



Great Public Schools for Every Student

TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE
ASPEN INSTITUTE
COMMISSION ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Thank you for the invitation to provide the perspective of educators from every state in the country on the issue of teacher and principal effectiveness.

As a 23-year veteran classroom math teacher, I have the great honor of being here today representing 3.2 million members who all believe in the power of education to transform lives. NEA members include teachers and education support professionals, higher education faculty and staff, Department of Defense schools' educators, students in colleges of teacher education, and retired educators across the country.

Today, students' success in school depends in large part on the zip code where they live and the educators to whom they are assigned. There are great teachers and education support professionals at work every day in this country who show up excited to teach students and feed them nutritious meals, help them travel safely to and from school, and make sure they attend schools that are safe, clean, and in good repair.

However, students who struggle the most in impoverished communities too often don't attend safe schools with reliable heat and air conditioning; too often do not have safe passage to and from school; and far too often do not have access to great teachers on a regular and consistent basis.

To ensure students have all that they need to realize their goals, we must finally focus on improving educators' effectiveness. However, improving their effectiveness will not improve schools for every student in this country if we do not also simultaneously and dramatically transform the public education system itself.

What we need is a new vision of 21st century learning.

If we do nothing differently, up to 25 percent of students will not graduate from high school. If we do nothing differently, the dropout rate for minorities or for the poor will continue to top 50 percent.

This should not be a surprise to any of us who realize that the educational system we live with today was created in an era when students helped their families run farms or households, and when there were plenty of good jobs for high school dropouts that would sustain a family. In essence, schools were not designed for every student to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities.

However, we don't live in that world today. What we have today is an interdependent, rapidly changing world, and our public school system must adapt to the needs of the new global economy. Every student will need to graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary educational options, and focus on a lifetime of learning because many of tomorrow's jobs have not even been conceived of today.

I think we can all agree that our public schools need a wholesale transformation with the resources to match our commitment. We cannot leave a generation of students behind by continuing to deny them the best education this country has to offer.

Instead of being first in the world in the number of inmates, let's work to be first in the world in the number of high school and college graduates.

As President John F. Kennedy said in 1961 and it still holds true now: "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. Our requirements for world leadership, our hopes for economic growth, and the demands of citizenship itself in an era such as this all require the maximum development of every young American's capacity. The human mind is our fundamental resource."

Revitalizing the Public Education System

It is important to recall that 1965 was one of the notable years in the history of education in America. That year, as part of his War on Poverty, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to reduce inequity by directing resources to poor and minority children and signed the Higher Education Act (HEA) to provide more opportunities and access to postsecondary opportunities for lower and middle-income families. "Poverty has many roots," Johnson said, "but the taproot is ignorance."

Poverty is still an issue in this country, and unfortunately we still have schools that lack resources, committed and effective leadership, and enough great teachers and education support professionals to reach every student. Schools in struggling communities too often have high dropout rates, and the cycle of poverty continues.

NEA stands ready to help do something about it—we must break this cycle of poverty. And we are ready to work with our partners, community by community, to revitalize the public school system and redesign schools for the 21st century.

Redesigning Schools for 21st Century Learning

To be clear, however, educating every student so they can succeed in this country is not enough today. We live in a global society and our students will have to compete with people from across the world.

We need a world class education system that will prepare students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and globally competent. To prosper, graduates must learn languages, understand the world, and be able to compete globally, and we must benchmark our educational goals against other nations with strong education systems. If we collectively work toward that outcome, it is expected that the United States gross domestic product will be more than one-third higher in the next 70 years.

As part of this effort, we must obtain the full commitment from all policymakers—at the federal, state, and local levels. We also must involve our communities and partners, including governors, state legislators, mayors, county officials, business partners, the faith-based community, the civil rights community, and parents and families, to name a few.

It will take the concerted effort of all of these stakeholders working with superintendents, school boards, and educators to ensure that all of our schools become the modern, safe, vibrant centers of the community that they can become.

In an effort to obliterate the “corridors of shame” that exist and repair or rebuild crumbling schools, we also must focus resources on infrastructure. President Obama’s administration and Congress already have taken a giant leap forward in this respect when they passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). ARRA included billions of dollars in aid that can be used to help update schools.

We also know that if we are to revitalize our public schools, we must address the design of public schools. Schools today must work for students in rural, urban, suburban, and exurban areas. In rural areas, for example, broadband access is key to ensure students have access to virtual, supplemental material and support that is not available in their physical location. By creating this technology gateway, educators can also obtain high-quality professional development to which they might otherwise not have access.

Schools and classrooms designed for 21st century learning also must be designed for universal access to ensure the inclusion of the widest spectrum of students. Every effort should be made to reduce the barriers to learning so that every student reaches his or her potential and dreams.

Students will be better prepared for the rigors of life and citizenship after school if they have had access to a broad, rigorous, relevant curriculum that prepares them for a variety of postsecondary educational and career options. Students’ access to core academic content areas that incorporate 21st century skills as well as fine arts, civics, and career and technical education helps inspire their creativity, helps connect their school work to their outside interests, and can help keep them engaged in school.

Revamping Accountability Systems for 21st Century Learning

In order to support public school improvement, states should have well-designed, transparent accountability systems that authentically assess both student learning and the conditions for its success, focus on closing achievement gaps, help to monitor progress, and identify successes and problems.

The federal government should use the ESEA implementation process, along with those associated with other federal programs, as mechanisms to incentivize states to devise comprehensive accountability systems that use multiple sources of evidence (including rich, meaningful, and authentic assessments, such as developing and/or using native language assessments for the appropriate students until they gain proficiency in English as determined by a valid and reliable measure). Instead of the current NCLB system that has resulted in a significant narrowing of the curriculum, state accountability systems should be designed to support efforts to guarantee every child has access to a rich, comprehensive curriculum. Such systems also should:

- Align with developmentally appropriate student learning standards;

- Provide multiple measures of student learning and assess higher-order thinking skills and performance skills;
- Be consistent with nationally recognized professional standards for test construction and test use; and
- Use principles of universal design in order to meet different needs of students, as well as appropriately designed assessments and accommodations for special populations and English Language Learners. These should be used only for their intended purpose.

These state systems should evaluate school quality, as well as demonstrate improvements in student learning and closing of achievement, skills, and opportunity gaps among various groups of students. As states design these evaluation systems, the design team must include practicing educators to ensure that the system can yield clear and useful results. The results of these evaluations should not be used to punish and sanction schools. Results instead should be used to inform state, local, and classroom efforts to identify struggling students and problematic school programs so that states, districts, and educators can provide appropriate interventions and supports for improvement.

States should continue to report data on a disaggregated basis (including at the district and school levels and including both outputs and inputs) to the Education Department and to the public. Each state’s application for federal funds shall describe in detail its transformative process and authentic accountability systems, and each application should undergo a rigorous peer review process in order to obtain federal resources.

The input components of state accountability plans should encompass the conditions that ideally should be present for every student to succeed in public schools and to be well-prepared for postsecondary education, lifelong learning, and the workplace. Such conditions could entail, for example, the reporting of students’ access to preK or other early childhood programs; student access to dental, vision, physical, and mental health care; access to supportive services for which the family is eligible; reasonable class sizes; alignment of preK, K–12, and postsecondary educational systems with each other and the needs of the 21st century community and workforce; and safe facilities in good repair.

Ensuring an Accomplished Educator for Every Student

Now let us turn to the primary subject of the hearing today—ensuring every student has access to accomplished educators. The research shows that a great teacher is the key to a successful student.

If states and/or the federal government are to make a serious commitment to ensuring a quality teacher for every child, they must support a systemic approach that recognizes, supports, and measures a teacher’s growth and ability along the various stages of a quality continuum—a continuum that includes:

- Recruitment
- Preparation
- Licensure
- Induction

- Professional Development
- National Board Certification

As an initial matter, attention should be placed on how best to advance the professionalism of teaching. The federal government should devote financial support to improving teacher preparation programs and should work with teacher unions and subject area associations to expand mentoring programs, provide targeted professional development for educators, and expand school leadership initiatives. We know these factors and this kind of collaboration—with teachers at the table in the decision-making process—are key to the success of teachers.

Some might ask how to recognize a quality teacher. NEA has identified some factors defining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions a quality teacher should possess. A quality teacher:

- Designs and facilitates instruction that incorporates the students’ developmental levels, skills, and interests with content knowledge;
- Develops collaborative relationships and partners with colleagues, families, and communities focused on meaningful and deep learning;
- Provides leadership and advocacy for students, quality education, and the education profession;
- Demonstrates in-depth content and professional knowledge;
- Participates in ongoing professional learning as an individual and within the professional learning community;
- Utilizes multiple and varied forms of assessment and student data to inform instruction, assess student learning, and drive school improvement efforts;
- Establishes environments conducive to effective teaching and learning;
- Integrates cultural competence and an understanding of the diversity of students and communities into teaching practice to enhance student learning;
- Utilizes professional practices that recognize public education as vital to strengthening our society and building respect for the worth, dignity; and equality of every individual; and
- Strives to overcome the internal and external barriers that impact student learning.

Teacher Preparation

It is critical that every teacher candidate receives adequate support and training and meets high standards for teacher skill, knowledge, and ability. By overlaying these key components with quality content, universities, school districts, and state licensing agencies can help ensure that preparation and licensure programs are producing the quality teacher candidates our schools need and our students deserve. Having a great deal of content knowledge does not mean one can teach students effectively. NEA believes that each pipeline must be *equal in rigor* and that every teacher candidate must meet *identical standards and measures* in order to receive a professional teaching license in a given state.

Generally, teacher candidates travel through three distinct pathways for teacher preparation and licensure: the University-Based Blended Pipeline; the University-Based Five-Year Pipeline; and the Post-Baccalaureate Alternative Pipeline (sometimes referred to as an intern program). While each pipeline utilizes different strategies in different sequential order, they all should share the same core elements:

- Every candidate must obtain a bachelor’s degree that includes a liberal arts curriculum that ensures adequate basic skills in reading, writing, and computation.
- Every candidate must have preparation in and demonstration of subject matter knowledge in core teaching area and have an academic major in that same teaching area.
- Every candidate must have preparation in and demonstration of professional and pedagogical skills, knowledge, and ability.
- Every candidate must participate in supervised clinical practice via an internship, student teaching, and/or mentoring program.
- Every candidate must participate in a new teacher induction program that includes mentoring from a qualified teacher in addition to support and/or mentoring from university faculty, school administrators, and new teacher peers.
- A candidate receives a full professional license only after demonstrating effective classroom practice as a teacher-of-record.

We know that teacher preparation matters when discussing teacher effectiveness, as evidenced by the experiences of the highest performing countries in the world. It is time for the federal government, through Title II of ESEA, to provide incentives to states that create world class teacher preparation programs. Consideration should be given to a rigorous assessment of those who wish to enter teacher education programs with a goal of recruiting candidates in the top quartile of academic excellence and providing “second chance” support for candidates who can and will meet high standards with extra support. Particular consideration should be given to eliminating those who do not have the temperament and aptitude to be a teacher. We should promote a bachelor’s degree in the content area and a master’s degree in educational pedagogy similar to Finland and Singapore.

To raise the status of teacher education in America, we should create a national institute to provide a master’s degree in education that is rigorous and relevant to teaching in today’s schools and accept college graduates who are in the top third of class rankings. We should pay a salary for this tuition-free preparation and require graduates to teach in America’s highest needs schools for at least six years.

With high quality preparation comes trust and empowerment of teachers. It is time to restore trust in America’s teachers.

Teacher Recruitment

To encourage the best candidates to consider teaching as a career, NEA urges Congress and the Administration to:

- Provide financial incentives for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession: increasing base salaries and providing predictable paths to professional salaries and benefits are essential to effective teacher recruitment programs.
- Offer incentives such as scholarships and loan forgiveness that encourage teachers to gain licensure in shortage subject areas or to teach in high-need areas.
- Develop “grow-your-own” recruitment programs for high school students, community college students, paraeducators, and mid-career changers.

We need to support teachers in their early years and throughout their careers. It is important that we not only recruit new teachers to work in high-needs schools, but that we foster an environment that encourages professional development and continual learning opportunities for teachers within our schools and districts to help meet the needs of students. We also must “grow our own” accomplished teachers and not rely solely on new recruits for our staffing needs.

Too often, school district recruitment and hiring practices rest on outdated mid-20th century organizational assumptions about teaching, learning, gender roles, and the career mobility patterns of young adults. Few systems are developing new teachers from within their own high-needs communities. Additionally, few are partnering with universities and nonprofits to make strategic investments in new teacher residency programs that can both drive improved working conditions and assure a steady supply of well-prepared, “culturally competent” teachers for high-needs schools.

One area that is showing promise in recruiting talented teachers is the development of Urban Teacher Residencies. In UTRs, aspiring teachers—known as residents—are selected according to rigorous criteria aligned with district needs. They integrate their master’s level course work with an intensive, full year classroom residency alongside an experienced mentor. In their second year, they become a teacher with their own classroom while continuing to receive intensive mentoring. UTRs are distinctive in that they:

- tightly weave together education theory and classroom practice;
- focus on residents learning alongside an experienced, trained mentor;
- group candidates in cohorts to cultivate professional learning community and foster collaboration;
- build effective partnerships among school districts, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations;
- serve school districts by recruiting and training teachers to meet specific district needs;
- support residents once they are hired as teachers of record; and
- establish and support differentiated career goals for experienced teachers.

While these programs are quite new, there is promising evidence that UTRs are attracting a new pool of talented and diverse recruits, preparing them to be successful in urban classrooms, and keeping them in high needs schools and subjects.

Policymakers could strengthen the promise of UTRs by helping them expand to help schools that are not located in urban areas, such as high-need rural schools or those serving Native American students.

Additionally, a series of public-private partnerships could be developed to help fund fellowships to Teacher Residency Academies located in strong teacher preparation programs at universities in every region of the United States. These Academies would recruit candidates from the top third of graduating college seniors, and pay them on par with new teachers for one year to participate in and complete a post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program that combines the successful components of the UTRs. While the Fellows are learning, they simultaneously would be able to apply their learning in high-need classrooms while being mentored by experienced accomplished educators. Once the fellowships are complete, the Fellows would commit to

serving as the teacher of record in a high-need school for several years, with continued access to mentors and colleagues who could help them continue to improve their practice. This model not only would help develop more effective teachers, but would help identify and encourage teacher leadership as well.

Additionally, states and school districts must do more to recruit and prepare teachers who mirror the diverse student population in American schools. Teachers from diverse backgrounds can serve as role models for their students, communicate in multiple ways with their students, serve as cultural mediators, employ a culturally sensitive curriculum, reduce the potential for discriminatory practices against students of color and those with unique needs, and close the gap between communities/parents and the school.

NEA encourages state and district programs and policies that attract future K-12 teachers from environments where teaching has not been a common career goal and that make the nation's teaching workforce more inclusive.

Retaining Accomplished Educators

Last month, NEA and the Center for Teaching Quality released *Children of Poverty Deserve Great Teachers*, a groundbreaking report presenting solid, proven strategies and policy recommendations that can make a difference. It also offers solutions to recruiting, preparing, supporting, and compensating teachers for high-needs schools and highlights NEA's commitments to ensure great teachers are in every classroom.

NEA worked with more than 2,000 of the nation's best teachers who told us what will attract and keep our most effective teachers in our most challenging schools:

- Good principals who both know how to lead and support teacher leadership;
- A commitment to creative teaching and inquiry-based learning, not scripted instruction;
- The opportunity to team with a critical mass of highly-skilled teachers who share responsibility for every student's success;
- Improved working conditions; and
- Additional pay to recognize the difficult work in turning around a struggling school.

The need for strong, qualified principals in every school cannot be emphasized enough. Time after time, surveys indicate that strong, supportive school leadership trumps financial considerations as the key to keeping great teachers. Policymakers need to promote innovative efforts to prepare administrators who can create and sustain school improvement by creating the right working conditions. Ultimately, it comes down to hiring and supporting principals who will understand what it means to promote teaching quality and distributive leadership in the unique contexts of high-needs schools.

In other words, accomplished educators need principals who not only have the ability to run the school but who can serve as the instructional leader of the school. Teachers are willing to be judged on their practice and how they perform with any given group of students when they know that the person who is observing and providing feedback to improve the instructional practice actually knows what he or she is seeing. A comprehensive teacher assessment and evaluation system would feature a commonly understood set of expectations, and clear indicators of WHAT

is being measured and HOW it is being measured. Strong principals, in essence, must not only be able to recognize effective teaching practice but be able to encourage it and provide useful feedback.

Additionally, teachers also seek opportunities to exercise leadership in such areas as:

- Curriculum development
- Selecting instructional models and materials
- Planning and/or leading professional development activities
- Mentoring and coaching other teachers
- Conducting peer assessments of fellow teachers and/or administrators
- Building-level decision-making, including deciding school budget

Also critical to retaining accomplished educators is the issue of teaching and learning conditions. A great public school for every student begins in the classroom. The conditions that are present in the classroom for both the student and the teacher have a fundamental impact on nearly every aspect of teaching and learning. To name a few, these classroom conditions include the number of students in the class, the accessibility of education technology and other instructional resources, the management of student behaviors and discipline, the environmental quality of the physical space, the amount of time spent on direct instruction to students, and the lesson planning and preparation time afforded to the teachers. There are countless research studies that provide clear evidence that these conditions are critical to students' academic achievement. The famous Tennessee STAR study on small class sizes and the follow-up studies conducted over the past 20 years not only prove that smaller class sizes in the early grades result in larger student achievement gains, but also result in more disciplined classrooms, fewer school dropouts, and the greater likelihood of ethnic minority students attending college.

Working conditions are of paramount concern to teachers when it comes to decisions about working in high-needs schools. We cannot expect them to be successful if we do not provide the tools and resources needed to do the job. The data are clear: a child's learning environment is a critical factor in his or her long-term success.

We cannot hold teachers accountable for substandard conditions beyond their control and must acknowledge that conditions of teaching and learning are essential to achieving high levels of student learning.

Mentoring also has been shown to be a great lever for retaining educators. One of the primary reasons for new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching is a lack of support by their schools and districts. One way to promote the profession, improve working conditions for new teachers, and then retain new teachers is through the implementation of strong multi-year mentoring programs for all new teachers. Some of those states that see the link between mentoring and teacher retention have provided the resources districts and schools need to start and maintain such programs, and have done it well. Other states are lagging far behind. The key, however, is to design a program that focuses on support of the new teacher, and to fully fund it. While mentoring has some positive effects during the first year of a teacher's career, the effects are greater in successive years. If we want to get serious about recruiting and retaining new teachers, we have to have greater support—especially financial support—for such programs.

Innovative compensation systems can provide incentives for retaining educators as well,

particularly for high-need schools. Incentives for educators in these schools should be designed to not only encourage teacher transfers and new hires, but to energize existing faculty and support their professional growth through opportunities like National Board Certification and the NBPTS *Take One!* program. States and districts should explore using ARRA funds, Teacher Incentive Fund grants, and other resources to address the specific incentives that matter most in growing, attracting, and retaining effective teachers for high-needs schools.

Financial incentives are only one piece of the puzzle, however. According to surveys of teachers who have earned National Board Certification, incentive systems should pay at least \$10,000 for accomplished teachers to agree to work in high-needs schools. Yet pay incentives will always be a partial solution. Incentives tied to working conditions and professional opportunities will be at least as important, if not more so. The National Board Certified Teachers said a menu of incentives should include, at a minimum: reduced class size or student load, increased planning and collaboration time, graduated teaching loads for novice teachers, and additional opportunities for proven teachers to lead initiatives and share expertise.

Innovative Bargaining to Close Achievement Gaps

Discussions around achievement gaps are common in the education community. What is not commonly discussed is the opportunity for collective bargaining to serve as a vehicle to positively impact student learning. Bargaining is an opportunity for the school employees, administrators, and school boards to sit down as co-equals and reach resolution on issues directly related to student achievement, particularly on issues that often receive too little attention at the bargaining table.

Because of its importance, NEA believes that the terms and conditions surrounding achievement gaps work that impacts NEA members should be collectively bargained between the local association and the local school district.

Seattle, WA

One example of collectively bargained achievement gap language can be found in the Seattle, Washington contract, where negotiations produced language on home visits by educators to promote engagement of parents and families in students' education.

Additionally, Article II of the Seattle contract "Partnership for Closing the Achievement Gap" focuses on the structure and parameters of the collaboration between the local association and the local school district concerning the tasks of closing the achievement gap. The contract language provides the following protections and common themes:

- Establishing a committee partnership between the school district and the local association
- Presenting joint workshops to parents/guardians
- Implementing a community engagement process
- Agreement to create a stable workforce, to include exemptions from Reductions in Force for staff (ESP and Teachers) in designated schools for one year
- Instituting Building Leadership teams
- Incorporating structure and language for jointly created on-going professional development

- Mentoring new teachers
- Initiating Intervention Staff Support building systems

The Seattle contract also addresses the need for employees to commit to hours and work beyond the normal workday. This issue is addressed in a supplemental contract that recognizes the additional responsibilities, services, and time with additional compensation. Furthermore, the contract focuses attention on staffing decisions, which the contract says should offer students the teachers who can best help them meet their learning goals, promote excellent teaching, and allow resources to be expended where they have the highest educational value.

Montgomery County, MD

On the East Coast, Montgomery County, Maryland has an innovative contract that includes a variety of provisions that seek to ensure the school district and the teachers' association work collaboratively to provide an excellent education for all students.

Some of the provisions that are particularly worth noting are:

Teacher transfer: voluntary transfers take into account a variety of factors, including but not limited to seniority. The approach to transfers is: "It is also in both parties' interest to ensure that the transfer process supports the instructional program, takes students' needs into consideration and that all vacancies are reported in an accurate and timely manner. Seniority in MCPS will be considered a factor in the transfer process; however, because the parties believe that there are educational benefits for all students to be taught by a diverse staff, MCPS will also consider diversity in the transfer process. Diversity is defined broadly to include gender, race, ethnicity, age, and experience."

- Support for National Board Certification: the contract provides for support during the certification process and awards a \$2,000 annual stipend to teachers each year that they maintain their National Board Certification.
- Professional growth system: the parties set up an extensive professional development system that is described in the contract as follows:

The Professional Growth System is a multi-dimensional approach to supporting and improving the quality of teaching in MCPS. The essential elements of the system are as follows:

- (1) Standards for performance;
 - (2) Training for evaluators and unit members;
 - (3) A professional growth cycle that integrates the formal evaluation year into a multi-year process of professional growth;
 - (4) A job-embedded professional development program utilizing best practices of professional growth, such as school-based staff development teachers; and
 - (5) Time to allow teachers to participate in professional development activities during their work day.
- Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR): This program provides intensive assistance to those who have not yet achieved the district's high standards of performance or who fall below them. The union and the district jointly oversee the program. The program has the

authority to recommend non-renewal of probationary teachers and termination of tenured teachers.

- Turn-around school: Broad Acres Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland is a high-poverty, previously low performing school. In April 2001, all staff at Broad Acres Elementary School had the option to make a three-year commitment to the school and its students. This commitment included working the equivalent of 15 extra days paid by a supplement to be used to extend the workday every Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. for planning sessions, study groups, and examining student work. Sixty percent of the staff elected to stay. According to the school district's website, students met the proficiency standards for adequate yearly progress in math and reading for the most recent year available. The student body is 99 percent minority and 88 percent qualify for free and reduced price meals. Furthermore, at Broad Acres, 30 percent of the teachers have more than 15 years of experience, 52.7 percent have 5-15 years, and only 16.4 percent have less than 5 years of experience.

It appears from those numbers that Broad Acres has successfully retained experienced educators and probably also attracted newer ones who are staying.

Syracuse, NY

A Syracuse, NY contract focuses on teacher professional discretion, joint labor-management decision making, elementary planning time, and other supports for teachers. The following excerpts from the contract highlight some features of a supportive atmosphere for accomplished educators:

- National Board Certification salary adjustment: Article 4 (B) provides a \$1,000 yearly stipend for National Board Certification.
- Teacher discretion in instructional techniques: Article 6 (A) provides: "A teacher shall base differential educational experience on the differing needs and abilities of students by utilizing styles and procedures of instruction which he/she believes to be most effective in his/her classroom, providing such methods of instruction conform to and implement the instructional objectives of the District..."
- Classroom learning conditions: Article 6 (B) entitles teachers to timely information on students, ensures the teacher's right to immediately remove a disruptive student from the site for the balance of the day, and provides that a teacher with classroom management issues "may seek and shall receive assistance from the local school and District resources, including mentors, peer coaches, etc., within a month of his/her request."
- Curriculum and Professional Development:
 - Article 7 (B) creates a joint union-management Coordinating Committee on Professional Development.
 - Article 7 (C) creates a joint Needs Assessment Team to "gather and examine data from Individual Professional Growth Plan summaries, School Improvement Plan addendums, and other data to determine staff and District needs that will influence the full range of in-service in the Syracuse City School District including: District in-service, site-based in-service, classroom visitation by colleagues, prescriptive focused in-service, targeted in-service, online

professional development, productive in-school activities and individual faculty in-service, exploring and proposing new flexible ways of accumulating hours for in-service credit, and any other matters relating to professional development....”

- And Article 7 (D) provides for committees on curriculum writing/implementation and textbook recommendation. “Opportunities for teacher representatives to serve on the textbook recommendation committees will be posted by the District. The District and the Association shall jointly review the applications of interested teacher candidates, and interview (unless jointly accepted prior to the interview), and shall forward to the Superintendent the names of those individuals recommended for appointment....”
- Professional support for new teachers: Article 8 (A) maintains a Peer Assistance and Review program, using “consultant teachers, who will provide guidance, support and evaluation to teachers (interns) for the first year of their employment in the district. The consultants will work with administration to provide comprehensive support for their interns including regular meetings with the interns and communication with administrators...” Article 8 (C) provides for a jointly developed in-service program for new unit members.
- Teacher planning time: Article 12 (C) guarantees that “Elementary practitioners shall receive at least one (1) daily unencumbered forty (40) minute preparation period during the student day. This preparation/planning time will take place when students are instructed in areas including, but not limited to, music, art and physical education....”
- Minimal out-of-pocket expenses: Article 19 (A): “The Board recognizes that appropriate texts, workbooks, supplementary materials, library reference facilities, maps and globes, laboratory equipment, shop equipment, audiovisual equipment, art supplies, athletic equipment, current periodicals, standard tests and questionnaires, and similar supplies and equipment, are the tools of the teaching profession. The parties will confer from time to time for the purpose of improving the selection, quality and use of such educational tools, and the Board will promptly undertake the implementation of all joint decisions made by its representatives and the Association within the budgeted amounts appropriated therefore. The Board agrees to at all times keep the schools reasonably equipped and maintained, as provided in the annual budget.”

Ensuring Sustainability of Public Education

Transforming America’s public schools is a daunting task. It will take the concerted efforts of all stakeholders and the commitment to continue the effort until every student has access to a great public school.

At the core of this effort is ensuring the fiscal stability of the educational system so that the energy of stakeholders can be spent on how best to serve students.

As we have said in the past, the federal government should require states, as part of their application for federal education funds under ESEA, to develop “Adequacy and Equity Plans.” Through these plans, states will demonstrate where there are disparities in educational tools and

services, as well as opportunities and resources. The plans will outline steps underway or planned to remedy the disparities.

Because states already must submit applications to the Education Department to receive funds, the plans will be an additional component, *not* a whole new program. The Education Department will include as part of its monitoring process a review of whether states are meeting the provisions of the plans.

The design of federal approval and monitoring should be one that sensibly supports adjustments and flexibility as states pursue their goals and work toward eliminating disparities, without ever losing sight of the fact that the richest country in the world can provide every student with a quality education.

Additionally, the federal government must meet the commitments it has made to fund critical programs. Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have *never* received the federal funding that the original laws promised. As a result, students, parents and families, and local taxpayers have been shortchanged.

In order for states and local school districts to build and sustain a successful public education system, they need a federal financial commitment commensurate with the requirements and mandates included in major federal legislation. Funding for students served by both of these critical programs must be made predictable, sustainable, and guaranteed by shifting these programs from being subject to the vagaries of the annual appropriations process to “mandatory” spending.

Additionally, the federal government should commit substantial resources to meet the needs of special populations of students. For example, Title III of ESEA outlines English language acquisition services and programs designed to support English Language Learners, and Title VII outlines programs for American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native education. The funding to fully implement these provisions is inadequate. For example, funds are needed to develop native language assessments that are aligned to the appropriate, challenging standards and curricula and are valid and reliable measures of student learning. Funds are needed to train a larger number of qualified English as a Second Language (ESL) educators; to provide training for all educators in ESL methodologies and cultural competency; to provide bilingual and dual language education as a means for students to become bilingual and biliterate; and to incorporate educational activities that are linguistically and culturally based for American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native students.

In addition, intensified monitoring should make sure that the funds are used for their intended purpose and not for the education of the general student population.

NEA’s Commitment to Student Learning

As we all prepare to help reauthorize ESEA, it is within the realm of possibility to imagine a reauthorized law that includes more flexible accountability measures.

It is easy to envision a reauthorized ESEA that encourages states to set high standards, not lower them.

Imagine a great public school for every student where quality programs and services exist, and where high expectations and common standards are aligned with rigorous and comprehensive curriculum as well as high-quality assessments for all students are the norm.

Imagine a great public school with modern facilities and up-to-date materials and technology for all along with small class sizes and strong leadership that collaborates among and with all education professionals in the school system.

None of us can afford to forget that as we set out to transform our public education system together, our country is battling out of tough economic times. Families in every state are feeling the economic pinch, losing jobs, and losing health insurance. Educators see their students' families lose their homes, their health insurance, and any semblance of a safety net.

And so, we must not fail this time. We must transform our nation's public schools.

NEA is committed to working with this Administration and Congress as well as other stakeholders to help realize this vision. We must work collectively and collaboratively to ensure students have access to schools of excellence, and accomplished educators who help them pursue talents and their dreams.

To that end, *NEA commits to the following:*

1. The NEA will continue to support programs and initiatives that empower educators to reach their full potential and improve their practice to positively impact student learning. As a result, the NEA encourages its teacher-members to consider a rigorous, reflective process to critically examine their practice on a regular basis and incorporate new findings into their teaching practice, such as through earning National Board Certification.
2. Through a \$6 million Priority Schools Campaign, the NEA will continue its major member outreach effort using its union advocacy and leadership position to encourage the most accomplished teacher-members to start their teaching careers in high-needs schools, remain teaching there, or transfer to high-needs schools.
3. The NEA will encourage and support affiliate collaboration with school districts to develop memoranda of understanding, collective bargaining provisions, and similar "compacts" that will provide increased flexibility in staffing high-needs schools. Through these compacts, school districts and teacher associations will be able to review district policies, school working conditions, and negotiated contracts to assess the extent to which they may inhibit or enhance teacher distribution.
4. The NEA will develop resources and strategies to help its affiliates expand the scope of collective bargaining to collaboratively pursue multiple measures of student learning and teacher quality at the bargaining table. Through this effort, affiliates will work to explore alternative methods for teacher evaluation and assignment, including proactive ways in which to use seniority or other contract provisions to promote the equitable distribution of effective teachers throughout a school district.

We know the road to economic stability and prosperity runs through our public schools, and we know that every student deserves the best we can offer. It is now time to deliver. NEA stands ready to do its part.

Thank you.