 10 members of each group consider it inappropriate to teach that "Columbus was a murderer because his explorations led to the mass destruction of Native Americans."

As noted above, minority teachers express some concern about classes and textbooks that stereotype minorities and women. Four in 10 black teachers (39%) and 3 in 10 Hispanic teachers (29%) — compared to fewer than 2 in 10 white teachers — say this is a problem (Table 2).

Minority teachers are more sensitive to issues touching upon race and stereotyping. It would be surprising if they were not. Overall, however, their values are similar to their white colleagues, with whom they share a desire to avoid the more turbulent and divisive issues of race. When it comes to public

education generally, the priorities, prescriptions, and values of African-American and Hispanic teachers reflect a broad commonality and consensus among America's teachers.

**Minority teachers express some concern about classes and textbooks that stereotype minorities and women. Four in 10 black teachers (39%) and 3 in 10 Hispanic teachers (29%) say this is a problem.**

## AFTERWORD

Reform of America's public schools continues to be contentious. Whether a spillover from today's highly-charged political climate, or a sign that contemporary reformers are more persistent and determined than their predecessors, we continue to see fractious debates in community after community. As these debates pit parents against school boards, advocates of private solutions against defenders of the current system, or even one group of reformers against another, there is growing bitterness among the participants and mounting despair among the public.

One signal of today's more negative environment, identified in past Public Agenda research, is that increasing numbers of educators and members of the public each believe the other has violated the unwritten contract long existing between them. Under this contract, educators agreed to educate America's children, and the public agreed to support them in their work. Today, neither group believes that the other is holding up its end of the bargain.

Public Agenda undertook *Given the Circumstances* in part to see whether there is a basis for renewing the compact among teachers, parents, and other members of the public. The study shows — as previous research had suggested — that teachers and the public-at-large hold some contrary views, especially in their assessment of how well public schools are doing. Teachers strongly defend the public schools, and believe they do their job well under the circumstances — a judgment that will undoubtedly unsettle many reformers. But surely it is not surprising that teachers are loyal to the institution to which they have devoted their working lives. Imagine the demoralized, almost hopeless, environment that would exist otherwise.

### Some Areas of Agreement

Despite their different starting points, teachers and the public do seem to share a remarkably lengthy and detailed agenda for action. Both agree on the essential elements of the curriculum. Both are convinced that higher standards will benefit children from all backgrounds. Both believe that restoring order and discipline in public schools is an urgent priority, and both support removing disruptive students from regular classes as a means to do so. Both question the usefulness of some newer teaching techniques, and both see fostering such qualities as persistence, inner drive, and respect for others as an integral aspect of education.

Do these areas of agreement provide a basis to renew the broken contract — or at least to launch more productive conversations? These shared priorities and concerns do seem to suggest some very practical, concrete starting points for renewed discussion. Moreover, the residual trust between teachers and parents may offer the key to getting the conversation back on track. As the *First Things First* study showed clearly, most Americans place teachers and parents at the very top of the list of those they trust to make sound decisions about schools.

### Champions of Knowledge?

*Given the Circumstances* offers some hope for those seeking consensus and perhaps even progress on education reform. But it also contains some disappointing news for those who believe that the nation's prospects — and those of the next generation — are in jeopardy unless public schools make a renewed commitment to high-levels of knowledge and learning.

To the surprise of many readers, I expect, *Given the Circumstances* suggests that classroom teachers are not fierce champions of high-level academic learning. Far from being strong advocates of higher standards, advanced knowledge and study, and top-notch academic attainment, teachers seem tepid in their support. They do not endorse raising standards as vigorously as the public does. Less than half of social studies

**High standards, advanced knowledge, top-notch academic mastery seem to be routinely sacrificed in an ongoing educational triage.**

teachers think world history and geography are crucial subject areas. Only about a third of English teachers say Shakespeare and Hemingway are essential areas of study. Of four factors that might determine career success, teachers put "an excellent academic education" a distant third, with only 21% saying it is the most important factor.

All of which prompts the question: If teachers are not ardent proponents of knowledge and learning, if they subscribe to the notion that well-rounded is better than well-educated, what can we expect from students or parents? Unless we wish to dismiss its importance altogether — and we clearly do not — someone must stand up for knowledge. Where else can students turn for inspiration about its importance and excitement?

#### Educational Triage

In one sense, of course, teachers are correct: persistence, inner drive, knowing how to deal well with people are vitally important skills. Our children certainly need them. It may also be true, as teachers in focus groups repeatedly stress, that demands to be psychologist, nurse and baby-sitter — as one teacher put it — simply sap the academic energies of even the most motivated teachers. High standards, advanced knowledge, top-notch academic mastery seem to be routinely sacrificed in an ongoing educational triage. Indeed, reformers pushing hard for higher standards may want to consider carefully teachers' calls for a more orderly, civilized, and disciplined school environment. From the teachers' perspective, order and civility form the infrastructure that good teaching builds on.

Public Agenda's purpose in preparing this study is simply to add one more perspective — an inarguably important one — to the nation's discourse on how to improve the public schools. Reform has never been easy — in education or any other area. But without honest discussion, without clear communications, without listening as well as advocating, reform will be impossible, and much will be lost as we all go our separate ways smug in the correctness of our views.



Deborah Wadsworth  
Executive Director, Public Agenda

TABLE 1: Private Schools vs. Public Schools

"Now I'm going to ask you to compare your community's public schools and the private non-religious/Catholic/Christian schools. In your area, which schools are generally more likely to provide:"

	TEACHERS			GENERAL PUBLIC		
	Public Schools	Private Schools	Same	Public Schools	Private Schools	Same
A better education for kids with special needs, such as the physically handicapped	86%	4%	4%	51%	23%	6%
An environment that teaches kids how to deal with people from diverse backgrounds	81	5	8	53	22	7
Better teachers	71	3	19	26	33	22
Tried and true teaching techniques	57	9	25	29	36	16
A better preparation for college	52	20	22	27	45	13
Higher academic standards	50	24	19	24	53	8
More safety and security	31	33	24	20	51	13
A school policy that removes kids who are routinely disruptive	30	51	10	29	42	11
Good work habits	25	26	42	22	45	19
More discipline and order in the classroom	23	49	18	18	61	8
An environment that promotes such values as honesty and responsibility	21	30	42	17	54	16
Smaller class size	18	60	11	13	67	6
An appreciation for religious values	11	76	6	11	70	4

Data for this table taken from the *Assignment/Incomplete* survey, conducted May, 1995. That survey did not include oversamples of black and Hispanic teachers.

Note: Percentages in tables may not add up to 100% because "not sure" are not reported or because of rounding. Rounding may also cause slight discrepancies between numbers in the text and numbers in the tables.

\* Question wording was tailored to fit respondents' point of comparison. "Private schools" column in table represents combined private school responses.

**TABLE 2: Problems Facing Local Schools**

"Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your own community's public schools. [INSERT PROBLEM] Is that problem very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or is that not a problem at all in your community's public schools?"

PERCENTAGES SAYING "VERY SERIOUS" OR "SOMEWHAT SERIOUS" PROBLEM	TEACHERS OVERALL	GENERAL PUBLIC	BLACK TEACHERS	HISPANIC TEACHERS	WHITE TEACHERS
Schools are not getting enough money to do a good job	80%	58%	77%	80%	80%
Classes are too crowded	65	50	70	80	64
Academic standards are too low and kids are not expected to learn enough	51	61	51	56	52
There's too much drugs and violence in the schools	47	72	61	71	47
Kids are not taught enough math, science and computers	43	52	48	49	42
Schools don't teach kids good work habits, such as being on time to class and completing assignments	38	52	42	49	38
Too many teachers are more concerned with making kids feel good about themselves than with how much they learn	36	37	25	41	37
There is not enough emphasis on the basics, such as reading, writing and math	34	60	41	49	34
Schools are not clear and specific enough about what they want kids to learn	31	47	37	42	32
Schools fail to teach religious values	20	47	40	32	19
Too many teachers are more interested in being popular than in requiring respect and discipline	19	41	22	32	19
Classes and textbooks stereotype minorities and women	17	30	39	29	15
Schools are too graphic and explicit when teaching sex education	7	24	11	15	7

Data for teachers taken from survey for this report. Data for the general public taken from the *First Things First* survey (1994).

**TABLE 3: Proposals to Improve Academic Achievement**

"Now I'm going to read you some ideas for changing the way public schools teach. For each, I'd like you to tell me if you think it would improve kids' academic achievement. Use a 5 point scale where 5 means that it would improve academic achievement a great deal, and 1 means it would not improve academic achievement at all. How about:"

PERCENTAGES GIVING THE ITEM A 4 OR 5 RATING	TEACHERS OVERALL	GENERAL PUBLIC	BLACK TEACHERS	HISPANIC TEACHERS	WHITE TEACHERS
Emphasizing such work habits as being on time, dependable, and disciplined	93%	83%	89%	87%	94%
Taking persistent troublemakers out of class so that teachers can concentrate on the kids who want to learn	86	73	85	80	89
Permanently removing from school grounds kids who are caught with drugs or with weapons	84	76	74	77	85
Not allowing kids to graduate from high school unless they clearly demonstrate they can write and speak English well	83	88	77	74	83
Setting up very clear guidelines on what kids should learn and teachers should teach in every major subject so the kids and the teachers will know what to aim for	80	82	85	79	80
Raising the standards of promotion from grade school to junior high and only letting kids move ahead when they pass a test showing they have reached those standards	62	70	67	61	62
Replacing multiple choice tests with essay tests to measure what kids learn	47	54	48	48	47
Mixing fast learners and slow learners in the same class so that slower kids learn from faster kids	40	34	53	48	40
Adopting how schools teach to the background of students, such as using street language to teach inner-city kids	15	20	14	17	15
Allowing educators to paddle or spank students	13	28	22	19	12

Data for teachers taken from survey conducted for this report. Data for the general public taken from the *First Things First* survey (1994).

**TABLE 4: Appropriate and Inappropriate Lessons**

"I am going to read you some descriptions of class textbook and lesson plans and ask you to rate how appropriate they would be for your community's public schools. Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means it is highly appropriate and 1 means it is not at all appropriate. How about?"

APPROPRIATE: PERCENTAGES RATING ITEM 4 OR 5 INAPPROPRIATE: PERCENTAGES RATING ITEM 1 OR 2	APPROPRIATE					INAPPROPRIATE				
	T*	GP	BT	HT	WT	T	GP	BT	HT	WT
Teaching respect for others regardless of their racial or ethnic background	96%	95%	95%	89%	97%	1%	2%	3%	5%	1%
Teaching honesty and the importance of telling the truth	95	95	94	90	96	1	2	3	5	1
Teaching kids to solve problems without violence	95	93	96	91	96	1	3	2	5	1
Stressing that democracy is the best form of government	72	70	64	60	73	8	9	13	12	7
Teaching respect for people who are homosexual	44	61	48	49	44	28	18	31	26	29
Teaching in a science class that the biblical view of creation and Darwin's theory of evolution are equally valid	36	38	29	38	36	42	36	40	32	42
Teaching that two-parent families are the best way to raise children	26	52	31	31	26	47	25	42	42	47
Arguing that racism is the main cause of the economic and social problems blacks face today	13	29	22	16	13	60	44	51	59	61
Bringing in a guest speaker who advocates black separatism	6	10	5	11	6	80	71	85	76	80
Teaching that Columbus was a murderer because his explorations led to the mass destruction of Native Americans	6	14	5	9	6	75	66	73	70	75
Bringing in a guest speaker who argues that the Holocaust never happened	5	8	5	7	5	86	81	88	79	86

\* KEY: T = Teachers, GP = General Public, BT = Black Teachers, HT = Hispanic Teachers, WT = White Teachers

Data for teachers taken from survey conducted for this report. Data for the general public taken from the *First Things First* survey (1994).

**TABLE 5: What Subjects Are Absolutely Essential to Teach?**

"Now here are some things the local public schools in your community could concentrate on teaching. Please tell me whether you think each is absolutely essential, important but not essential, or not too important for your local schools to be teaching. How about teaching?"

PERCENTAGES SAYING "ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL"	TEACHERS	GENERAL PUBLIC	BLACK TEACHERS	HISPANIC TEACHERS	WHITE TEACHERS
Basic reading, writing and math skills	98%	92%	99%	96%	99%
Good work habits such as being responsible, on time, and disciplined	90	63	94	89	90
The value of hard work	63	78	83	82	83
Values such as honesty and tolerance of others	82	74	88	79	82
Habits of good citizenship such as voting and caring about the nation	77	66	82	77	77
Curiosity and a love of learning	76	57	75	73	77
Computer skills and media technology	72	80	79	77	73
American history and American geography	72	63	73	68	72
Biology, chemistry and physics	64	59	64	61	64
How to deal with social problems like drugs and family breakdown	61	64	76	71	60
Practical job skills for office or industry	55	57	74	61	54
The history and geography of such places as Europe or Asia	41	35	42	49	41
Advanced mathematics such as calculus	36	37	42	40	36
Classic works from such writers as Shakespeare and Plato	24	23	28	28	24
Modern American writers such as Steinbeck and Hemingway	23	22	29	26	23
Sports and athletics	14	23	20	20	14

Data for teachers taken from survey conducted for this report. Data for the general public taken from the *Assignment Incomplete* survey (1995).

**TABLE 6: Measures Aimed at Improving Order**

"Here are some policies your community's public schools might consider adopting. Would you favor or oppose [INSERT ITEM]: Is that strongly or somewhat?"

PERCENTAGES RESPONDING "STRONGLY FAVOR" OR "SOMEWHAT FAVOR"	TEACHERS	GENERAL PUBLIC	BLACK TEACHERS	HISPANIC TEACHERS	WHITE TEACHERS
Banning smoking anywhere on school grounds by students	94%	83%	80%	87%	95%
Requiring kids to stay on school grounds throughout the day, with no choice of going off-campus for lunch	80	73	79	78	80
Banning hugging and kissing between students on school grounds	69	56	61	64	69
Requiring teachers to dress like professionals, with male teachers wearing jackets and ties to set an example for kids	52	56	72	60	51
Requiring kids to dress in standard clothing, such as a button-down shirt and slacks for boys	47	49	64	60	45

Data for teachers taken from survey conducted for this report. Data for the general public taken from the *First Things First* survey (1994).

**TABLE 7: What Determines Career Success?**

"I'm going to read four things that could determine people's success in their jobs and careers. Which do you think is generally most important?"

PERCENTAGES SAYING "MOST IMPORTANT"	TEACHERS	GENERAL PUBLIC	BLACK TEACHERS	HISPANIC TEACHERS	WHITE TEACHERS
Being persistent and having inner drive	42%	41%	36%	39%	42%
Knowing how to deal with people well	32	23	28	27	32
Getting an excellent academic education	21	27	29	31	21
Knowing the right people and having the right connections	4	6	7	5	4

Data for teachers taken from survey conducted for this report. Data for the general public taken from the *Assignment Incomplete* survey (1995).

**NOTES**

1. Jean Johnson, *Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform* (Public Agenda, 1995).

2. Although both teachers and the general public show concern over American students' competitiveness, it is the difference in degree of their concern that is significant. Exact question wording: "How concerned would you be if international test scores showed that American students were doing poorly in comparison with students from many other countries? Would you be very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not concerned at all?" Results: General public — very concerned 56%, somewhat concerned 32%, not too concerned 7%, not concerned at all 4%. Teachers — very concerned 28%, somewhat concerned 45%, not too concerned 19%, not concerned at all 8%.

3. When asked, "Overall, would you say that the public schools in your community are doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job," only 16% of the general public said "excellent," whereas 42% of teachers and 38% of school administrators said "excellent." When asked, "In your community, is it the public schools or the private schools which generally provide a better education," only 33% of the general public responded "public schools," while 75% of teachers and 83% of administrators responded "public schools."

4. Jean Johnson and John Immerwahr, *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools* (Public Agenda, 1994).

5. For example, a 1995 Office of Technology Assessment report which drew on a number of past studies found students are at far more risk of death or serious injury when they are off school grounds (reported in the *New York Times*, Nov. 19, 1995).

6. For further information on the attitudes of diverse groups toward math reform, see *Math Leads the Way: Perspectives on Math Reform* (Public Agenda, 1993).

7. Steve Farkas, *Divided Within, Besieged Without: The Politics of Education in Four American School Districts* (Public Agenda, 1993).

8. Elementary school teachers are somewhat less likely than high school teachers to approve of a "get tougher" approach for younger kids (the margin is 53% to 65%). Elementary school teachers are also less likely to approve of a "get tougher" approach for high schoolers — 71% say it's a good or excellent idea compared with 84% of high school teachers who feel that way.

9. National telephone survey of 1,000 adults, conducted December, 1995 for upcoming study on welfare. Exact question wording with results for the general public: "I am going to read five areas of government responsibility. Please tell me in which area it is most urgent for the government to change the way it does things. Is it most urgent to change... how the government deals with other nations (7%), how the government deals with crime (18%), how political leaders are elected (6%), how the public schools are educating kids (33%), how the government runs the welfare system (33%)." Responses of "don't know" totaled 3%.

10. Forty-one percent of social studies and history teachers say that teaching "the history and geography of such places as Europe or Asia" is absolutely essential, matching the 41% of teachers in general. Thirty-three percent of math teachers say that teaching "advanced mathematics such as calculus" is absolutely essential, approximately the same as the 36% of teachers in general who take this position. And 30% of English teachers say that teaching "modern American writers such as Steinbeck and Hemingway" is absolutely essential, only marginally more than the 23% of teachers in general who feel this way.

11. Exact wording of questions (with results for teachers): "If a teacher passes a group of kids in a public school playground who are teasing another child about the fact that his mother or father is a homosexual, should the teacher: let the kids work it out themselves (3%), break up the situation and leave it at that (23%), break up the situation and emphasize that teasing about homosexuality is wrong (73%)." "If a teacher passes a group of kids in a public school playground who are teasing another child about his race, should

the teacher: let the kids work it out themselves (2%), break up the situation and leave it at that (13%), break up the situation and emphasize that teasing about race is wrong (85%).” “If a teacher passes a group of kids in a public school playground who are teasing another child about his religion, should the teacher: let the kids work it out themselves (3%), break up the situation and leave it at that (15%), break up the situation and emphasize that teasing about religion is wrong (82%).”

12. Due to the low incidence rates of minority teachers, it would have been prohibitively expensive to interview black and Hispanic teachers randomly. As a consequence, the black and Hispanic teacher oversamples were based on a targeted, not a random, sample. Please refer to the Methodology section for a full explanation of how these samples were constructed.

Hispanics can be any race. For the purposes of our study, we asked respondents to self-identify by asking them, “Do you consider yourself: White, Black or African-American, Hispanic, or Asian or Pacific Islander.” References to race or ethnicity rely on how respondents define themselves.

It should be noted that minority teacher attitudes are not available for some of the items discussed in the previous chapters. This is because some of the teacher attitudes reported were captured in an earlier survey for the report *Assignment Incomplete* which did not include oversamples of minority teachers (see Methodology for more details.)

13. In the *First Things First* survey, 71% of African-American parents said they favored “requiring teachers to dress like professionals” compared to only 47% of white parents and 56% of the general public. Sixty-four percent of African-American parents said they favor requiring kids to dress in standard clothing” versus 41% of white parents and 49% of the general public.

14. Exact question wording: “How good a job are the public schools in your community doing at teaching. . . [ITEM]: Would you say excellent, good, only fair, or poor?” Percentages saying “Excellent” or “Good” for “basic reading, writing, and math skills:” White teachers — 85%, Black teachers — 69%, Hispanic teachers — 72%. Percentages saying “Excellent” or “Good” for “American history and American geography:” White teachers — 82%, Black teachers — 60%, Hispanic teachers — 65%. Note that these questions were asked only of those teachers who had earlier said that teaching these subject matters is “absolutely essential.”

15. In the *First Things First* survey, African-American parents supported heterogenous grouping in approximately the same numbers as did the general public and white parents. Thirty-nine percent of African-American parents support the idea, as do 38% of white parents and 34% of the general public. This supports the contention that it is the level of school taught rather than race which drives teachers’ perceptions on this issue.

## METHODOLOGY

*Given the Circumstances* draws upon findings from two separate telephone surveys conducted with public school teachers in 1995. The main survey, conducted specifically for this study, reports the attitudes of 1164 public school teachers interviewed by telephone throughout the continental United States. The other supplemental survey was part of Public Agenda’s 1995 study, *Assignment Incomplete*, and gauged the views of 237 public school teachers.

*Given the Circumstances* also refers to findings from a mail survey of community leaders done for the *Assignment Incomplete* study. Finally, it draws on the dozens of focus groups Public Agenda has conducted with teachers across the country in recent years for a variety of research projects.

### About the Survey

The main survey underpinning the analysis for this study is based on telephone interviews with 1164 public school teachers. Of this 1164 total, 800 interviews were conducted with a representative, randomly drawn sample of public school teachers, grades 4 through 12. The remainder comprise the black and Hispanic teachers’ oversamples. The survey instrument was designed by Public Agenda. Interviews were conducted by Eastern Research Services, and averaged 28.5 minutes in length. As in all surveys, question order effects and other non-sampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these, including pre-testing the survey instrument and randomizing the order in which some questions were asked.

The 800 random sample interviews were conducted between October 9th and October 26th 1995. A random sample of teachers with phone numbers at their schools was drawn by Quality Education Data, one of the pre-eminent sources in the school data field. The survey was then fielded using an approach similar to that used by Louis Harris and Associates for interviewing teachers. Teachers were called at their schools and asked for by name. If they were reached directly they were asked to participate in the survey. If they were unable to be interviewed immediately they were asked to make an appointment to be interviewed at a later time either at school or at their home. Teachers at their schools who were not able to come to the phone were left a message asking them to call the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Agenda at a toll free 800-number to participate in a national survey of teachers about education. In all cases, teachers were screened by being asked, “Are you a public school teacher who teaches in a classroom?” to ensure that only current public school classroom teachers were interviewed for the study. The margin of error for this portion of the sample is plus or minus 3.4%.

### About the Oversamples of Black and Hispanic Teachers

The percentage of black and Hispanic teachers is generally low (about 8% for black teachers, 3% for Hispanic teachers), and, of the sample of 800 respondents, only 37 teachers identified themselves as black or Hispanic. To assess the views of black and Hispanic teachers with greater confidence, an additional 364 interviews were conducted with targeted samples of minority teachers. The study thus analyzes the views of 200 black and 201 Hispanic public school teachers.

The 364 black and Hispanic oversample interviews took place between October 23rd and November 2nd, 1995. A targeted sample was employed because, as mentioned above, the incidence of minority teachers was prohibitively low. The targeted sample was constructed from Survey Sampling’s “Low Incidence Targeted Sample” data base. The targeted sample provided home phone numbers of people who had identified themselves as teachers within approximately the past year, and who lived in neighborhoods with at least 10% black or Hispanic residents. Margin of error statistics are less appropriate when discussing these oversamples because they were based on targeted samples drawn from self-selected respondents. Nevertheless, generalizations about black and Hispanic teachers in this report are strongly suggestive.

Oversample respondents were called at home and screened with the question, "Are you a public school teacher who teaches in a classroom?" as well as a question about their race and ethnicity. If they said they were a public school teacher and identified themselves as either black or Hispanic, they qualified for the study.

#### *About the Supplemental Teachers Survey*

Some of the results reported in *Given the Circumstances* are based upon a supplemental survey of teachers conducted as part of Public Agenda's 1995 study *Assignment Incomplete*. This random sample of 237 public school teachers was drawn and interviewed using the same techniques as were used with the main *Given the Circumstances* random teachers sample, described above, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 7%.

#### *Survey of Community Leaders*

This study also draws upon a mail survey of a nation-wide sample of community leaders, conducted for Public Agenda's *Assignment Incomplete* study. That survey was mailed to 3,650 economic, political, civic, and educational leaders in early May 1995 and netted 1,151 returns - an overall response rate of 32%. Of the 1,151 leaders, 734 were non-educators, and it was this portion of the leadership results that are reported on in *Given the Circumstances*. They include 261 leaders from the economic sector (e.g. directors of Chambers of Commerce, union presidents); 165 leaders from the political sector (e.g. mayors, state legislators); 207 civic leaders (e.g. police chiefs, heads of foundations); and 101 leaders from other (non-educator) categories.

#### *Focus Groups*

To inform this study, Public Agenda has drawn upon the many focus groups it has conducted with teachers across the country in recent years for a variety of research projects. (See, for example, Public Agenda's *Divided Within, Besieged Without: The Politics of Education in Four American School Districts*; *Effective Public Engagement: The New Standards Project*; and *The Broken Contract: Connecticut Citizens Look at Public Education*.) While focus groups do not produce quantifiable results in the way surveys do, they allow for an in-depth, qualitative exploration of complex issues that is extremely valuable in designing and interpreting surveys. Insights from these groups were important to the survey design, and quotes were drawn from them when they gave voice to the attitudes captured statistically through the surveys.

#### RELATED PUBLICATIONS

*\*Committed to Change: Missourians and Public Education.* 1996. Prepared by Public Agenda for the Missouri Partnership for Outstanding Schools, this report describes how the citizens of Missouri feel about public education. The gaps among educators, community leaders, and the public, including a special focus on African-Americans, are outlined. How Missourians feel in comparison to citizens of Connecticut and the nation at large is also included. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$10.00.

*\*Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform.* 1995. A follow-up study to *First Things First*, this report examines why support for public schools is in jeopardy; why Americans are so focused on the basics; whether people are really committed to higher standards; and whether they value education in and of itself. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$10.00.

*\*The Basics: Parents Talk About Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and the Schools.* 1995. This focus group study further explores the public's concern with the basics and the differences in attitudes between college and non-college educated parents. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$7.50.

*\*Professional Development for Teachers: The Public's View.* 1995. This report indicates the potential for both support and disappointment with professional development for teachers. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$7.50.

*The Westchester School-to-Work Initiatives: Prospects and Challenges.* 1995. This report probes the public's reactions to public education in Westchester, NY, and explores the possibilities for school-to-work transitions. Copies of this report are available from the Westchester Education Coalition, 222 Bloomingdale Road, White Plains, NY 10605, (914) 683-8045.

*\*Accomplishing Reform with Public Engagement: A Map of the Process.* 1995. Prepared by Public Agenda in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation, this map addresses citizens and community groups who want to undertake reform but believe that the public should or needs to be their partner for real change to occur. Roadblocks a community might encounter are flagged. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$7.50.

*Contested Values: Tug-of-War in the School Yard.* 1995. Prepared by Public Agenda for the National Issues Forums, this citizen discussion guide focuses on the debate over which values American children should be taught in public schools. Written for the general reader, the guide lays out pro and con arguments for having schools promote diversity and tolerance; having them convey a common core of civic values; having them teach traditional Christian values; and granting parents the choice of which schools their children will attend. The book can be ordered from McGraw-Hill, Inc. by calling 1-800-338-3987. ISBN 0-07-051825-4

*Preserving the Higher Education Legacy.* 1995. A follow-up study to *The Closing Gateway* (1993), this report is based on a series of in-depth interviews with California leaders who cite rising costs and declining access as problems for higher education. Copies of this report are available from the California Higher Education Policy Center, 160 West Santa Clara Street, #704, San Jose, CA 95113. Fax requests to 408-287-6709. Ask for Report #95-3.

*\*First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools.* 1994. Based on a national study of over 1,100 members of the general public, including 550 parents of children currently in public school, this report examines public attitudes about values issues in public schools as well as views on reform efforts. The study also offers detailed analyses of the views of white and African-American public school parents, as well as parents identified as traditional Christians. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$10.00.

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\**The Broken Contract: Connecticut Citizens Look at Public Education*. 1994. Prepared by Public Agenda for the William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund, this report describes how the citizens of Connecticut feel about public education and integration in their state and why they hold these attitudes. The gaps among educators, business leaders, and the public, including a special focus on African-Americans and Latinos, are outlined. Copies are available from Public Agenda for \$5.50.

\**Divided Within, Besieged Without: The Politics of Education in Four American School Districts*. 1993. Prepared by Public Agenda for the Kettering Foundation. This study reports the results of over 200 face-to-face interviews with teachers, principals, administrators, school board members, parents, and business executives in four typical school systems undergoing reform. It reveals a significant barrier to educational reform — political gridlock among education stakeholders — and describes the substantial in-fighting and communication gaps among these groups. The report can be ordered from Public Agenda for \$10.00.

*Effective Public Engagement*. 1993. Prepared by Public Agenda for The New Standards Project. Based on focus groups with teachers, parents, high school students and members of the general public, this study explores responses to and concerns about implementing higher standards. This handbook suggests ways to address people's reservations about standards, but it is useful for anyone interested in communicating about education reform. To order, write or call The National Center on Education and the Economy, 700 11th Street NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20005. Tel: (202) 783-3668. The report is \$5.00 for New Standards Project partners, \$25.00 for non-partners.

\**Math Leads the Way: Perspectives on Math Reform*. 1993. Prepared by Public Agenda for The Math Connection. A survey of more than 1000 participants in a national videoconference on math reform sponsored by WQED in Pittsburgh and the Math/Science Education Board in Washington, DC, this study identified a consensus among math educators about the kinds of changes needed to improve student achievement. Single copies are available from Public Agenda for \$7.50.

*The Closing Gateway: Californians Consider Their Higher Education System*. 1993. Prepared by Public Agenda for the California Higher Education Policy Center. The study compares Californians' perceptions of the cost, accessibility, value, and opportunity in their higher education system with those of citizens in other parts of the country. Available from the California Higher Education Policy Center, 160 West Santa Clara Street, Suite 704, San Jose, CA 95113. When ordering, ask for report #93-6.

\**Educational Reform: The Players and the Politics*. 1992. Prepared by Public Agenda for the Kettering Foundation. Based on a survey of teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, and business executives from major corporations, the study reports consensus among the groups over the goals of K-12 education but strong differences in their evaluations of the performance of the schools. The report is \$8.50 and can be ordered from Public Agenda.

\**Crosstalk: The Public, The Experts, and Competitiveness*. 1991. A research report from Public Agenda and the Business-Higher Education Forum. The report describes a gap between the way leaders and the public view the issue of U.S. economic competitiveness and the associated crisis in education and work force training. The report is \$17.50 and can be ordered from Public Agenda.

\*Reports marked with an asterisk can be ordered by calling or writing Public Agenda at 6 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016: Tel: (212) 686-6610. Fax: (212) 889-3461. Shipping and handling costs will be applied.

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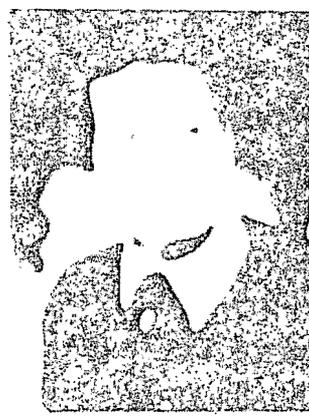
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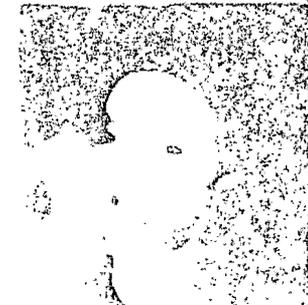
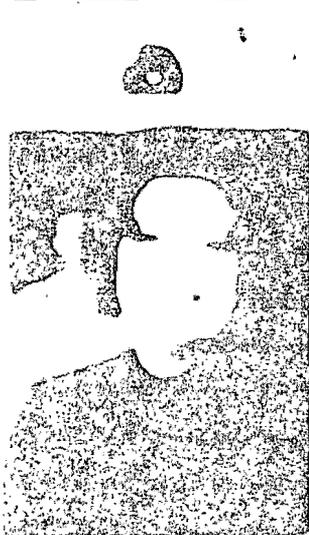
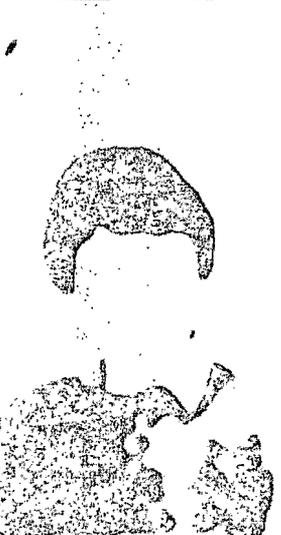
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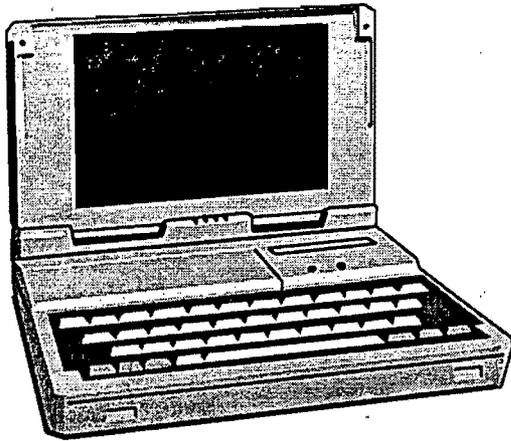
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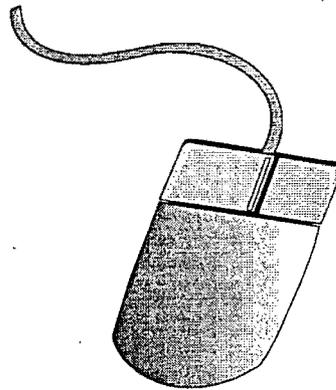
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# 21st Century Teachers



**President Clinton Announces  
"21st Century Teachers"**  
May 29, 1996

**2 PAGE SUMMARY  
of Presidential Announcement**

# 21ST CENTURY TEACHERS

May 29, 1996

"Our challenge is to provide Americans with the educational opportunities we'll all need to for this new century. In our schools, every classroom in America must be connected to the information superhighway with computers and good software and well-trained teachers."

-- President Clinton, State of the Union Address, January 23, 1996

**TODAY, PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES A NEW VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE: "21st CENTURY TEACHERS:"** The nation's education leaders join with the President today to announce the creation of a new voluntary corps -- *21st Century Teachers* -- to help all teachers learn to how to use new technology to improve teaching and learning in every school, classroom, and home in America.

- **This Announcement is an Integral Part of President Clinton's Technology Literacy Challenge.** The President has challenged the private sector, states and localities, schools and communities and the Congress to transform teaching and learning in America's schools through new information-age technologies so that every child can become technologically literate.
- **National Partnership To Train Teachers.** Today, following several months of planning and work with the White House, the nation's leading parent, teacher, and school board organizations are stepping forward together to meet a vital component of the President's challenge: Ensuring that all teachers will be trained to use the new educational technologies. This national volunteer partnership has made a commitment to the President to reach the following goals:
  - **100,000 21st Century Teachers Will Train More Than 500,000 Teachers.** 100,000 teachers, already familiar with the new technology, will be signed up on the Internet this summer (similar to California Net Day sign-ups) to lead a kick-off event as school begins this fall to introduce their peers to the potential of education technology.
    - ⇒ **Internet Recruitment.** Volunteers will be recruited throughout this summer using electronic mail and a home-page on the World Wide Web sponsored by the participating organizations. Through meetings, newsletters, and electronic communications with their members throughout the summer, each organization will encourage teachers to participate. The groups are committed to having 100,000 21st Century Teachers lead the effort this fall.
    - ⇒ **Commitment to Train 500,000 Teachers.** The 21st Century Teachers will train more than 500,000 other teachers this fall and continuing throughout the school year in using computers, educational software, and the Internet Superhighway.
- **National Kickoff Day of 21st Century Teachers:** The work of the volunteers and all of their supporters will be inaugurated in a *National 21st Century Teacher Day* shortly after school starts.
  - ⇒ **Local Events,** sponsored by school boards, teacher organizations and other groups will recognize the *21st Century Teacher* volunteers, recruit new volunteers and teachers interested in receiving training, and expose teachers to the types of resources that will be available for professional development in education technology.
- **Commitment to a National Partnership to Make Real Progress.** Parents, school boards, business groups, colleges and universities have volunteered to provide new resources and support to help technologically literate teachers help other teachers use new and more powerful learning tools to help all students learn the new basic skills essential for the 21st century.

**TRAINING PROGRAMS BEGINNING IN OCTOBER:** The core of the *21st Century Teachers'* activity will center on teachers helping at least 5 of their colleagues. Beginning in October, communities around the country will provide their volunteers with different kinds of help:

- **Build on Successful "Net Days."** Building on the highly-successful California Net Day in March, several other states have already announced plans to hold "Net Days" to connect classrooms to the Internet and many more states will have plans for such "electronic barn-raising" in place by this fall.
  - ⇒ **Follow-up Net Days with Teacher Training.** A new commitment to have Net Days followed with programs designed to help teachers learn how to use computers, educational software, and learning resources available on the information superhighway.
- **Tech Corps Offers Training and Support.** *Tech Corps*, a national organization of private sector volunteers with technical expertise now chartered in 30 states, is prepared to offer training to *21st Century Teachers* in all levels of technology, and mentor these teachers as they begin to apply what they have learned, offering the one-on-one support so critical to learning new skills.
- **The International Society for Technology in Education** will inaugurate a new online service which will allow 21st Century teachers to collaborate on the internet to help their communities develop guidelines and standards for teaching technology skills, using technology throughout the curriculum, and assessing student progress.
- **PTAs** can work with their local schools to conduct "back-to-school" nights and days that encourage parents to work with teachers to understand and to leverage the full potential of the new education technologies for learning in the classroom and at home.
- **Community colleges** can offer training and support for practicing teachers in technology-enhanced curriculum, educational software, and research and problem solving on the Internet.
- **Public and private colleges and universities** can help schools meet rigorous academic standards by sharing strategies for technology-enhanced instruction in math, science, history, literature and composition.

**A NEW CHALLENGE TO BUSINESS LEADERS:** In recent meetings with the President, business leaders have been unanimous in recognizing the importance of training teachers to teach new technologies. A recent report to President Clinton by the NIIAC group of business and community leaders, chaired by Edward McCracken (Silicon Graphics) and Delano Lewis (NPR), noted: "Unless teachers are properly trained, the technology and connections that so many are working to bring into the schools will not be used to fullest potential or, worse yet, will be left to gather dust." *In acknowledging the commitment made by the education community today, President Clinton will call on the business community to join in this national partnership and provide essential support, expertise, information, and resources for 21st Century Teachers to succeed.*

**SUPPORTING AMERICA'S TECHNOLOGY LITERACY CHALLENGE:** President Clinton urges Congress to join in meeting our National Challenge to make all students technologically literate by the dawn of the 21st century. The President urges bi-partisan support for the \$2 billion, 5-year Technology Literacy Challenge -- funded in the President's Balanced Budget -- which will leverage funds to encourage states to develop strategies with the private sector and local communities to ensure that all American schools make effective use of technology. The fund would play a vital role in providing states and local communities with the focus, the incentives, and the resources needed to help teachers get the training they need.

# BACKGROUND MATERIALS

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**LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON**  
**From The Education Community**  
**Accepting His Challenge**  
**On Technology Training For Teachers**

# *21st Century* Teachers

May 28, 1996

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton III  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders of national organizations committed to quality education for all students, we heartily endorse your education technology initiatives. In response to your challenge in the State of the Union message, we have already convened ourselves to discuss how we might play a role in making the goals of your Administration a reality.

We have agreed to jointly establish our own initiative in support of your goals, which we call *21st Century Teachers*. It is designed to encourage, recognize, and support educators who are developing skills in new technologies and using them in innovative ways with students and colleagues.

This initiative would not be a new bureaucracy but rather an agreement among the organizations listed below to work together at the grassroots level to prepare all educators for the next century. Interested educators would join this initiative by committing to four basic actions:

- Build expertise in using new learning technologies,
- Share expertise and experience with colleagues,
- Use their expertise with students as part of the daily learning process,
- Work to make classroom technology available to all students and teachers.

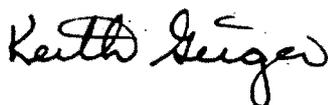
Our organizations have agreed to work cooperatively to support teachers and other educators at the local level by disseminating information on skills teachers will need to facilitate learning in the 21st century, ensuring professional development opportunities, developing awards and incentives for using educational technology, and promoting the development of, and access to, classroom resources and curricula that use advanced technologies.

To launch this effort, we will be sponsoring a national 21st Century Teachers kickoff this Fall. During this event, thousands of educators from around the country will be participating in programs and activities to highlight the importance of technology as a tool for teaching. From now until the kickoff, educators will sign up electronically on a home page being created on the Internet. They will pledge their commitment to participate in kickoff activities and to the four basic activities outlined in the 21st Century Teacher Vision Statement.

To follow up the kickoff, teachers who sign up as 21st Century Teachers will pledge to explore the potential of educational technology with at least five of their colleagues during the month of October, and at least five others during the rest of the 1996-97 school year. In response to your Technology Literacy Challenge, we hope to sign up at least 100,000 teachers by October, and potentially have half a million teachers participating in development activities during the month of October. During October our organizations will support and publicize the 21st Century Teacher Initiative through a variety of efforts. We will involve students and parents in follow-up activities.

We are prepared to announce our commitment to your four-pillared Education Technology Initiative, and to join you in the challenge of bringing the power of technology to all America's classrooms.

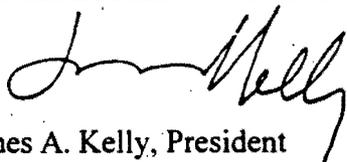
Sincerely,



Keith Geiger, President  
National Education Association



Albert Shanker, President  
American Federation of Teachers



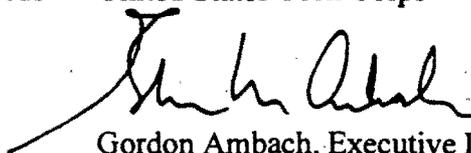
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National Board for Professional Teaching Standards



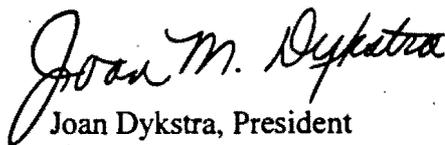
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United States Tech Corps



David Brittain, President  
International Society for Technology in Education



Gordon Ambach, Executive Director  
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Joan Dykstra, President  
The National PTA



H. Michael Brown, President  
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David R. Pierce, President and CEO  
American Association of Community Colleges



Art Wise  
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education



Thomas Shannon, Executive Director  
National School Boards Association

## *21st Century Teachers*

**21st Century Teachers** is an initiative to encourage, recognize and support educators who are developing skills in new technologies and using them in innovative ways with students and colleagues. **21st Century Teachers** is a joint undertaking by several leading education organizations--the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the International Society for Technology in Education, the National PTA, the National School Boards Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the American Association of Community Colleges, the U.S. Tech Corps, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards--to support the "teacher development" pillar of President Clinton's Educational Technology Initiative.

**21st Century Teachers** are pioneers in using technology to enhance teaching and learning--from the English teacher who develops professional networks online to share innovative curriculum ideas with colleagues, to the science teacher who helps students access up-to-the-minute science information from around the world over the Internet, to the third grade teacher aide who uses multimedia technologies to create exciting learning opportunities.

**21st Century Teachers** challenges every teacher to help build 21st century schools by committing to four actions:

- to **Build** their own expertise in using new learning technologies,
- to **Share** their expertise and experience with colleagues,
- to **Use** their expertise with students as part of the daily learning process,
- to **Work** to make classroom technology available to all students and teachers.

The education groups which developed this initiative will cooperate in its implementation by:

1. Publishing and disseminating information about the skills teachers will need to facilitate learning in the 21st century.
2. Promoting availability of professional development designed to enhance the technological expertise of current educators.
3. Recognizing achievement by developing awards and incentives that encourage the acquisition of educational technology skills and efforts to share this knowledge with colleagues.

- 4. Promoting the development of and access to classroom resources and curricula that use advanced technologies.**
- 5. Encouraging use of high standards for teacher education, licensure, and advanced teacher certification to promote the acquisition of educational technology skills by 21st century teachers.**

**During the coming months, these groups will work with their grassroots memberships to develop and implement policies and support mechanisms to enable every educator willing to become a 21st Century Teacher to participate.**

**EXAMPLES  
Of Teacher Training Progress**

**EXAMPLES:**  
**Teacher Technology Training Programs**

- **California "Cybercamp."** In California, Dr. Barbara O'Connor, Co-Chair of the California Education Technology Taskforce, reports that the business and education community will launch a major program to train teachers in the use of technology this fall. A "sign-on-day" will introduce teachers throughout the state to the new mentor-teachers and learning-materials on-line. "Cybercamp" days will be designed to help teachers and students learn new skills with each other and from each other.
- **New Orleans, Louisiana FreeNet.** In New Orleans, Louisiana, the University of New Orleans has created the Greater New Orleans FreeNet and is helping teachers in Jefferson Parish learn how to access communication and curricular support using the Internet. UNO's College of Education has created "chat groups" and "bulletin boards" used by both teachers and students.
- **Jefferson County, Kentucky, In-Service Training.** In Jefferson County, Kentucky, 12 computer in-service teachers work with teachers in the district's 153 schools. Each in-service teacher provides teachers immediate help over the phone and provides advice about strategies for integrating technology into curricula. Three-hour after school workshops are provided for all teachers.
- **U.S. West Trains 1 Percent Of Teachers In 14 States.** U.S. West Communications will provide funds to train one percent of the classroom teachers in the 14 states in the company serves. These company will provide laptop computers, modems, travel, and expenses for attending a workshop. The 4000 teachers must agree to "pass on" what they have learned to their colleagues back in their schools.
- **MATHLINE Helps Teachers In 35 States.** The Public Broadcasting Service project MATHLINE provides instruction for using advanced technology to teach mathematics. Operating in 35 states in 1995, the program uses on-line resources, teleconferences, video lessons and a variety of other new communication tools to help teachers keep pace with new concepts in mathematics instruction.

- **AT&T Foundation Professional Development Grants.** A new AT&T Foundation grant program will "...focus on support for teachers by providing professional development programs to assist them in understanding and utilizing new technologies, and by also supporting efforts to help integrate technology training into the curriculum for the preparation of new teachers."
- **Stevens Institute of Technology Workshops Train 2,000 In New Jersey.** In New Jersey, the Stevens Institute of Technology has provided workshops and training programs for more than 2,000 teachers and administrations helping them "... create and diffuse compelling, content-rich applications of the Internet".
- **Albuquerque, New Mexico "In-House Advisers."** In Albuquerque, New Mexico, teachers can attend a voluntary training course at the school district's training center. Those who complete the course are certified as "in-house advisers" within Albuquerque's 110 schools. As in-house advisors the teachers are expected to help their peers learn to use computers in their classrooms. In addition, they serve as a resource on such issues as software and hardware compatibility.
- **Mission Viejo, California Teachers Take It Home.** In Mission Viejo, California's Saddleback Valley Unified School District, in 4 of its 36 schools, laptop computers are available for teachers to take home, where they can train themselves at their convenience. During the school day, these computers are set up, 12 at a time, on library carts that are moved from classroom to classroom for students' use.
- **National Alliance For Restructuring Education "Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow."** The National Alliance for Restructuring Education opened four Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow (ACOT) teacher development centers. Located in California, Kentucky, Vermont, and Washington, these centers offer teachers the opportunity to participate in 1-week workshops on how to use technology in the classroom. Participants in the program learn by observing and working with ACOT teachers and students in actual classroom settings. Project coordinators guide participating teachers as they examine student outcomes, learn about new technologies, and develop instruction that integrates technology into their curriculum.

# **TEACHER SKILLS REQUIREMENTS CHART**

**National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIIAC)  
Analysis Of Teacher Skills Requirements**

<b>Skill Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Professional Development Needed</b>
Entry	Teachers struggle to cope with technology and new learning environment, or have no experience at all.	⇒ none
Adoption	Teacher moves from initial struggle to successful training use of technology at a basic level (e.g., can use drill and practices software).	⇒ 30 hours
Adaptation	Teacher moves from basic use to discovery of potential in a variety of applications. Teacher has good operational knowledge of hardware and can perform basic troubleshooting.	⇒ 45+ hours training ⇒ Just-in-time support ⇒ 3 months experience
Appropriation	Teacher has mastery over the technology and can use it to accomplish a variety of instructional and classroom management goals. Teacher has strong knowledge of hardware, local area networks, and wide area networks.	⇒ 60+ hours training ⇒ 2 years experience ⇒ Just-in-time support
Invention	Teacher actively develops entirely new learning skills that utilize technology as a flexible tool.	⇒ 80+ hours training ⇒ 4-5 years experience ⇒ Just-in-time support

\* Required times for professional development are cumulative.

Source: McKinsey & Company, Inc.; U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment; Teaching Matters.

**QUOTES FROM EDUCATION  
AND BUSINESS LEADERS**  
**Supporting Teacher Technology Training**

**BUSINESS AND EDUCATION LEADERS AGREE ON  
THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING TEACHERS THE TRAINING  
NEEDED TO MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY**

"Unless teachers are properly trained, the technology and connections that so many are working to bring into schools, libraries, communities, and other settings will not be used to their fullest potential, or worse yet, left in the corner to gather dust."

"Although much of the training "mentors" receive is on an ad hoc basis, a number of schools, school districts, universities, public, private, and nonprofit organizations are developing and offering training programs for in-service teachers, student teachers, librarians, and others who will be expected to teach children and adults to use information technologies."

*The Kick Start Initiative  
National Information Infrastructure  
Advisory Council, February 13, 1996*

"Computers, telecommunication, and interactive cable are among the many technologies that have immense potential to help schools reach higher standards. Yet, the sad truth is that schools are technologically impoverished. They have not even caught up with the computer revolution of the last decade, let alone become part of the telecommunications revolution of the 1990s."

Equally disturbing is the fact that when technology is present in schools, it is all too often used with styles of teaching that fail to maximize its full potential. This is not surprising. Few teachers or administrators receive adequate preparation during their pre-service or in-service training about how to integrate technology into classrooms and schools."

*National Governors' Association  
1996 National Education Summit Briefing Book*

"Successful use of technology in schools depends upon the skills of the teachers and other staff in those schools. Unfortunately, as participants in the RAND/CTI workshop on technology and teacher professional development put it, "professional development as currently conceived and delivered -- one-shot seminars, an afternoon with an expert, or 200 teachers in a gymnasium -- will not bring the profession up to speed with emerging school reforms." Moreover, not only is teacher continuing professional development shallow, but there is broad consensus that the preparation of people to enter teaching is deficient as well. Increasingly widespread use of technology in schools requires changes in both pre-service and in-service training and, more generally, reform of policies that govern the professional development of teachers."

*Fostering the Use of Educational Technology  
Critical Technologies Institute/The Rand  
Corporation Thomas K. Glennan and Arthur  
Melmed, 1996*

"[I'd invest in].. moving teacher training out of the horse and buggy era. We expect doctors to get their training in teaching hospitals. We wouldn't send an NBA player on the court if his only training consisted of lectures on the theory of the jump shot, case studies of the fast break, and films of games played years ago...Its time teachers learned their craft in real schools side-by-side with expert teachers. It's time they got the kind of hands-on experience most other professionals consider vital for certification."

*Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.*  
*Chairman and CEO- IBM Corporation*  
*at the National Governor's Association*  
*Annual Meeting, July 30, 1995*

"It is essential that the nation develop teachers who are well versed in science and mathematics and who come into schools equipped to use modern information technology in the best possible way...Schools of education and education departments should also improve the preparation of prospective teachers to work with information technology in the classroom. Information technology should be integrated into teaching methods in all education courses and should not be treated as an unrelated add-on to more traditional methods of instruction."

*Connecting Students to a Changing World*  
*A Statement by the Research and Policy*  
*Committee of the Committee for Economic*  
*Development, September 14, 1995*

**NATIONAL RESPONSE  
To The President's Education  
Technology Challenge**

## THE NATION RESPONDS TO PRESIDENT CLINTON'S TECHNOLOGY LITERACY CHALLENGE

The Clinton Administration has made a landmark commitment to bringing information-age technology into America's classrooms so that all students can learn the basic communication, math, science and problem-solving skills essential to thriving in the new century. This is an integral part of the President's commitment to improving schools so that every child can learn these new basic skills -- technological literacy for the 21st century -- and proceed to build a brighter future for themselves in this new age of possibility.

Among the many challenges and accomplishments to date are:

- **America's Technology Literacy Challenge:** On February 15th, 1996, the President called for a five-year, \$2 billion fund that would support grassroots efforts at the state and local level to put the future at the fingertips of every child by the dawn of the new century -- with modern computers, high quality educational software, trained teachers, and connections to the information highway.
- **Ensuring Equality in Access:** On April 17, 1996, the Vice President joined with business leaders and the Tech Corp to launch CyberEd, the mobile library of the 21st century. CyberEd will travel to fifteen cities and rural communities over the next three months to catalyze efforts to connect every school in all 15 empowerment zones this year. The President's Technology Literacy Challenge, announced in Union City, New Jersey, conditions funding on states joining with local communities and the private sector to determine how they can best assure that all schools in all districts will have full access to education technology by the dawn of the new century.
- **Affordable Computers:** On April 17, 1996, the President signed an Executive Order making it much easier to get computers no longer needed by the federal government into America's classrooms. Procedures have been simplified, and private organizations will ensure that the computers are fully functional and equipped to use modern software.
- **NetDay:** On March 9th, the President and Vice President joined more than 20,000 volunteers, parents and teachers to wire 3,000 California schools in an "electronic barnraising." Companies contributed wiring kits, technical assistance, free Internet access, and free or discounted hardware and software. NetDay was so successful in California that states around the country are organizing similar initiatives.
- **Affordable Communications:** On February 8, 1996, the President signed a bold reform of the nation's telecommunication laws that will increase competition and lower prices for all users of communication -- including schools. The bill includes a

specific requirement for telecommunications to provide classrooms and libraries with discounted access to the information superhighway

- **Organizing Volunteers with Computer Expertise:** In October 1995 the President announced the business-sponsored US Tech Corp, which now has chapters in 30 states and the District of Columbia. This volunteer organization enables high-tech workers from the private sector to assist teachers and schools to connect to the information superhighway.
- **Honoring Student Volunteers:** In October 1995 the President helped inaugurate the National Technology Honorary Society, created by the nation's secondary school principals to honor students who serve their schools by helping their peers and teachers use new learning technologies. This group also operates the National Honor Society.
- **Technology Learning Challenge Grant Program:** The Clinton Administration has initiated a "Technology Learning Challenge," to inspire communities to form partnerships of local school systems, students, colleges, universities and private businesses to develop creative new ways to use technology for learning. Each grant focuses on integrating innovative learning technologies into curriculum and leverages federal dollars to establish local consortia of communities committed to school reform and technology integration. 500 consortia were formed to apply for the first round of grants and 19 grants for FY 95. More than 1000 consortia are forming to apply for the second round of grants. The President's new Technology Literacy Challenge includes increased funding for such local innovation to spur the continuous development and deployment of ever more powerful and effective interactive learning materials and curriculum.

# **HOW EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

## EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES STUDENT PERFORMANCE

- Using technology to support instruction improved student outcomes in language arts, math, social studies, and science, according to a 1995 review of more than 130 recent academic studies.  
[Bailo, Ellen R., and Jay Sivin-Kachla. 1995. *Effectiveness of Technology in Schools. 1990-1994*. Washington, DC: Software Publishers Association]
- A review of computer-based instruction in military training found that students reached similar levels of achievement in 30 percent less time than needed to achieve the same level of competency using more standard approaches to training.  
[Orlansky, J., and J. String. 1979. *Cost-Effectiveness of Computer Based Instruction in Military Training*. Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis.]
- A congressionally mandated review of 47 comparisons of multimedia instruction with more conventional approaches to instruction found time savings of 30 percent, improved achievement and cost savings of 30 to 40 percent, and a direct positive link between the amount of interactivity provided and instructional effectiveness.  
[Fletcher, J.D. 1991. "Effectiveness and Cost of Interactive Videodisc Instruction," *Machine Mediated Learning*, 3, pp. 361-385.]
- A review of New York City's Computer Pilot Program, which focused on remedial and low-achieving students, showed gains of 80 percent for reading and 90 percent for math when computers were used to assist in the learning process.  
[Guerrero, J.F., M. Mitrani, J. Schoener, and Swan. Summer 1990. "Honing in on the Target: Who Among the Educationally Disadvantaged Benefits Most from What CBI?" *Journal of Research on Computing in Education*, pp. 381-403.]
- A comparison of peer tutoring, adult tutoring, reducing class size, increasing the length of the school day, and computer-based instruction found computer-based instruction to be the least expensive instructional approach for raising mathematics scores by a given amount.  
[Fletcher, J.F., D.E. Hawley, and P.K. Piele. 1990. "Costs, Effects, and Utility of Microcomputer Assisted Instruction in the Classroom." *American Educational Research Journal*, 27, pp. 783-806.]
- A 1993 survey of studies of the effectiveness of technology found that "courses for which computer-based networks were used increased student-student and student-teacher interaction, increased student-teacher interaction with lower-performing students, and did not decrease the traditional forms of communications used.  
[Report on the Effectiveness of Technology in Schools 1990-1992," conducted by Interactive Systems Design and commissioned by the Software Publishers Association. 1993, p.2.]

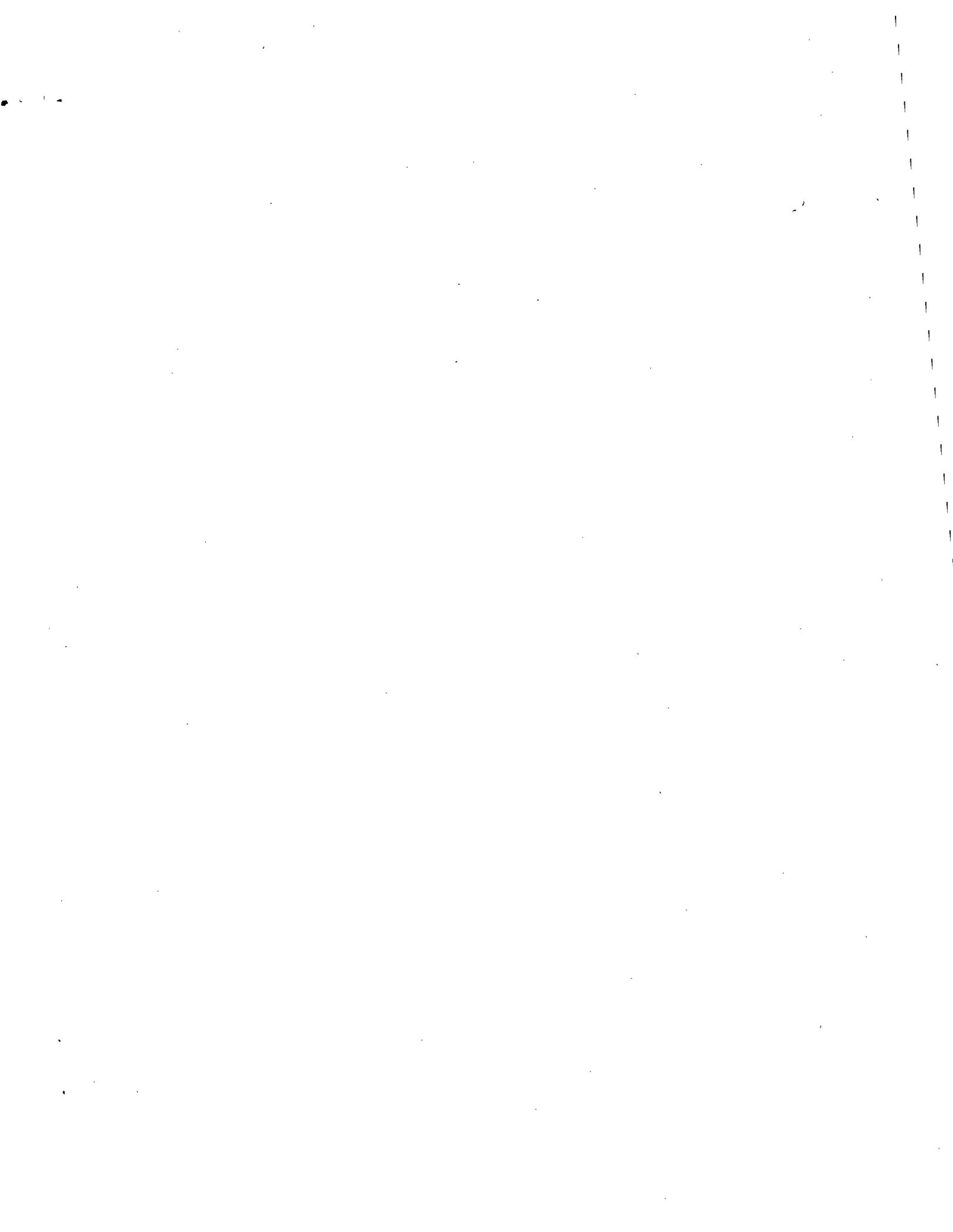
- Research on the costs of instruction delivered via distance learning, videotape, teleconferencing, and computer software indicates that **savings are often achieved with no loss of effectiveness**. Distance learning vastly broadens the learning environment, often providing teaching resources simply not available before.  
[National Council on Disability. *Study on the Financing of Assistive Technology Devices and Services for Individuals with Disabilities*. March 4, 1993.]
- A landmark study on the use of technology for children with disabilities showed that **"almost three-quarters of school-age children were able to remain in a classroom, and 45 percent were able to reduce school-related services"** when computer-assisted learning techniques were employed.  
[U.S. Dept. of Commerce, *National Telecommunications and Information Administration*, June 1995.]

## EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY: CHANGING TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Educational technology has the following benefits:*

- **Brings the world to the classroom.** No matter what their socioeconomic or ethnic background, and no matter where they live, the learning field for all students can be leveled. Students are introduced to people, places, and ideas they might otherwise not be exposed to;
- **Enables students to learn by doing.** Studies have confirmed what many instinctively knew -- that children who are actively engaged in learning, learn more. The effects are particularly noticeable among students who were not high achievers under more traditional methods. Networked projects, where students work with others and conduct their own research and analysis, can transform students into committed and exhilarated learners;
- **Encourages students and parents with limited or no English skills to learn English,** by engaging them in interactive learning;
- **Makes parents partners in their children's education** by connecting the school with homes, libraries, or other access ports;
- **Makes it possible for educators to teach at more than one location simultaneously.** Vastly expands opportunities for students in small, remote areas, linking them to students in more diversely populated, urban and suburban areas;
- **Enables educators to accommodate the varied learning styles and paces of learning within the classroom.** This makes available individualized instruction techniques that are a proven factor in student achievement;
- **Encourages students to become lifelong learners,** who can access, analyze, and synthesize information from a variety of sources;
- **Enables administrators and educators to reduce time spent on administration and recordkeeping,** increasing efficiency so they can spend more time with students;
- **Makes students proficient in the basic technological skills needed to take their place in society,** whether they enter the working world directly after high school or pursue further formal education;

[Source: KickStart Initiative, U.S. Advisory Council on the National Information Infrastructure]



Today's debate: Teacher salaries

## Tying teacher pay, performance could boost entire profession

**OUR VIEW** But unions, fearing loss of clout, resist sensible move.

Try to imagine a profession entrusted with preparing the nation's future that offers starting salaries of less than \$25,735. That's the situation in teaching, according to a salary survey to be released Monday by the American Federation of Teachers.

And teacher pay doesn't improve markedly with time. After 10 years, average salaries still fall short of \$40,000.

Small wonder, then, that teachers in Shreveport, La., can earn nearly as much moonlighting as blackjack dealers at Harrah's as teaching middle school science.

And small wonder that many schools are having trouble either recruiting or hanging on to teachers: 40% of new teachers leave within the first five years.

The first step to solving the problem is obvious: raising teacher salaries across the board.

You won't get any argument from teachers on that. But some local teacher unions are actually opposing proposals to target teacher raises — fearing that this common private-sector practice would undercut union strength.

Supply and demand, for example, isn't a concept embraced by most teacher unions.

When software writers earn more than civil engineers, it is accepted as a reality of the marketplace. But teachers in Wichita, Kan., recently nixed a school district proposal to offer \$1,800 stipends for scarce special education teachers.

The union complained it was unfair to those teaching subjects such as English, in which there are few job openings.

Likewise, the idea of performance-based pay is being fought in many school districts nationwide.

Yet not all teachers are equal, and new technology is emerging that can identify the relative effectiveness of teachers.

One tool developed by William Sanders at the University of Tennessee — called "value-added" research — measures student performance at the beginning and end of the school

### Starting salaries

On average, beginning teachers earned \$25,735 during the 1997-98 school year, compared to the average salary of \$35,000 received by 1998 college graduates in other fields. Here's how the salaries for new teachers compared to starting salaries in other professions in 1998:

Engineering	\$42,862
Computer science	\$40,920
Math/statistics	\$40,523
Chemistry	\$36,036
Business administration	\$34,831
Accounting	\$33,702
Sales/marketing	\$33,252
Teaching	\$25,735

Source: American Federation of Teachers, June 1999

By Alejandro Gonzalez, USA TODAY

year. In doing so, it tracks how successful individual teachers are at educating students.

With further refinement, this tool for identifying effective teaching could someday be used to help set teacher salaries.

Already, hybrid forms of performance-based compensation are under discussion in Denver, Delaware and Florida. Kentucky has used a form of performance pay for years, granting extra money to schools in "rewards" for exceeding state-set expectations.

Teachers in Delaware who now are fighting a performance-based contract proposed by the governor should take a look at the contract signed in Douglas County, Colo., a fast-growing Denver suburb. While that contract falls short of linking teacher pay to student test scores, it moves in the direction of linking teacher quality with teacher pay.

Douglas Hartman, president of the Colorado Federation of Teachers, backs the contract, saying that unless teachers adapt to changing times, less-favorable changes will be forced upon them.

He's right. And the current movement leads in the direction of a more respected, better-paid teaching profession.

Done -  
Teacher  
Salaries

## Denver proposal unacceptable

### **OPPOSING VIEW** Grading teachers on students' performance unfair.

By Andrea Giunta

The term "pay for performance," as it is being used in contract negotiations between Denver Public Schools (DPS) and the classroom teachers, is misleading at best.

The offer on the table is not to pay teachers for their performance in the classroom, but to pay teachers based on someone else's performance. In this case, that means teachers' pay would be based on how students perform in a number of areas, including standardized tests.

Teachers oppose this proposal for several reasons, but perhaps the most important is that teachers have no control over what happens to students outside of the classroom. According to research compiled by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the home environment is responsible for 49% of the factors influencing student achievement.

Regardless of a teacher's performance in the classroom, children living in homeless, hungry, abused or neglected situations will have difficulty learning and performing well on day-to-day assignments and tests.

Denver teachers welcome being held ac-

countable for the quality of their teaching. The current contract with DPS includes a process to evaluate a teacher's performance in 24 areas. If a teacher is unsatisfactory in just one of those areas, she does not receive a salary increase until future evaluations are satisfactory.

Research on performance pay indicates teachers should be rewarded for their knowledge and skills and should receive bonuses when their schools show overall improvement. This research also says that a pay system needs to foster cooperation, not competition, among school employees, parents and students. This is the approach used in the nationally acclaimed Douglas County, Colo., teacher-pay system. The Denver board rejected recommendations based on the research.

Student achievement is a priority for Denver teachers. We are willing to work hard to create stimulating, supportive environments in which learning can occur. We're willing to continue our education to improve our teaching skills. We're willing to be evaluated for our performance. We are not willing, however, to accept a pay proposal that has not been tried, is not tied to teachers' classroom performance and did not include teacher input in its creation.

*Andrea Giunta is president of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association.*

## Primary surprises

**Primary risk.** Listening to some of the talk from Republican presidential candidates, you'd think they'd lost their political marbles.

Rep. John Kasich, R-Ohio, is telling Iowans their corn alcohol subsidy should be abolished.

Elizabeth Dole was urging more controls on guns even before the Colorado massacre.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., was telling President Clinton to win the conflict in Yugoslavia at all costs, even if that meant U.S. ground troops, while fellow Republicans were disowning even the air campaign.

The standard playbook says politicians should be leery of any stand that risks angering a highly motivated constituency, such as those anxious about protecting local boondoggles, gun rights, abortion or Social Security. Doubly so in primaries, where turnout is low as 5% multiplies the clout of single-issue voters.

Cynics say these are the moves of also-rans desperate for attention. But right or wrong, when politicians are stereotyped as poll-driven and risk-averse, those with the starch to buck conventional wisdom deserve a little applause.

**Primary right.** California state Sen. Ray Haynes is a conservative Republican with a quaint democratic idea: People should have more control in picking a president.

He'd like to abolish the winner-take-all rule, a vestige of boss-controlled politics that permits a candidate with as little as 25%-30% of the primary vote to get all of the state's national convention seats.

Instead, California's 156 delegates would be divided among the state's congressional districts. The 52 separate races would produce a delegation more reflective of the state's diversity — conservative, moderate and liberal, urban, rural and suburban — and not all under the thumb of a statewide "winner."

The California GOP executive committee takes up Haynes' idea on Saturday, and those who favor power-broker politics won't like it. But the political convention was invented more than 160 years ago as a way of giving power to the grass roots. Haynes' idea is good for California — and for anyone who thinks politics should reflect the will of the voters, not the bosses.



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SANDRA FELDMAN  
PRESIDENT

EDWARD J. McELROY  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

NAT LaCOUR  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

February 22, 2000

Mr. Bruce Reed  
Executive Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

*Educ-  
Teachers*

Dear Bruce:

I thought you might be interested in AFT President Sandra Feldman's remarks late last month to the Economics Club of Detroit. In her speech, President Feldman calls for a new social compact of higher standards for teachers along with higher salaries to help recruit and retain the more than 2 million new teachers needed within the next ten years.

President Feldman makes several suggestions that might not be expected from the leader of a teachers union. For instance, she proposes modifying the traditional "single salary schedule" that has been based almost entirely on levels of education and years of experience. Additionally, she would require that teachers pass a rigorous peer review before being awarded tenure.

I hope you find the speech of interest. Please let me know if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

Gregory King  
Press Secretary and Assistant to the President for  
Communications

Enclosure

**220,000 Teachers a Year:  
Putting First-Class Educators in Every Classroom**

**Remarks by Sandra Feldman  
President, American Federation of Teachers  
Economic Club of Detroit  
January 18, 2000**

I am honored to be here at the Economic Club of Detroit.

This is the pre-eminent public forum in a city that's used to tackling the toughest problems with free-wheeling debates. And these arguments often produce an agenda for action for Detroit – and frequently, historically, for our nation as well.

In 1940, as we prepared for the fight against fascism, Walter Reuther offered an ambitious plan to retool the auto industry and retrain the workers, so that they could produce, in a phrase he made famous, "500 planes a day." He believed that if America offered the skilled and dedicated workers of our industrial heartland the resources they needed, they could rise to the challenge of replenishing the arsenal of democracy.

Reuther declared – and I quote:

"England's battles, it used to be said, were won on the playing fields of Eton. This plan is put forward in the belief that America's can be won on the assembly lines of Detroit."

It took some time, but, eventually, America pursued the vision that Reuther presented. And not only did we defeat fascism but we further developed the industrial might that built three decades of postwar prosperity and assured that American democracy would prevail against Soviet totalitarianism.

Now, our nation is at peace, our people are competing in a new global economy based on information, and America's battles will be won or lost in our public schools – where 90% of our children are preparing to be tomorrow's workers, citizens, and parents.

The challenge we're engaged in today is striving to reach the highest standards of achievement in all our schools – especially those in low-income communities, from our inner cities to our rural areas.

Let me say at the outset: This can be done.

But, just as a lot of families are being left out of economic opportunity, even in the midst of our great new prosperity, a lot of kids are being left out of educational opportunity, even in the midst of our hard-won improvements.

Much needs to be done for kids from low-income families – inside and outside the schools.

We can -- and must -- help their families by raising the minimum wage, expanding the earned income tax credit, and extending health insurance to every household.

We can -- and must -- help the children and their schools by: offering every child a quality, pre-school education; intervening early and effectively when kids fall behind; and providing small classes in the early grades -- and I'm proud that the Detroit Federation of Teachers is fighting for, and beginning to win, this goal.

And, as the Clinton/Gore Administration is proposing, we need to rebuild our aged and overcrowded schools, so our kids will feel the future opening up for them – and not the ceiling falling down on them.

Our children and our classrooms have many needs, but today I want to focus on one of the most fundamental: the need for excellent teachers.

We can't reach first-class standards without first-class teachers – dedicated professionals who have a wide and deep understanding of their subject and a repertoire of proven strategies for delivering it to their students.

Over the next ten years, we need to recruit, train, hire and retain more than 2 million teachers, according to the best estimates. Just as America's challenge 60 years ago was to produce 500 planes a day, our challenge now is to prepare over 200,000 teachers a year – and not just any teachers, but qualified, dedicated teachers in every subject, for every school, in every city and suburb and small town in this country.

I am here today to offer ideas for how we can make sure that this new generation of teachers will be qualified and capable of teaching to the tough new standards demanded by educational improvements in this country and exacting economic competition all across the world.

It won't be easy. We can't do it on the cheap. We'll have to ask more of all of our teachers – from the newcomers to the old-timers. And we'll have to find new ways to reward the best and remove the worst.

That is why I'm calling for a new social compact similar to the ones that have seen our nation through other historic challenges – a national commitment to offer teachers higher salaries at the same time we insist that they meet higher standards. We need both components of that compact – high salaries and high standards.

To attract the best teachers and keep them in the profession, we'll need to raise salaries and offer additional incentives for new knowledge, new skills, new responsibilities, outstanding performance, and taking on the toughest assignments.

To keep the confidence of the parents and taxpayers, we'll need new standards for quality and accountability, including ideas that some teachers and our unions have opposed in the past. These ideas include the requirement that teachers pass a rigorous peer review before being awarded tenure, as well as making modifications in the traditional "single salary schedule" for teachers that has been based almost entirely on levels of education and years of experience. And we need other trailblazing initiatives as well, such as making sure that elementary school teachers are equipped with proven techniques based on the most recent research breakthroughs in teaching reading.

From the federal level to our states and our major cities, public officials are addressing this problem and offering solutions. Many of these ideas are promising – such as Vice President Gore's proposal that the federal government work with the states to offer incentives for veteran teachers to serve in poor communities.

While these goals can and must be pursued in the legislative arena, they should also be promoted at the bargaining table. At the AFT, we are working on ideas for how teacher unions can use our union agreements to advance this social contract of higher salaries and higher standards – ideas we hope will get the respectful attention and support of school administrators.

The time is right. This can be done. And, in many ways, it's now or never.

We face the challenge of finding over 2 million new teachers because of the anticipated retirement of more than a million veteran teachers, the growth of student enrollments, and our critically important and long-overdue efforts to reduce class sizes. Those of you in the business community can easily understand the enormity of that challenge to a system that has to educate 52 million youngsters.

Today's schools, especially in urban areas, are already in the throes of the problem of finding and keeping good teachers.

There are shortages in important areas of expertise – math, science, special education, and bilingual education. More and more school systems are granting emergency credentials to unprepared or under-prepared teachers, or are assigning teachers to subjects they are not equipped to teach. Efforts are being made – to recruit teachers from the military, from non-traditional backgrounds, even from overseas. We have retired executives, Troops to Teachers, Teach for America, Americorps, and more.

These are good programs and AFT supports them. But they are not making a dent in the overall need – and especially not where the problems are the worst – in schools where conditions are rough, where pay is low, and where children are needy.

In low income, mostly minority schools, students have less than a 50% chance of having a certified math teacher. They lose 50% of their teachers in the first 3 to 5 years of teaching, leaving them without the stability and continuity of experienced staff.

This is one more way – and an incredibly important one – that our society shortchanges poor kids. It is a national disgrace, and it must not continue.

Without excellent teachers to get the job done, our nation's schools will not be able to continue our progress towards setting and meeting high standards.

In a relatively short time, we've gone from being a nation that didn't even talk about academic standards to one where high standards are becoming the norm.

And these reforms are getting results – fewer high school drop-outs; higher scores; and success stories of schools that are turning themselves around, even in communities where hope has been a scarce commodity.

The challenge now is to keep the standards movement going forward and do what it takes to reach every child in every classroom in every community in this country with the help they need to reach them.

As someone who grew up in public housing and built her future in our public schools and colleges, let me tell you:

We must not allow poverty to be an excuse for poor academic achievement – not for the students, not for the teachers, and not for the schools. But neither can we ignore its consequences, and overcoming them takes more than we've been giving so far. For young people from low and moderate-income families, education is the only opportunity to make their way in the world.

Overwhelmingly, our nation's teachers understand this – especially those in the major cities where the going is toughest and where the membership of our union is concentrated. They want the standards movement to continue, even if it means more demands on them.

The Albert Shanker Institute – a fledgling think tank named for the late AFT president who championed many of the reforms we are discussing today – recently conducted a survey about standards that it gave to teachers who are AFT members and the principals in their schools.

The high standards were supported overwhelmingly: by 71% of the teachers and 2/3rds of the principals – and the strongest support came from the teachers and principals in high-poverty urban areas.

But most of these teachers say that more needs to be done to help their students, and most of them frankly admit that they've been inadequately prepared to teach to the higher standards. And nearly two-thirds say they need more professional development even if it means lengthening the school day or year.

We must listen to the voices of today's teachers as we prepare to hire tomorrow's teachers. Right now, before it is too late, we must prepare for well-educated teachers in every classroom.

Here, briefly, are ten things we should be doing right now:

First: Prepare new teachers better before they begin their careers.

Good teachers need to be really well educated – as our good teachers today are. They need to know – deeply – the subject they teach. And they need to know how to teach.

A rigorous college education is essential – but it isn't enough. School districts should work with universities to provide meaningful, practical experience in the classroom for prospective teachers.

Second: Special attention must be paid to teaching reading – the fundamental skill on which all education depends.

Children who don't learn to read early and well are unlikely to learn anything else. And they're going to have a hard time supporting themselves in a new economy where processing information is a skill needed to build cars as well as computers.

As with so much else in school and in life, reading problems hit hardest at the kids in greatest need. For children from poor families, the rates of reading failure are high. On average they come to school already two to four years behind in vocabulary and other skills.

But the good news is: Thanks to new research, the knowledge now exists to teach almost all children how to read well.

We need to make sure that new teachers learn these techniques and experienced teachers have the professional development that allows them to benefit from them, too – especially teachers and paraprofessionals from Kindergarten through Grade 3.

Third: Provide immediate and ongoing support on the job for new teachers.

This happens in most other professions, and in the schools that succeed in the advanced nations we're competing with around the world. New teachers should develop and perfect their teaching skills by closely observing, meeting with, and learning from their more experienced colleagues in an organized, institutionalized program of mentoring. In the AFT, we seek to bargain for programs that provide experienced teachers with an active part in improving their colleagues' teaching. But that effort requires a partner on the management side, and unfortunately, it isn't

happening as much as it should. Fortunately, in Dearborn, it is – and it's making a difference in quality.

Fourth: Find fair and workable ways to remove incompetent teachers. We need to assure due process and quality.

In too many schools, teachers are subject to perfunctory or arbitrary reviews by administrators who don't understand the subject matter themselves. It is quite common, for example, to have a principal who is a former phys ed teacher evaluating a physics teacher.

We don't advocate eliminating administrator responsibility; the buck has to stop somewhere, and school leadership is really important.

But the best – and most rigorous -- evaluations are by teachers who know the discipline, know about teaching, and know from painful experience that they don't want to face the failures of an incompetent colleague in their own classroom next year.

That is why we are bargaining more and more Peer Assistance and Peer Review programs where experienced, high-quality teachers evaluate their less experienced colleagues. They take an active role in helping those in need of improvement. And, with those who don't measure up, even after extensive help, they counsel them out of the profession.

We should take this proven educational reform to its logical next step. In addition to the reviews that now exist, no teacher in any classroom in any school in any community in this country should receive tenure without undergoing a successful peer review.

Fifth, we should call a halt to the tactics that school systems use to take the easy way out of the challenge of finding first class teachers in every subject.

It's way past time to eliminate emergency credentials and out-of-field teaching. If necessary, school districts should offer incentives to credentialed teachers to take on additional courses in their field, or entice qualified veteran teachers to put off retirement. We can't afford to shortchange our children because the adults in charge are unwilling to address this problem.

Sixth: We must have ongoing, meaningful professional development in every school and district. Most large companies consider ongoing training of staff a part of doing business. School districts must adopt that practice and provide the resources for it.

Teachers need to keep current with the latest knowledge in their subject areas and with proven teaching techniques, and they need to have the time to meet with colleagues and help each other unlock the difficulties students often present.

We need to change the entire atmosphere in schools to encourage and institutionalize collegiality and the quest for constant improvement.

Seventh, and in that spirit, we need new roles for teachers.

Teachers aren't interchangeable parts. We can't recruit or retain the best people to our profession, and we can't make the most of their talents, when teachers can't look forward to new challenges and increased rewards unless they leave the classroom to become administrators.

We need to do much more to extend and expand the role of mentors, of master teachers – excellent and experienced educators who help their colleagues and the school in many ways.

Eighth: We need to find new ways to develop, recognize, and reward the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities these roles require.

That may mean salary premiums for teachers in subjects where talent is urgently needed but in short supply.

That can mean extra pay for teachers in schools that are hard to staff, and where longer days and years and extraordinary effort is required.

And that also can mean beginning a new and serious discussion of rewarding special skills, special knowledge, special responsibilities, and special accomplishments – from earning advanced degrees, to mentoring colleagues, or working with teams of colleagues to attain dramatic improvements in student achievement.

In the past, too many initiatives that went under the label of "merit pay" were under-funded and poorly planned, without objective standards and fair systems for determining who qualified.

But new ways to reward great teaching are being developed. Many states now provide bonuses to faculties in schools that achieve steady improvement. But only 14 states provide salary supplements for the teachers who qualify as master teachers through the National Board Certification process – and that's one merit pay plan that has real merit, and that teachers believe in.

Ninth: Raise teacher salaries significantly. As we answer the challenge of finding more than 2 million new teachers, we've got to get real.

For years, the teaching profession could count on discrimination, depression, and recession to act as its recruiting agents. But, thankfully, women and minorities can now explore other professional opportunities. And a booming economy offers exciting opportunities for young women and men from every background. But the market competition idea isn't working here.

Urban and rural school districts across the nation, where the most serious shortages of good teachers are, are struggling to recruit. They don't have the tax base or the resources to compete with higher-paying suburbs, let alone other professions.

Governors and state legislators will have to step up to the plate here – and perhaps even the federal government, as Vice President Gore has suggested.

In a knowledge-driven full employment economy, teaching must offer competitive salaries. With starting salaries of little more than \$25,000, average salaries of less than \$40,000, and little opportunity for advancement, we can look forward to shortages of quantity and quality, and we'll shortchange our kids and our country far into the future.

Tenth: and finally, teacher unions need to continue to do our part as architects of the future and agents of reform.

Virtually every improvement strategy I've mentioned today – from higher standards to peer review – was invented or championed by the AFT at the local and national levels. We have been at the cutting edge of turning around low performing schools, and pushing for research-proven programs.

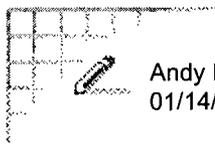
Further, at our professional issues conference last summer, I discussed the idea of streamlined, information-age contracts that would set scales for salaries and benefits, provide due process, and commit resources for evaluation programs at the district level, while offering teachers and administrators in the schools the flexibility and autonomy they need to deliver instruction to their students.

Here in the Detroit area, enlightened employers understand how good labor relations and collective bargaining can be a mechanism for improving quality, and how system-wide agreements in industries such as auto can offer management and employees the opportunity to solve problems and make progress at the local level.

Most of all, you understand how skilled and dedicated Americans can see and shape the future. Sixty years ago, on the eve of World War II, when he sketched out his plan for "500 planes a day," Walter Reuther said: "Time, every moment of it precious, ... will not permit us to wait." Today, at the start of a new decade where we must prepare over 200,000 first-class teachers a year, time is just as precious, delay is just as dangerous, and, once again, we dare not fail.

Thank you.

Educ -  
Teachers



Andy Rotherham  
01/14/2000 11:36:27 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP  
cc: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP, Cathy R. Mays/OPD/EOP@EOP  
Subject: Chuck Schumer teacher plan

Bruce:

You asked me to look over Chuck Schumer's teacher proposals. In a nutshell, he is proposing a "Marshall Plan" for teacher recruitment. His proposals would:

- Forgive all student loans for people who teach in public schools for at least 5 years. \$14 billion over ten years.
- Creates a Mentor Teacher program where quality veteran teachers adopt young teachers and mentor them about teaching, classroom management, curriculum, etc. \$50 million in grants to school districts to run these programs.
- Gives a stipend of \$2,500 to math and science teachers who pass an advanced competency test developed by the National Academy of Sciences. \$10 million per year.
- Gives grants to school districts to pay 75 percent of the cost of having teachers complete one year intensive programs to become board certified. \$50 million per year.
- A national public service campaign to encourage people to become teachers and offer one year grants to professionals in other fields to become teachers. \$20 million per year.
- Provides incentives for retirees to enter teaching through pension provisions that maintain pensions for federal workers who upon retirement enter teaching. Also includes a public challenge to private sector employees to do the same.

The loan provision makes some sense although it is expensive. Our current forgiveness programs really don't offer enough of an incentive on an economic basis to move people into teaching, they are more of just a reward for people who are doing so.

The mentor program is a good idea and so is the public service campaign/stipend idea although it overlaps with our Transition to Teaching proposal.

The pension provision is good, giving people with defined-benefit pensions a break if they teach makes sense.

The one year board certification proposal makes sense although the NBTPS is designed to be a year so the "intensive" part is curious.

The National Academy of Sciences has no math or science test so one would have to be developed to make that part of the proposal workable.

Andy

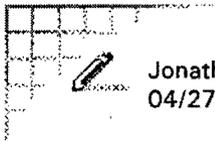
Ednc-Teachers

→ MIKE re FLEXIBILITY/STATES  
PERF. BONUSES

- FY99 FLE \$ for Alternative  
Certif.

→ Alcohol-free schools

→ Jose: -- Drivers Licenses  
- Community Service



Jonathan H. Schnur  
04/27/99 01:29:08 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP  
cc: Tanya E. Martin/OPD/EOP, Bethany Little/OPD/EOP  
Subject: For today's 2pm -- other ESEA issues that Tanya and I have not been able to resolve with Education

Here are the remaining issues that either Tanya, Bethany, and I have been pushing with Education that have not been agreed-to, or that we need to confirm. We dropped other concerns that they opposed because they just weren't a big enough deal. If you are Ok with these, we'd like to raise at today's 2pm.

**1) Troops to Teachers:**

a) **The Name of the program.** We suggested that the name of the program be changed from "Transition to Teaching" to "Troops to Teachers: Transition to Teaching". Education responded that they would rather not, and Mike reiterated that in last week's meeting, stating that this is primarily about other mid-career professionals not troops. This is NOT consistent with agreements we worked out with Ann O'Leary and other ED staff that about half of these \$ would be used for Troops.

b) **Who gets the \$ for Troops.** Currently, it is not clear to whom the \$ for the expanded Troops program -- including the stipends and other support -- would be given. Right now, the language only appears to envision a \$1 million contract from Education to Defense and no mechanism or language for providing the larger amount needed to expand the program.

**2) Title II and Title I: --permitting alternative certification like Teach for America, high quality alternative certification programs.** Right now, the bill would say that states need to get within 4 years 95% of their teachers in public schools a) certified, or b) have a college degree and are enrolled in a program (including an alternative certification program) leading to full certification in their field within two years).

This will be problematic for teach for America and high-quality alternative certification programs that do not lead to certification within 2 years. We recommended saying teachers could be considered "qualified" if they have a college degree and are in alternative certification programs determined by the state or school district to provide qualified teachers with the training and support needed to succeed in the classroom. *Education said no to this.*

**3) Report cards.** We suggested changing language to require comparisons of progress made by the school in improving the achievement of its students. These demonstrated gains are often a more accurate reflection of the school's improvement than a straight comparison of overall performance to other schools. Education initially said no, though Ann O'Leary seemed to be OK with it.

**4) Safe and Drug-Free Schools: - Alternative placements.** Are we ok with requiring schools to provide alternative education placements for students suspended under the Gun-Free schools act?

**5) Tobacco.** Make sure that OMB/ED have fix on the tobacco issue suggested by Cythina Rice that Elena ok'd. i.e. requiring that schools and school events be tobacco, drug and alcohol free.

**6) Bilingual --** OMB has raised two concerns about the implementation of the three-year goal in Title VII that we share. Moreover, make sure that Education put in language reflecting our agreement about the use of english-language tests.

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# Teacher Quality is Job One

## *Why States Need to Revamp Teacher Certification*

*Stephanie Soler*

In the spring of 1998, 1800 prospective teachers in Massachusetts took the first ever Massachusetts Teacher Test, a high school level test of skills. Despite the fact that Massachusetts is home to some of the best teacher education programs in the country—including those at Harvard University, Boston College, and Boston University—59 percent of the teachers failed. Thirty percent failed a basic reading and writing test, and failure rates on subject matter tests ranged from 18 percent in physical education to 63 percent in mathematics. Spelling errors included “integraty,” “serching,” “corupt,” and “messures.” Similarly, last year only 202 out of 758 teaching applicants in a suburban New York district passed a reading comprehension test drawn from the state’s high school Regents English exam. If teachers can not pass high school level tests, how can we expect their students to do it?

Around the country, recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is becoming a major concern. As states and districts enact higher standards for promotion and graduation, it is critical for teachers to have a solid grasp on the subjects they teach. Yet just as we are expecting more from teachers, fewer and fewer of the most talented college graduates are entering the profession. There is also growing concern that schools of education are ineffective. Critics maintain that they emphasize pedagogy at the expense of rigorous academic content and lack connections to real world classrooms.

Some states no longer accept undergraduate degrees in education for teacher certification. Instead, they require a liberal arts undergraduate degree plus one or two years of additional graduate study. Although this approach ostensibly has the advantage of ensuring that teachers have both solid academic backgrounds and teaching skills, it also has the negative effect of deterring those unwilling to spend additional years and money in graduate school, especially since many education graduate programs have mediocre reputations. Even more troubling, because of low academic standards in many universities, a liberal arts college graduate may not necessarily have mastered his subject. Rather than prescribing the means of training teachers, states should demand that teachers demonstrate subject mastery through rigorous exams and hold them, and those making hiring decisions, accountable for classroom performance.

Back in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education reported in *A Nation at Risk* that not enough “academically able” students were being attracted to teaching as a career option.<sup>1</sup> Student performance was clearly suffering. Fifteen years later, test results indicate the trend continues.

**Teachers Can't Teach What They Haven't Studied: Teacher Training in the United States**

Increasingly, students are expected to pass high-stakes tests for promotion and graduation and they must have teachers who have the knowledge and teaching skills to help them pass. Unfortunately, state teacher certification policies actually *discourage* potential teachers from studying academic subjects, so it should come as no surprise that teachers lack deep subject matter knowledge. Although requirements vary across states, there are three basic components states use to determine who is qualified to teach: formal education, student teaching, and standardized tests. In practice, states issue teacher licenses primarily based on hours of study—not demonstrated proficiency in a subject or in the classroom. The problem is not that teachers are not certified. The vast majority of public school teachers—over 90 percent—are indeed certified to teach. The problem is teacher certification simply does not translate into teacher quality, especially when it comes to subject matter mastery.

### ***Teacher Testing: What Do Teachers Know?***

The United States is one of the few countries participating in the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), a math and science education study of 41 countries, that does not uniformly require teachers to pass a test for certification. Testing requirements for new teachers vary greatly among states. Despite rigid certification requirements, many teacher education programs are producing graduates with poor basic skills. In general, the teaching profession loses the brightest college graduates who are lured by more lucrative careers. According to Harvard University's Richard Murnane, "College graduates with high test scores are less likely to become teachers, licensed teachers with high test scores are less likely to take teaching jobs, employed teachers with high test scores are less likely to stay, and former teachers with high test scores are less likely to return."<sup>2</sup> A bold strategy is necessary to reverse this trend.

Many states require teachers to take some type of certification test. Many states employ the Praxis tests for initial certification, developed by the Education Testing Service (ETS) in 1993. The consensus view is that these tests are not particularly difficult. (One sample question from a Praxis general knowledge test asks prospective teachers to list the following events in chronological order: The beginning of the Great Depression, The First World War, The New Deal, and the Korean War.) In Virginia, nearly one third of aspiring teachers did not pass the Praxis test of basic skills in reading, writing, and math this year. If the twenty other states issuing the test had used Virginia's cutoff, about half of the test takers would have failed.

Education school professors and others argue against testing teachers. One argument is that minority teachers tend to fail such tests at a higher rate than white teachers. In 1996, a federal judge upheld the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) after a group of minority educators claimed the test was a "discriminatory selection device" that prevented qualified minorities from obtaining a teaching credential. As a result of the suit, state officials removed difficult geometry and algebra questions from the test. In Massachusetts, only 31 percent of African American prospective teachers passed the literacy portion of the test, compared to a 51 percent passing rate for all racial and ethnic groups.

Recruiting minority teachers has become a public policy priority, since there are far more minority students than teachers. One-third of K-12 students are black, Hispanic, or Asian, while 87 percent of teachers are white. Nearly half of all schools do not have a single minority teacher.<sup>3</sup> A major barrier to recruiting more minority teachers is that minority students are less likely than white students to enroll in and graduate from college. But the story is much more complicated.

As minorities have made socioeconomic gains in recent decades, they are pursuing more lucrative professional careers. The result is that fewer well-educated minorities are entering the teaching profession. In the 1940s, 79 percent of female, African American college graduates became teachers; that figure has dropped to just 23 percent.\*

Another criticism of teacher testing is that the research link between test scores and classroom performance has not been definitively established. Yet, there is also no evidence that teachers who graduate from accredited teacher programs are more effective than teachers who do not. Test scores in and of themselves will not ensure quality teaching; neither will rigid certification requirements. However, some measure of basic competence is necessary to prevent the grossly incompetent from teaching children. A solid foundation in basic skills and in the subject one teaches must be a prerequisite to entering a classroom. Teachers, like students, should not be "socially promoted."

### ***Teachers Can't Teach What They Haven't Learned***

A surprisingly large number of teachers have not actually studied their subjects. For example, although most social studies teachers in grades 7 through 12 are certified, only 20 percent of them majored or minored in history (which is what comprises most of "social studies" at the secondary level). Fourteen percent of these teachers hold a degree in "social studies education," and another 65 percent have an education degree unrelated to an academic discipline. Overall, the majority of today's public school teachers majored in education as undergraduates rather than any specific subject area.

Secondary school teachers are less likely to have majored in general education; only 20 percent of teachers at the secondary level majored in general education, compared with 69 percent of teachers at the elementary level.<sup>4</sup> However, this is not to say that most secondary teachers hold "subject matter" majors. Prospective teachers are often segregated academically from liberal arts students. An aspiring scientist studies chemistry or biology, usually in the college of arts and sciences, while an aspiring science teacher studies "science education" in the college of education.

The phenomenon of out-of-field teaching is more common in schools with higher proportions of low-income students and minorities as well as in certain subject areas like math and science. For example, in secondary schools where 40 percent or more of the student population is eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch, over 40 percent of students in math classes are taught by teachers without an undergraduate major in the field. Fully 73 percent of students in physics classes are taught by teachers without an undergraduate major in the field.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, in most states professionals with strong backgrounds in an academic field are barred from the classroom. Even college professors can not teach high school students; last year, Wyoming had to actually pass new legislation to allow university and community college instructors to teach high school classes without attaining certification. Common sense dictates that a college math professor should be eligible to teach high school geometry, but in most states that is not the case.

**Students taught by teachers with no undergraduate degree in the field**

- 32% of students in math classes
  - 33% of students in biology classes
  - 45% of students in chemistry classes
  - 68% of students in physics classes
- U.S. Department of Education, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1993-94.*

As it has become clear that teachers should master the subject they intend to teach, some states have changed their policies. Ten states now require all new teachers to hold a major in a specific subject field other than education. An additional 19 states and the District of Columbia require only secondary school teachers to hold a major in an academic subject. Recent data shows that a shift is indeed taking place in teacher training. Newer teachers are more likely to have majored in academic subjects.

### ***Education Schools: How Are Teachers Trained?***

Schools of Education have long been objects of criticism. In general, they are not as competitive as other professional graduate programs. For example, Columbia University Teachers College—the top-ranked school of education in the country—accepts 61 percent of all applicants to its master’s program. Meanwhile, Columbia’s highly ranked business school only accepts 13 percent of applicants. Many graduates of top education schools choose not to teach: overall, 25-40 percent of education school graduates choose not to teach, and the percentage is even higher at the top schools.

According to a recent report from Public Agenda Foundation, the priorities of education school professors differ drastically from those of parents and the public. The majority of Americans want public schools to place more emphasis on the basics: reading, writing, math, good work habits, and discipline. Yet professors place more emphasis on developing a “love for learning” than on the basics. For example, only a third of professors think that students should be required to know the names and locations of the fifty states before receiving a diploma. As a Los Angeles professor put it, “Why should they know [the fifty states]? They need to know how to find out where they are. When I need to know that, I go look it up. That’s the important piece, and here is what’s hard to get parents to understand.” There is no doubt that developing lifelong learning skills is crucial in the New Economy. However, students must master the basics before they can think critically.

The same report found that 57 percent of professors believe that it is absolutely essential for teachers to be deeply knowledgeable about the content of the specific subjects they will be teaching, while 82 percent think it is absolutely essential for teachers to be committed to teaching kids to be active learners. A mere 12 percent of professors think it is absolutely essential for teachers to expect students to be neat, on time, and polite, and only 19 percent think that stressing correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation is absolutely essential for teachers. It comes as no surprise then to find that 17 percent of education school professors have never been K-12 classroom teachers, and that 51 percent of the rest have not been K-12 teachers for over fifteen years.

Education professors themselves report serious problems. Over 80 percent say that their programs need to do a better job weeding out unsuitable teachers, 63 percent admit that education programs often fail to prepare teachers for the challenge of real-world teaching, and

75 percent find that their students have trouble writing essays free of grammar and spelling mistakes.<sup>6</sup>

In the past decade, teacher training practices have shifted somewhat. Several prominent reports recommended that teachers use their undergraduate years to study academics and study education in graduate school. Subsequently, several states now require one or two years of graduate level education for teacher certification. Although this is a step in the right direction, there is not one particular method of training and certification that will always guarantee teacher quality. In fact, mandatory training requirements will hinder innovation in training. Rather than regulating the *means* of educating teachers, states should concentrate instead on ensuring that students have qualified teachers in their classrooms. Student performance, not seat time in education school, must be the bottom line.

## **Putting Talented Teachers in the Classroom**

Since school administrators simply cannot leave teaching positions vacant, some schools must scramble to put warm bodies in front of classrooms during the first week of school. In California, 21,000 of the state's 250,000 teachers are working with emergency permits in the most troubled schools. A growing student population and class size reduction will only exacerbate this problem. Facing a teacher shortage in the 1980s, New Jersey was the first state to offer prospective teachers an alternative route to certification. Unlike emergency permits, which open the doors to teaching to anyone with a college degree, alternative certification programs generally require the passage of a competency test and ongoing professional development. Now 41 states and the District of Columbia have some form of alternative certification, although the promise of such programs has not been realized because they are often designed as stopgap emergency measures, not as systemic ways to lift teacher quality.

Alternative credential programs go beyond the typical "approved college teacher education route." To qualify for many alternative teacher credential programs, applicants must have a baccalaureate degree, and at least one year of work experience, demonstrate experience with children (i.e., through volunteer work), and complete an extensive number of hours in training and management. Successful completion of standardized Praxis I tests along with a minimum college GPA are additional requirements set up by alternative credential programs.<sup>7</sup> The growing number of teachers entering the profession through alternative routes supports the claim that there are many college graduates interested in teaching who are deterred by traditional requirements.

California has made great use of its Teacher Internship Program since the state reduced class size to 20 in grades K-3 two years ago. The internships are the products of local partnerships between districts and universities. They offer candidates a full-salary teaching position upon completion of 120 hours of pre-service training and passage of the state's teacher assessments. The streamlined process attracts a greater number of teacher candidates who specialize in particular fields or demonstrate special skills.

One of the greatest benefits associated with alternative teacher certification programs is the practical experience and maturity that these people have gained in another job that they can then bring to the classroom. Instead of teaching immediately upon graduation from college, alternative programs attract people who have already established themselves in a previous career. Not only do these candidates have college majors in science, math, and the liberal arts, they may

bring a critical perspective to students as to the necessary skills required in the workplace. The mean age for the California program is 38. Alternative certification programs also attract a higher proportion of minority teachers than traditional programs.

Alternative programs have shown high retention rates. Less than three-fourths of California's traditional teacher education graduates actually become teachers. An astonishing 75 percent of teachers with emergency permits leave after 2 years, while 88 percent of interns are still in the classroom.

While alternative certification programs bring many benefits, traditional teacher credential programs continue to overshadow alternative ones. And although they offer a streamlined entry into the profession, most states require candidates to complete course work in schools of education during the first few years of teaching.

## **Policy Implications**

There is clearly a problem in the way teachers are certified, hired, and rewarded. States and districts will not be able to raise their standards unless they have a larger applicant pool. Maryland is a telling example. That state requires teachers to take exams in the subjects they plan to teach, but in high shortage disciplines, such as chemistry and physics, the exams are given on a "no fault" basis. That is, teachers must take the exam, but there is no requirement that they actually pass it. Meanwhile, many talented people are barred from public classrooms because they lack education course work, choosing instead to teach in private schools or enter other professions.

Of course, someone who masters a subject area will not necessarily have the skills to teach it. Most new teachers will need training in classroom management, instruction, and other teaching skills, but states should not prescribe a particular way to do this.

Alternative routes into the teaching profession should not be reserved for the most desperate situations. The field should be open to those with traditional education training and those with a liberal arts background or relevant professional experience. To ensure teacher quality, schools should require new teachers to demonstrate mastery of the subjects they will teach, hold teachers accountable for classroom performance, dismiss poor teachers, and reward excellent teachers. Only by boosting teacher expertise can we expect students to excel.

## **Recommendations**

To meet these policy challenges, PPI proposes the following:

- ▶ ***States should develop assessments for new teachers based on established student standards.*** Most states have developed standards for what students should know and be able to do. The next logical step is for states to create tests for new teachers that are aligned with student standards. All new teachers should be required to pass challenging state competency examinations.
- ▶ ***States should modernize teacher certification.*** States should not prescribe a particular method of teacher training. Ironically, states' course work requirements for what aspiring teachers should study are actually contradictory. Some states

specifically require undergraduate course work in education, while others specifically require undergraduate course work in the liberal arts. The proliferation of interdisciplinary undergraduate majors makes it increasingly difficult for states to prescribe a specific course of study. Finally, a prescribed course of study hinders innovation in training. A principal should be able to hire any candidate who passes the state competency exam.

- ▶ ***States should promote alternative teacher education programs.*** Although states should not dictate teacher education, most teachers will need training. Schools of education will continue to train teachers, but government should also support other forms of teacher training. For example, public schools could follow the example of many private schools and place inexperienced teachers with a mentor as a paid assistant. More states could implement teacher internship programs, similar to the one in California, which place professionals as full-time teachers after a summer of training and provides them with ongoing professional development. In order to receive government funding and accreditation, states should require that all teacher education programs ensure that a high percentage of students pass the state competency exam.
- ▶ ***Districts should recruit teachers in shortage areas with higher pay.*** In today's society, a solid background in math and science is valuable. It is not surprising to find that there is a nationwide shortage of math and science teachers. According to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, that state has *never* filled its math and science teaching positions (in forty years of keeping records) with fully credentialed teachers. At the same time, there are four to seven times as many social studies teachers as positions. Allowing professionals with math and science backgrounds to enter the profession more easily would help ease the situation, but the reality is that districts will have to pay math and science teachers more. Likewise, it is difficult to recruit teachers into high poverty urban and rural areas. Rather than scrambling to put warm bodies in classrooms during the first week of school and lowering teacher test score cutoffs, school districts should recruit workers like other segments of the labor market: by raising salaries.
- ▶ ***Teacher shortage districts should offer "signing bonuses" to teachers who relocate.*** Some areas, especially those with many colleges and universities, have teacher surpluses. Conversely, areas without a well-educated population often have a hard time finding well-educated teachers. Teachers who relocate should, like other professionals, receive financial incentives to move.
- ▶ ***The federal government should provide incentives for teachers to teach in high poverty areas.*** Since high poverty areas face financial constraints, the federal government should help level the playing field by expanding loan forgiveness programs. Such programs should target teachers who pass the state competency exam and teach in high-poverty, teacher shortage areas.

- ▶ ***States should repeal teacher tenure laws.*** The way to improve teacher quality is to hold teachers accountable for performance. Tenure laws prevent principals from firing incompetent teachers. Firing a teacher can take years and cost a school system thousands of dollars. Not surprisingly, schools rarely make the effort. In the 1997-1998 school year, ten of Boston's 46,000 teachers were recommended for dismissal, the largest number ever. Not a single teacher faced dismissal the prior year. As in any profession, teachers should have protection from discrimination, but they should be dismissed if they are ineffective.
  
- ▶ ***Schools should reward educators for high performance.*** When teachers and administrators succeed in boosting student performance, they should receive bonuses and other recognition. Currently, performance incentives are rare in public schools, but experiments have occurred in Kentucky, South Carolina, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district in North Carolina. In New York City, the business community has adopted a district in the East New York section of Brooklyn, and plans to raise \$29 million to reward effective teachers, principals, and superintendents. Compensating high performance should not be an isolated event.
  
- ▶ ***Schools must be attractive workplaces.*** There are deeper problems surrounding teacher recruitment and retention beyond certification and salaries (which are outside the scope of this paper). High-poverty schools face shortages in large part because they are unsafe, bureaucratic red-tape interferes with teachers' efforts to do their jobs, and teachers often do not have the necessary supplies and resources. Larger reform efforts that empower teachers will go a long way in making the profession more attractive. For example, Washington, DC has a general teacher shortage, yet attracted hundreds of interested candidates to its charter school fair this spring. Although the new charter schools will serve at-risk students and are not located in the best facilities, prospective teachers were attracted to the prospect of working in an innovative, non-bureaucratic school. All teachers should work in such an environment.

## Conclusion

Teacher quality is not the only component of effective schooling, however it is a crucial one. Quality teachers are as important to academic achievement as high standards, adequate resources, and accountability. It is imperative that states consider teacher quality when developing their educational strategy and teacher certification policies.

## Endnotes

1. Findings from the Condition of Education, "America's Teachers Ten Years After a Nation at Risk."
2. Richard Murnane, et al., *Who Will Teach? Policies that Matter*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991): 10.
3. U.S. Department of Education, *Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993-1994* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993-1994).
4. *America's Teachers: Profile of a Profession, 1993-1994* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).
5. U.S. Department of Education, *Schools and Staffing Survey, 1993-1994* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994).
6. *Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education*, (Washington, DC: Public Agenda Foundation, 1997).
7. Emily C. Feistritz, "Alternative Teacher Certification—An Overview" (1998).

Final 10/13/98 10:45am

Jeff Shesol

RANGER  
Lowey  
M-Brian

TEACHERS

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON**  
**REMARKS ON SCHOOL MODERNIZATION**  
**SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND**

**October 13, 1998**

Acknowledgments: Gov. Glendening; Sen. Daschle;  
Rep. Gephardt; Sec. Riley; Carolyne Starek (STAIR-ick),  
Principal of Forest Knolls Elementary School

I want to thank Principal Starek (STAIR-ick) and the students and teachers of Forest Knolls for having us here today and for showing us your school. It is fitting that we are joined here by Governor Glendening, who has done so much to build strong schools and a better education for the children of Maryland -- building or renovating thousands of classrooms and moving ahead with plans for thousands more.

Six years ago, when I first ran for President, I said that our government could live within its means, and, at the same time, invest in our people. This required some tough choices. Today, we see that the tough choices were the right ones: We are living in an American economic renaissance. Our economy is the strongest in a generation, and we have the first budget surplus in a generation. Opportunity is abundant. Communities are getting stronger. Families are more secure. These are prosperous and productive times, and the American people have worked hard to get us here.

It is important to remember, in these prosperous times, exactly why we have all worked so hard to balance the budget: not only to strengthen our powerful economy, but also to do something meaningful for our children.

Eight months ago, in my State of the Union Address, I asked the Congress to widen the circle of opportunity in America by strengthening our public schools for the 21st Century.

I asked them to take two critical steps. I proposed, first, to help local communities reduce class size in the early grades by hiring 100,000 new teachers. Studies confirm what every parent already knows: smaller classes and better trained teachers make a big difference, from improved test scores to improved discipline.

Second, I asked Congress to help local communities modernize crowded and crumbling schools. We had a record number of children start school this year in America -- 52.7 million, half a million more than last year, more than at the height of the baby boom. And a recent study from the General Accounting Office concluded that as many as one-third of America's classrooms are in need of serious modernization and repair. That's one third of our children in substandard classrooms. And, as we can see, too many are in trailers like these. We call them "temporary." Yet at many schools across America, they are anything but temporary. They are almost certain to be here next year, and there will likely be more of them the year after that.

Our teachers are holding classes in trailers, classes in hallways, classes in gyms.

**Let me be clear: any country that has its children learning in trailers instead of in classrooms is not fully prepared for the 21st Century.**

I believe we have an opportunity in this budget to help communities meet the challenges of a record number of students. My proposal is the first national initiative to help communities build, repair and modernize more than 5,000 schools. It could also make schools more accessible.

It targets investments where they are needed most, and maintains our fiscal discipline with targeted, school construction tax cuts that are fully paid for within the balanced budget. It does not take a penny from the surplus.

Eight months have passed since I made this proposal to modernize our schools. But since Congress has yet failed to act, my budget team yesterday brought to Capitol Hill a detailed proposal to pay for these badly-needed tax cuts -- dime for dime, dollar for dollar -- by closing various corporate loopholes. Right here in Maryland, our plan would mean tax credits on more than \$300 million of bonds to help build or modernize their schools.

In Florida, where the Vice President is also visiting overcrowded school today, our proposal would help build or modernize more than 300 schools.

There are many other important elements in this proposal, including after-school and summer school programs to help students rise to higher academic standards. But the number of teachers and the conditions in crowded classrooms are the most pressing issues, and they demand immediate national attention. When communities across America told us they needed help in the fight against crime, we made a national commitment to giving them the help they needed. Not federal control, but better local control.

That is the idea behind our community policing effort that is putting 100,000 officers on the streets. America's schools are no less important than America's streets. They, too, deserve a national commitment to helping communities meet their needs. Smaller classes, more teachers, modern classrooms -- all can do for our public schools what 100,000 new police officers are doing to keep our communities safe.

School is almost out of session on Capitol Hill. I know members are eager to return home, and I know there's an election coming. But before Congress goes home to campaign, I urge them to put progress ahead of partisanship. This balanced budget presents an opportunity to make a critical investment in the future of our children, and of our nation. If we work together, I believe we can make the most of this opportunity.

*Edison  
Teachers*

**Hold for Release**  
**Embargoed until Thursday, October 22, 1998 (am)**

**Contact: Chris Cerf, The Edison Project, 212-419-1605**  
**Pat Tornillo, United Teachers of Dade, 305-854-0220**  
**Eric J. Parker, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 305-995-1525**

**EDISON, TEACHERS UNION AND SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNOUNCE  
INNOVATIVE STOCK OPTIONS PLAN FOR TEACHERS**

**PLAN WILL SERVE AS NATIONAL MODEL**

Miami, FL - Officials from the Edison Project, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS), and the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) jointly announced today that the 90 teachers and staff members of Henry E. S. Reeves Elementary School will receive stock options in Edison, America's largest private manager of public schools.

Edison officials noted that the company will make options available to any Edison school that requests them. Edison operates 51 public schools serving more than 24,000 students in 26 communities across the country. Reeves, which opened in 1996 and serves 1,175 K-5 students, operates as a partnership among MDCPS, UTD (an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers) and The Edison Project.

"This is the first time in the history of American education that teachers have become direct economic stakeholders in the public schools where they work. It's about time," said Pat Tornillo, Executive Vice President of the UTD.

"This is an innovative approach to teacher compensation that did not come in exchange for scaling back teachers' salaries and benefits," said Sandra Feldman, President of the American Federation of Teachers. "It was done in partnership with the union. It should be interesting to see how it turns out."

Tornillo and Chris Whittle, Edison's founder and CEO, both noted that the options plan will help reinforce the school's top priority--improved student achievement. Added Whittle, "Until now, education has been one of the few sectors in the U.S. economy where the people doing the front-line work were not in a position to reap the rewards from the enterprise's success, which in the case of schools is improved student performance. We want to help change that. Our curriculum and professional development are helping teachers succeed professionally. We hope our option plan will help them succeed financially."

Miami-Dade Superintendent of Schools Roger C. Cuevas also praised the innovative approach. "Our foremost objective is to improve student achievement. We embrace any effort that will help students succeed," Cuevas said. "This is a win-win-win-win for teachers, for Edison, for the district, and most importantly, for our students."

Under the option plan, all full-time staff at the school will receive options, enabling them to buy shares of Edison stock at a set price once the company is traded publicly. The teachers and staff could then sell them and benefit from any increase in the shares' value. Many companies use options to reward employees. Although private firms sometimes offer options in return for salary reductions, Edison and union officials emphasized that this is not the case here; the options will be in addition to current salaries and normal increases. "Teachers and staff will continue doing what they have been doing--helping children get a great education," said Tornillo. "The difference is they now have an ownership interest in success in the same way that millions of employees in the private sector do."

"This is great news for our entire school community--teachers, staff, parents, and students," said Reeves Principal Diane Paschal, the 1996 Miami-Dade County Principal of the Year. "All of us feel incredible ownership in this program already. We're motivated. We've been working day and night to make a difference for children. We're already seeing results in the classroom. This adds a financial reward to the people who are most responsible for raising student performance--our teachers and staff."

"This is exactly the kind of constructive partnership with local unions, school districts, and charter boards that we are committed to. Because the success of Edison depends to a great extent on our partners, we want to make sure to share our success with them," said Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., Edison's Chairman and Chief Education Officer.

All full-time personnel at Reeves will be able to buy shares at a set price after the stock goes public. Shares with a total exercise price of \$10,500 will be set aside for the principal, \$5,400 for lead teachers, \$3,000 for teachers and \$1,000 for other school staff. Options will vest over a five-year period.

While the company declined to make any predictions about its future value, Michael Moe, a managing director at Merrill Lynch, noted that, "this has the potential to be the most significant increase in educator compensation ever."

Edison offers a comprehensive school design that features: an ambitious and wide-ranging curriculum, pervasive use of technology (including a computer on every teacher's desk and in the home of every student in grades three and up), an extended school day and school year, and an

innovative organization that allows teams of teachers to work with the same students over several years.

Since its inception, the company has raised \$161 million in private capital to support its research and development and to build out its national system of schools.

Edison invested nearly \$40 million in R&D before it opened its first schools. To maintain the same high standards in all of its schools, both new and existing, Edison continues to invest in curriculum support systems, including substantial continuing commitment to professional training for its educators.

During the 1998-1999 school year, Edison more than doubled its schools (from 25 to 51) and increased its enrollment from 13,000 to more than 24,000 students. It now operates in the following states: California (Chula Vista, East Palo Alto, Napa, San Francisco, and West Covina), Colorado (Colorado Springs, Airforce Academy, and Denver), Connecticut (Hamden), Florida (Miami), Kansas (Wichita), Massachusetts (Boston and Worcester), Michigan (Battle Creek, Detroit, Flint, Lansing, Mt. Clemens, and Pontiac), Minnesota (Duluth and Minneapolis), North Carolina (Goldsboro), New Jersey (Trenton), Texas (San Antonio and Sherman), and Washington, D.C.

*Over Teachers*

Educ- Higher Educ Act, general

*Bruce/Mike -*

*Assuming we go ahead with a similar admission verb threat on Master Teachers (and perhaps a couple of other provisions), the cherry time of the 1st couple of paragraphs of this letter obviously has to be changed. Also, Mike, is it possible to beef up the master teachers section?*

Dear Conferee:

I am pleased that versions of H.R. 6, a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), have passed both the Senate and the House, and I greatly appreciate the hard work that you and your staff have devoted to this important legislation. We now have the opportunity to work together during the conference deliberations to enact a strong bipartisan bill, grounded in sound educational and fiscal policy. I look forward to working with you and the other conferees to ensure that the final version of this bill will provide maximum benefits to students while protecting the interest of taxpayers.

This letter highlights the issues in the HEA reauthorization that are of particular importance to the Administration. It reiterates the Administration's continued concerns with a number of issues, as previously communicated to you in Statements of Administration Policy and letters on earlier versions of this legislation. Addressing these concerns is crucial to enacting legislation that expands access to postsecondary education, improves program administration, and comports with budgetary requirements. It is imperative that the bill be fully paid for with acceptable offsets. My views on a number of significant provisions in the House and the Senate versions of H.R. 6 that are not directly addressed in this letter are explained in the attachment.

**Interest rates**

I am pleased that both the Senate and House versions would lower the interest rates that students pay on new loans by 0.8 percent, as the Administration proposed. This reduction is a major accomplishment that will provide substantial savings for students. However, I do not support the \$2.4 billion subsidy that both versions would provide to lenders. Most of this subsidy is not offset and could trigger a sequester, resulting in increased student loan origination fees as well as reduced funding for Medicare and other entitlement programs.

**Section 458**

I remain adamantly opposed to any cuts in the student aid administrative funds available to the Department under section 458 of the HEA beyond those agreed to in last year's balanced budget package. A further decrease in section 458 funds would impair the Department's ability to administer effectively the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) and Direct Loan programs by threatening the Department's ability to manage such activities as student aid application processing, student loan default collection, and the urgently needed modernization of student aid delivery systems. Both the Senate and House versions would create a new loan processing and issuance fee to be paid to guaranty agencies from section 458 funds. I strongly support the Senate's provision to cap this fee to ensure sufficient funding for the efficient administration of the loan programs.

The Senate's decision to offset the amendment regarding need analysis determinations for veterans receiving G.I. Bill benefits with funds from section 458 also undermines the Department's ability to manage the loan programs. I hope to work with you to find a more suitable offset for this provision.

#### **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

I strongly oppose the House provision to prohibit Federal funds from being spent on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The National Board recognizes and rewards outstanding teachers who then become observable examples of excellence to which other teachers can aspire. Upgrading the teacher corps and raising teacher standards in this way is a key element of our efforts to improve student learning.

#### **High Hopes**

I am very pleased that both bills address the importance of early outreach to at-risk youth. The House version includes the Administration's proposal for High Hopes for College, while the Senate created a new "Connections" program that incorporates certain elements of High Hopes and the National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership (NEISP) program. I look forward to working with the conferees to ensure that the final version of the program encourages colleges to partner with high-poverty middle schools, offers comprehensive services to all students at these middle schools, and is administratively feasible.

#### **Consolidation loans**

As you know, pursuant to the Department's regulations, interest rates for Direct Consolidation Loans have been lowered to match the rates enacted in the Transportation Equity for the 21st Century Act for new loans made on or after July 1, and before October 1, 1998. I hope that the final version of H.R. 6 will set maximum consolidation interest rates for both programs at the new low rate to reduce costs for all borrowers and to maintain a level playing field between the two loan programs. This policy is consistent with our HEA reauthorization proposal to have the same low consolidation rates in both loan programs.

#### **Teacher training and recruitment**

Both the House and Senate bills would authorize grants to states and local partnerships to reform and improve teacher training. The Senate version, which would divide funding equally between states and partnerships and would focus the partnerships on improving teacher education, offers a better chance at meaningful change than the House version, which limits partnerships' share of funding to 33 percent. Partnerships that involve colleges, teacher training programs, K-12 schools and other local organizations will encourage interaction among practicing teachers, aspiring teachers, and professors of education to better prepare teachers for 21st century classrooms than state-level efforts.

I am pleased that the Senate version includes the Administration's program to recruit new teachers for underserved areas through partnerships between colleges and underserved school districts. The House version fails to include sufficient efforts to recruit new teachers in order to address the pressing need for teachers in urban and rural areas. I urge the conferees to adopt the Senate's program for teacher recruitment.

Both bills include accountability provisions that require state and institutional "report cards" on the quality of teacher education. While I endorse reporting requirements that will provide more information about the teacher training process, I am still concerned about eliminating good students from student aid eligibility based on the inadequate performance of others.

### Distance learning

We have made significant progress on the issue of distance learning, and I am pleased that both the House and Senate versions include demonstration programs to accommodate the new technologies and innovations that can greatly increase access to postsecondary education. The House's program would allow the Secretary to waive any provision in parts F or G of title IV or part A of title I, comprising all the need analysis provisions and general provisions, for a representative sample of institutions. The Senate version would limit participation in the demonstration program to 15 institutions initially, to be expanded to up to 50 after an evaluation of the initial 15 is completed. The Senate program authorizes the waiver of the computer-related cost of attendance rules in Part F for non-proprietary demonstration schools, minimum weeks of instruction rules, rental or purchase of equipment provisions, and any regulations in Parts F and G. I urge the conferees to provide sufficient flexibility in the demonstration projects to allow for the development and support of high-quality distance education programs, and I support the additional opportunities that are provided in the House bill.

I am also pleased that the Senate version authorizes the Administration's Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnership (LAAP) program, which would encourage partnerships to develop innovative ways of delivering education, ensuring quality, and measuring student achievement that are appropriate to distance education. I urge the conferees to adopt LAAP.

### PBO

I am glad that provisions that would create a Performance Based Organization (PBO) for the administration of student aid programs were included in both passed versions of H.R. 6. I prefer the PBO provisions in the Senate version, in part because these provisions explicitly provide for personnel and procurement flexibilities necessary for the successful operation of the PBO. I also ask that the conferees add certain buyout flexibilities to the personnel flexibilities included in the Senate version.

**Year 2000**

It is anticipated that all Department systems needed to deliver Federal student aid will be fully compliant with Year 2000 requirements no later than March 1999. However, the Department is still concerned that all of its partners and customers may not be able to ensure that all their data systems related to the delivery of aid are also compliant. In light of that concern, I believe it is important that the final version of the bill authorize the Secretary to delay implementation of provisions of the bill with significant systems implications if earlier implementation would jeopardize the ability of the Department, or its partners or customers, to ensure that their data systems are Year 2000 compliant. In utilizing such discretion, the Department would work in close consultation with the House and Senate authorizing committees.

**[TANF]**

**Pay-As-You-Go Scoring**

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 requires that all revenue and direct spending legislation meet a pay-as-you-go requirement. That is, no such bill should result in an increase in net budget costs, and, if it does, it will trigger a sequester if not fully offset. Both the House and Senate versions of H.R. 6 would increase direct spending and, therefore, are subject to the pay-as-you-go requirements of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. The bill does not contain provisions to fully offset this increase in direct spending. Therefore, if the bill were enacted, its net budget cost could contribute to a sequester of mandatory programs. OMB's preliminary scoring of the House version is that it would increase outlays by \$ \_\_\_ million during FYs 1998-2003, and OMB's preliminary scoring of the House version is that it would increase outlays by \$ \_\_\_ million during FYs 1998-2003: *Senate*

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>1998-2003</u>
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**House version**

<b><u>Outlays</u></b>	-\$---	\$---	\$---	\$---	\$---	\$---	\$-----
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**(In millions of dollars)**

**Senate version**

**Outlays**

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this report to the Congress.

JUL-29-1998 10:14 TO:ELENA KAGAN

FROM:DADE, J.

P. 8/22

Yours sincerely,

Richard W. Riley

Attachment