

## **No Dream Denied A Pledge To America's Children**

**No Dream Denied** includes a number of important findings and recommendations:

- The teacher shortage is a symptom of a larger problem – the problem of retaining teachers, given that one-third of new teachers leave the profession within three years and almost one-half leave within five years.
- Hardest hit are urban, rural, and minority communities – who frequently struggle with a revolving door of underqualified and underexperienced teachers.
- There is a strong relationship between retention and a) adequate preparation – background in subject material and how to teach – and b) meaningful induction and mentoring programs.
- Federal, state and local officials should devote attention and resources to preparation, induction, and salaries.

The Commission's definition of "highly qualified beginning teachers" includes:

- Deep understanding of the subjects they teach.
- A firm understanding of how students learn.
- Demonstrated teaching skills to help all students achieve high standards.
- Know how to use a variety of assessment strategies.

### **Extent of the retention problem:**

Between 1987-1991, more people were entering the teaching profession than were leaving. But over the past decade, the gap between those leaving and entering has grown enormously. In 1999-2000, some 50,000 more people left teaching than entered.

In 2000-01, about 15 percent of public school teachers left the district – about one-half moved to another school, about one-half left the profession. In low poverty districts, about 13 percent moved or left, but in high poverty schools about 20 percent moved or left. In other words, high poverty schools experience – on average – one-fifth of their entire teaching force changes each fall. That high turnover creates an obvious set of problems – lack of continuity and stability for students, difficulty in building a successful school team, and difficulty in sustaining a culture of success and improvement over time.

The data shows that “turnover problems are more strongly influenced by school working conditions and salary levels than by the characteristics of the student population in these schools.”

### **Organizing schools for success**

The Commission calls on schools to organize in ways that:

- Respect learning.
- Honor teaching.
- Teach for understanding.

A school organized for success has certain characteristics, including:

- It allows time for collaboration among teachers.
- It allows time for teachers to study and reflect on what is working and what isn't.
- It provides a supportive environment where teachers can get help from their peers and administrators in teaching strategies, assessment strategies, classroom management, etc.

The report advocates smaller schools and better use of technology to help create that environment.

### **Preparation, accreditation, and licensure**

The report acknowledges that alternative routes to teacher licensure exist in most places, but the focus should be on making sure that whatever the program all teachers “should meet the same high standards for teacher quality.”

Among the characteristics of a good teacher preparation program the report cites:

- Careful recruitment and selection of teacher candidates.
- Strong academic preparation for teaching.
- Strong clinical practice.
- Support for entry-level teachers.

Individuals who had academic backgrounds in the selection and use of instructional materials and child psychology and learning theory, and those who had opportunities to observe others in the classroom, get feedback on their own teaching styles, and practice teaching experience were all more likely to stay in the profession.

The report calls for better accountability for teacher preparation programs, including assessments of the skills and knowledge of participants (based on

performance, not just a pencil and paper test) and accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

The report also recommends better accountability for licensure, stating “the content and quality of licensing standards across states is uneven and inconsistent,” and further “loopholes can make licensing a mockery.”

The Commission recommends a strong role for professional standards boards, better cooperation among states (reciprocal licensure agreements), and tiered licensure that would enhance the career development of teachers.

### **Building a professionally rewarding career**

The report is clear about the need for salaries that respect the professional, stating “We say we value education, but what we pay teachers says otherwise.” At the same time, the report calls for “pay for knowledge and skills that contribution to improve student achievement.” Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is one example of pay for knowledge. The report is not prescriptive for how pay scales should be ordered, but it does recommend compensation for additional roles, such as mentorship responsibility and conducting professional development, as well as incentives – such as signing bonuses, loan forgiveness, and housing allowances – to help attract teachers to rural and urban districts and in shortage areas, math, science, special education, and English as a second language.