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COMMISSION ON
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND
THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
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Background for the Commission's Hearing on Teacher and Principal Effectiveness

Wednesday, October 28th

Colorado State Capitol Building, Old Supreme Court Chambers

Denver, Colorado

Hearing Guiding Questions

Beginning with this hearing, the Commission will seek to address the following key questions:

- *How should teacher and principal effectiveness be measured?*
- *How can student achievement gain data and other measures of effectiveness be used to better support and reward teachers and principals? What other supports or training are necessary?*
- *How can we attract, prepare, and retain effective teachers and principals and remove those who do not improve?*
- *How can we boost school leaders' capacity to drive improvement and better manage teacher talent?*
- *How can we ensure that students with the greatest needs have access to the best teachers?*
- *What can be done now to support teacher and principal effectiveness? What changes are needed in a reauthorized NCLB?*

Teacher and Principal Quality Overview

Research shows that teacher quality is the single most important school factor affecting student achievement, particularly in schools with a high proportion of low-income students.ⁱ One well-known study found that having effective teachers three years in a row enabled students to outperform peers who started at the same score by 50 percentile points.ⁱⁱ Put in practical terms, this can mean the difference between going to an Ivy League college and not graduating from high school.ⁱⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, effective teachers are systemically less available to poor and minority children than to children

in schools with more resources. One in three classes in high-poverty schools is taught by an out-of-field teacher, while four out of five classes in low-poverty schools are taught by teachers with subject expertise. In seven out of ten middle school math classes in impoverished schools, the teacher did not even have a college minor in math.^{iv}

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all core subject classes be taught by “highly qualified teachers” (HQTs). The percentage of core academic classes taught by HQTs has risen since NCLB’s passage, and by the 2007-2008 year, ninety-five percent of core classes were taught by HQTs—an increase of more than eight percentage points.^v However, because it is entirely based on qualifications, “highly qualified” status (as detailed below) is not an indicator of a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. There is no comparable measure of principal quality.

What NCLB Currently Requires

NCLB attempts to strengthen teacher quality and eliminate disparity in the distribution of qualified teachers by requiring states to ensure that all teachers were highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. To achieve HQT status, a teacher must (1) possess state certification or licensure, (2) have a B.A. degree or higher, and (3) demonstrate knowledge of the subjects they teach.

In response to concerns that the HQT requirements were unworkable in some situations, particularly where there are shortages of teachers, the U.S. Department of Education issued rules and guidance to provide flexibility for states. For instance, teachers in some rural school districts are provided professional development and given additional time to meet HQT standards, science teachers are permitted to have a general science certification rather than a certification in a particular science discipline, and special education teachers have different qualifications to meet under changes made in the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

NCLB also includes language designed to ensure that highly qualified teachers are distributed equally across all schools. The law requires states and districts to publicly report progress on ensuring that low-income and minority students have access to highly qualified teachers. Through their Title I plans, districts must “ensure ... that low-income students and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers.”

A comparability provision requires that services offered in Title I schools must, as a whole, be at least comparable to services provided in schools that do not receive Title I funding. This most often accounts for teacher salaries, and the provision can be met by providing an assurance that the district has a salary structure that applies the same rules for hiring and promotion for all teachers and all schools in the district.

The Commission’s Original Recommendations

The Commission recommended a major shift in the way we measure teacher quality—from evaluations based on qualifications when a teacher enters the classroom to those based significantly on classroom results once teaching in *Beyond NCLB: Fulfilling the Promise to Our Nation’s Children* in February 2007. The report, released following a comprehensive review process with extensive public input, is a blueprint for strengthening NCLB by

preserving the law's core principles and making needed changes to accelerate progress toward achieving its goals, particularly in the areas of teacher and principal effectiveness, robust accountability and data, higher academic standards, stronger high schools, and increased options for students. *Beyond NCLB* can be found at <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/no-child-left-behind/beyond-nclb>.

What Has Changed Since the Commission Released Its Recommendations

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) – The ARRA provides significant fiscal support to states and requires states accepting that funding to make progress on critical education reforms—commonly known as the four “assurances”—including improving teacher effectiveness, data systems, standards and assessments, and turning around the lowest-performing schools.

Requirements related to teacher effectiveness

- *States must improve teacher effectiveness.* The law requires states not only to improve teacher effectiveness (though it does not specify how), but also to address two NCLB goals: eliminating inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers between high- and low-poverty schools, and ensuring that low-income and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers.
- *States must develop longitudinal data systems that include student and teacher identifiers.* States have made significant but uneven progress in developing and improving data systems in recent years. Now all states are required to build or upgrade their data systems to include student and teacher identifiers (among other components), which are necessary to measure teacher effectiveness and inform related policies at the state or district level. According to the Data Quality Campaign, 48 states reported having a unique statewide student identifier in 2008, while only 21 states reported having teacher identifier system to match teachers to students by classroom.^{vi}

Funding

- *The Race to the Top Fund.* \$4.35 billion was authorized for this ARRA competitive grant program to drive substantial gains in student achievement. States applying for and receiving grants through this program must demonstrate progress in and a comprehensive approach to addressing all four policy assurances noted above. The U.S. Department of Education's proposed requirements for the Fund (currently being finalized following a public comment period) include a number of criteria related to states' progress in and plans for improving teacher and principal effectiveness, such as:
 - differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, including a significant focus on student growth ;
 - reporting the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs in producing educators who improve student achievement; and
 - providing alternate pathways for aspiring teachers and principals.
- *State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF).* \$48.6 billion in formula grants for all states was authorized under ARRA for the purpose of saving jobs and advancing education reform. In order to receive the initial round of SFSF funding (which has already been released), all governors pledged to improve teacher

effectiveness and make progress on the other three policy assurances. The U.S. Department of Education is finalizing requirements that states must meet in order to receive the remaining SFSF funding.

Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) — The Teacher Incentive Fund, the only federal program devoted to compensation reform, began awarding funding in 2007 to support state and local efforts to develop and implement performance-based compensation systems that reward teachers and principals for raising student achievement and serving in high-need schools. Competitive grants have gone to states, school districts, and nonprofit organizations partnering with districts or charter schools. The program’s goals include:

- Improving student achievement by increasing teacher and principal effectiveness;
- Reforming teacher and principal compensation systems so that teachers and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement;
- Increasing the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff subjects; and
- Creating sustainable performance-based compensation systems.^{vii}

TIF has not yet been evaluated, but it has supported a variety of promising compensation reform experiments around the country, including in Denver, where funding is being used to expand the district’s Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp) to include principals through a strategic partnership with New Leaders for New Schools, and to strengthen professional development, information and technology, and student assessment systems to ensure ProComp is consistently and rigorously implemented district-wide.^{viii}

Ineffective Teacher and Principal Policy Architecture

As a nation we spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year on teacher salaries, benefits, and professional development, but do very little to ensure that we attract, prepare, support, and retain effective teachers who help students to make the most progress, and remove those who do not improve. Following is a brief description of some of the key issues to be considered.

Preparation

The quality of most university-based teacher preparation programs is lacking. A multi-year study by Arthur Levine, former president of Columbia University’s Teachers College, identified several model programs but found that most programs have low admissions and graduation standards and are “largely ill equipped to prepare current and future teachers for new realities.”^{ix} The National Council on Teacher Quality has asserted that many education courses are not rigorous enough and reflect low expectations for students.^x Once teachers receive a teaching license, very little is done to track their growth and effectiveness.

Evaluation

In most cases, teacher evaluation is not used as a tool for improvement or feedback. Seventy-three percent of teachers responding to an independent survey in 2007 said their most recent evaluation was either “just a formality” or “well-intentioned but not particularly helpful.”^{xi} Only twenty-three states require that new teachers be evaluated more than once a year, leaving new teachers with little formal guidance and feedback.^{xii}

Nine states require no feedback and only four states require feedback for new teachers to be given in a timely enough manner to impact their teaching. ^{xiii}

According to *The Widget Effect*, a four-state study by The New Teacher Project (TNTP), school district policies tend to assume classroom effectiveness is the same from teacher to teacher, creating an environment where teachers are viewed as interchangeable parts rather than individual professionals. The findings showed that in teacher evaluations using a binary system of satisfactory or unsatisfactory ratings, more than ninety-nine percent of teachers were rated satisfactory; in districts with a wider rating system, less than one percent are rated unsatisfactory. ^{xiv} When teacher evaluations fail to differentiate among high and low performers, TNTP notes, excellence goes unrecognized, professional development needs go unmet, and poor performance goes unaddressed.

Professional Development

Despite the billions spent on professional development each year, little empirical evidence exists on its effectiveness. ^{xv} Of the nearly \$3 billion in federal funding per year appropriated for Title II-A of NCLB (which authorizes a wide range of activities to improve teacher and principal quality), 39% supported professional development activities, yet as Education Sector reports, “tangible results from [Title II funding] are scant,” and that “there is little evidence of professional development initiatives improving student learning outcomes at any scale.” ^{xvi} The Center for American Progress notes that “much of what counts as professional development is fragmented and not sufficiently focused on strategies for improving classroom instruction in specific content areas or even linked to school and district improvement plans.... Moreover, many teachers still attend short-duration ‘one-shot’ workshops that offer no follow-up to help them implement new strategies in the classroom.” ^{xvii} The National Education Association agrees, stating recently that “most professional development is disjointed... And too often, professional development offerings do not address teachers’ needs. With little consideration given to differentiating professional development, novice teachers and experienced teachers often attend the same sessions that may not help either to improve their practice.” ^{xviii}

Tenure

Tenure systems generally grant teachers permanent employment status without regard to demonstrated effectiveness in teaching. Before awarding tenure only two states require any evidence of effectiveness in the classroom, and forty-three states allow teachers to earn tenure in three years or less. ^{xix} Three states award tenure after just one year in the classroom. ^{xx} Eighty-one percent of administrators and fifty-eight percent teachers interviewed as a part of *The Widget Effect* said they knew of at least one tenured teacher in their school who is performing poorly, and forty-three percent of teachers said there is a tenured teacher they knew of who should be dismissed for poor performance—and the percentages were higher in high-poverty schools. Yet, the process of firing a tenured teacher can be so costly and difficult—and unsuccessful—that many principals do not even attempt it. ^{xxi}

Compensation

Most teachers’ salaries are tied to years of teaching experience and educational credits rather than results with students, and are thus unable to be used as a managerial lever in school systems. Although research shows that teachers respond to monetary incentives, “few school systems strategically use compensation as a policy tool to achieve various objectives: a fairer allocation of teacher quality across students, hiring and keeping teachers

with key knowledge and skills, and increasing student achievement via measurable results.”^{xxii} While there are many complexities associated with performance pay in the education context, research and growing experience suggests it holds promise. Vanderbilt University researchers who studied performance-pay programs with a treatment-and-control design found them effective: all had positive effects on the outcome tied to the incentive, though further experiments and research are needed to determine the optimal structure of such programs.^{xxiii} Fortunately, a variety of initiatives are underway across the nation: 11 states have statewide performance pay programs and there are district plans or federally funded initiatives in 26 states.^{xxiv}

Principals

Efforts to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement will be hampered without accompanying action to promote strong leadership in schools. Research shows strong school leadership is the catalyst for improvement and the main reason teachers stay in difficult schools, yet most states do not have a leadership development system, and university-based programs are weak.^{xxv} In a 2005 study, former Teachers College president Arthur Levine found that university-based school-leadership programs “are engaged in a ‘race to the bottom,’ in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down coursework, and offering faster and less demanding degrees.”^{xxvi}

According to the Wallace Foundation, “preparation must catch up to the real-world demands facing today’s principals,” and prepare them to be instructional leaders, to understand data, and to raise student achievement in addition to their traditional responsibilities as building and crisis managers.^{xxvii} The Foundation reports that preparation is improving as nontraditional leadership programs expand and as more universities and districts work to ensure that university program graduates’ skills meet local needs. As with teachers, many principals do not get the support or professional development they need, and their evaluation is viewed as a formality rather than an opportunity for feedback and improvement.^{xxviii}

However, according to New Leaders for New Schools, “in increasing numbers of individual schools across the country, a new kind of principalship is taking hold and producing well-documented breakthrough results for children.”^{xxix} These schools are “led by principals who have carved out a radically new role for themselves, including responsibility for school-wide practices to drive both student achievement and teacher effectiveness.”^{xxx}

Funding Streams that Support Teachers and Principals

A number of federal programs support teachers and school leaders. Some of the most significant include:

- *Title II, Part A.* Nearly \$3 billion per year is appropriated for this section of NCLB, known as “Improving Teacher Quality State Grants.” Title II-A authorizes a wide range of activities to improve teacher and principal quality, though annual U.S. Department of Education surveys show that the majority of the funds are used for professional development activities for teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators and to pay highly qualified teachers to reduce class size.^{xxxi}
- *Title I.* Under this section of NCLB, approximately \$14 billion per year, including an additional one-time \$10 billion in the ARRA, is provided to states and districts to help raise the achievement of students at risk of educational failure, especially in high-poverty areas. The majority of this funding directly

supports teachers. In the 2004-05 school year, 49% of Title I funding was used for teacher salaries, while an additional 8% was spent on professional development, and 11% was spent on teacher aide salaries.^{xxxii}

- *Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants.* Title II of the Higher Education Act authorizes three teacher quality grant programs--State Grants, Partnership Grants, and Teacher Recruitment Grants—which are intended to support changes in the ways teachers are recruited, prepared, licensed, and supported. Annual funding for these programs has fluctuated; in 2009, they were funded at \$50 million. \$43 million was recently awarded to 28 cohorts of high-need districts and institutions of higher education to reform traditional university teacher preparation and residency programs in order to prepare teachers to be effective in the classroom.
- *Race to the Top.* As discussed above, \$4.35 billion was authorized through the ARRA to drive substantial gains in student achievement. States applying for and receiving grants through this program must demonstrate progress in improving teacher effectiveness, among other reforms.
- *State Fiscal Stabilization Fund.* As discussed above, \$48.6 billion was authorized under ARRA for the purpose of saving jobs and advancing education reform. In order to receive the initial round of SFSF funding (which has already been released), all governors pledged to improve teacher effectiveness, among other reforms.
- *Teacher Incentive Fund.* Funded at \$97 million in 2009, the program to support innovative performance pay models received an additional \$200 million under the ARRA, and President Obama’s budget proposes an increase to \$487.3 million in fiscal year 2010. (Further information on this program is above.)
- *Transition to Teaching.* This program provides grants to recruit and retain highly qualified mid-career professionals as well as recent college graduates as teachers in high-need schools. Approximately \$44 million is awarded to states annually for this program.
- *Troops to Teachers.* Approximately \$14 million is appropriated annually to support this Department of Defense program which transitions members of the armed services to the teaching career.

ⁱ The Education Trust, “The Real Value of Teachers: If Good Teachers Matter, Why Don’t We Act Like It?” *Thinking K-16*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Winter 2004). Online. <http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5704CBA6-CE12-46D0-A852->

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ⁱⁱⁱ Edith Starzyk and Scott Stephens, Cleveland Plain-Dealer. “Darling-Hammond says pressure is mounting to reform teacher training,” May 25, 2008. <http://ed.stanford.edu/suse/faculty/displayFacultyNews.php?tablename=notify1&id=817>

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^v U.S. Department of Education, “A Summary of Highly Qualified Teacher Data.” May 2009. <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/data2009.doc>

^{vi} Data Quality Campaign, “2008 DQC Survey.” 2008. <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/survey/elements>

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