



ALLIANCE FOR  
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

# Straight A's:

## An Update on Public Education: Policy and Progress

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### NEW-TEACHER EXCELLENCE: Alliance to Hold Forum on High-Quality Teachers on December 12

The Alliance for Excellent Education in conjunction with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) will hold a special forum on recruiting, retaining, and preparing qualified teachers. The Alliance/AASA forum will provide recommendations designed to guide decision makers in their efforts to ensure that every student has access to qualified teachers in every classroom.

In the first of two forum sessions, three reports that describe the nature of the qualified-teacher shortage and strategies for addressing the problem will be discussed. *New-Teacher Excellence: Retaining Our Best is a new Alliance report* that recommends that states and districts implement induction programs for all new teachers as a strategy for retaining teachers and helping them to grow professionally.

AASA's report *Higher Pay in Hard-to-Staff Schools: The Case for Financial Incentives* describes federal, state, and district incentives for recruiting qualified teachers and recommends that the federal government provide a tax credit for teachers and principals working in high-poverty schools. Finally, the **National Association of State Boards of Education's** recently released *State Incentive Programs for Recruiting Teachers: Are They Effective in Reducing Shortages?* examines the correlation between state efforts to recruit new teachers and the nature of the teacher shortage problem.

The introductory session will be followed by a discussion of a wide range of issues related to teacher quality, including assessment of teacher quality; innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining qualified teachers; alternative approaches to certification; and the appropriate role of local, state, and federal governments, as well as unions and the business community, in ensuring a highly qualified teacher in every classroom.

Space is limited. Please RSVP to Brenda Maddox-Dolan at the Alliance for Excellent Education at [brenda@all4ed.org](mailto:brenda@all4ed.org) or. For more information, download the invitation from the Alliance Web site at: <http://www.all4ed.org/media/TeacherForumInvite.html>

Beginning Thursday afternoon, Dec. 12, the report will be available on the Alliance Web site at: <http://www.all4ed.org/policymakers/NewTeacherExcellence/index.html>



## **RETAINING OUR BEST: NCLB Implementation Must Address Teacher Attrition Problem**

A new Alliance report, *New-Teacher Excellence: Retaining Our Best*, argues that as school districts around the nation work overtime to implement the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, they may inadvertently be accelerating the departure of experienced teachers and failing to provide struggling new teachers with the supports they need to become comfortable and effective in the classroom.

With veteran teachers leaving, districts must sometimes hire large numbers of underqualified or beginning teachers to fill the vacancies, and they often do so without putting necessary support systems in place. These new teachers are being recruited by the hundreds and thousands in many school districts that are facing rising enrollments, but little effort is made to allow their successful transition into the classroom. As a result, the very precondition necessary to ensure that no child is left behind—that is, students' consistent access to qualified and effective teachers—is not being met.

Poor urban schools have been the hardest hit by this teacher shortage. Nationally, according to the report, classes in high-poverty secondary schools are 77 percent more likely to be assigned an “out-of-field” teacher—a teacher without experience in the subject she will teach—than classes in “low-poverty” schools. The problem is most acute in middle schools where 53 percent of classes in high-poverty middle schools are led by a teacher lacking a major in the subject she teaches. Even when teachers do come to low-performing schools, they rarely stay very long. Overall, 12 to 20 percent of teachers leave the classroom in their first year, with an even higher rate in urban and high-poverty schools.



## **RETAINING OUR BEST: Successful Strategies to Support New Teachers and Keep Veteran Educators**

School districts across the country will need to develop successful strategies both to support new teachers and to keep veteran educators in place if the nation is committed to making sure that no child is left behind. These strategies involve a two-pronged solution: financial incentives for teachers in high-poverty schools, and well-organized professional development and support systems—including new-teacher induction programs—for beginning teachers.

While *Every Child a Graduate* made the case for financial incentives, the new Alliance report, *New-Teacher Excellence: Retaining Our Best*, argues that school districts nationwide must provide well-organized induction programs for all new teachers. In general, these programs must be linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of teacher learning, and supported by a professional culture that favors collaboration and inquiry.

Some districts and states have already implemented successful induction programs, increasing their ability to hold on to new teachers by 25 percent and saving millions of dollars in turnover costs. In developing induction programs, states should borrow ideas from one another, learning and making improvements as they implement their plans. The Alliance report focuses on programs in Texas and Ohio, two states that have developed and begun implementing induction programs modeled closely on California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program, which has been described as a national exemplar.

With induction programs, high-poverty schools and districts will have much greater success meeting the challenge in the *No Child Left Behind Act* to guaranty that all students have access to qualified teachers who can help them meet high standards and graduate from high school prepared for college.

The complete report is available from the Alliance Web site at:  
<http://www.all4ed.org/policymakers/NewTeacherExcellence/index.html>

#### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT AROUND THE COUNTRY: How States and Districts are Working to Meet the High-Quality Challenge**

##### **Chicago: Academy for Urban School Leadership**

In an effort to encourage new people to enter the teaching field, the Chicago-based Academy for Urban School Leadership has developed an incentive program for people willing to teach for five or more years in high-need schools. In addition to providing a \$30,000 stipend to participants, the Academy also pays for the cost of obtaining a master's degree and a teaching certificate for program.

In its first year, the program began with 32 teachers-in-training from a pool of 300 applicants from a wide range of backgrounds, including a candy company manager, a former funeral services executive, and a former captain in the U.S. Army. The program is expected to expand to 80 candidates next year with the help of a \$1.5 million federal grant. The master's program and teacher's certification are provided on site by faculty from National Louis University.

##### **Massachusetts: "Bonus Baby" Program**

Three years ago Massachusetts began a program that offered \$20,000 in bonuses to attract non-educators to teach in its schools. However, a recent study found that the nearly half of participants in Massachusetts' "bonus baby" program have left their classrooms.

According to the *Boston Globe*, Clarke Fowler, a Salem State College professor and prominent critic of the initiative, found that of the 59 people awarded bonuses in 1999, 46 percent were no longer teaching three years later. In the second and third year of the program, 28 percent and 17 percent, respectively, of bonus recipients left the program.

Supporters of the program say that past bonus recipients were placed in classrooms with as little as two months of training. Now, recipients must undergo training at colleges or universities versus the "eight-week blitz of classes and summer school" in the past. Andrew Effrat, interim dean of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst told the *Boston Globe* that "providing more mentoring, more support, and stronger induction are certainly likely to enhance retention" in the bonus baby program and other, similar programs.

To read more, visit: [http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/335/learning/\\_Bonus\\_teachers\\_opting\\_out-.shtml](http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/335/learning/_Bonus_teachers_opting_out-.shtml)



## **SUPPORT FOR NEW-TEACHER EXCELLENCE: New Reports Say Financial Incentives and Induction Programs are Successful Tools to Help Meet the Highly Qualified Teacher Challenge**

Two recent reports argue that financial incentives and induction programs are successful in both recruiting new teachers and retaining veteran educators. These reports will be addressed at the Alliance/AASA teacher forum on December 12.

The first report, *Higher Pay in Hard-to-Staff Schools: The Case for Financial Incentives*, was written by Cynthia Prince at the American Association of School Administrators (The report is available at: <http://www.aasa.org/>). It argues that “changing the way teachers are paid and offering targeted financial incentives” is a vital part of any effort to attract and retain highly qualified teachers in the nation’s lowest performing school districts.” The report examines the use of targeted salary increases, bonuses, housing incentives, tuition assistance, and federal tax incentives to attract candidates for hard-to-fill positions. Specifically, the report recommends federal tax credits as one of the most effective incentives to attract and retain teachers.

Prince argues that targeted incentives are necessary because of difficulties that are unique to high-poverty school districts. Her report cites fewer applications for vacancies, disproportionately more uncertified teachers, and higher rates of teacher and administrator turnover as examples. In the report, she points to evidence that suggests that targeted financial incentives can increase the relative attractiveness of jobs in these hard-to-staff schools and can overcome teacher reluctance to work there.

Another report to be released at the Alliance/AASA Teacher forum examines state incentive programs that are already in place for recruiting teachers. The paper, *State Incentive Programs for Recruiting Teachers: Are They Effective in Reducing Shortages?*, points to new data that indicates that state spending on teacher incentives has jumped to almost \$217 million. Released by the National Association of State Boards of Education, the report presents an overview of the teacher shortage problem and examines incentive programs that states have developed in response (The report is available at: [http://www.nasbe.org/Front\\_Page/Press\\_Release3.html](http://www.nasbe.org/Front_Page/Press_Release3.html).)

Overall, the report argues that while incentive programs certainly have a place in the recruitment of teachers, states need to do more work to find out where the greatest need lies and address it by using incentives in a very precise manner.

### **New National Campaign to Improve Public Education**

Public Education Network has launched a new national campaign to encourage Americans to demand high-quality investments in improving public education, especially for poor and minority students. Initially, the Web campaign will focus on high quality teachers because “Given the vital role teachers play in the lives of young people, [GiveKidsGoodSchools.com thinks] the best way to start is to put a good teacher in every classroom.” The Web site gives visitors the opportunity to send an e-mail to their governor asking him to help put a good teacher in every classroom.

Visit the Web site and send a message to your governor at: <http://www.givekidsgoodschools.com>



## **FOCUS ON NEW TEACHERS: American School Board Journal Highlights Programs for New Teachers**

The December 2002 *American School Board Journal* contains two articles on support programs for new teachers.

In “Supporting New Teachers,” authors Harry K. Wong and Christina Asquith argue that each teacher who leaves a district within the first three years costs taxpayers approximately \$50,000. Calling “induction the key to retaining teachers,” they spotlight the efforts currently underway at Lafourche Parish Public School district in Louisiana. The program at Lafourche, the Framework for Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers (FIRST), began with four days of training as well as an introduction to the school’s culture and the community. Today, the FIRST program has expanded from four days to three full years of ongoing training. It is so successful that Louisiana has adopted it as a statewide model called Louisiana FIRST.

The second article, “The New Teacher Mentors,” by Tom Ganser examines four trends that are changing the look of mentoring programs for teachers. The first trend is “high-stakes mentoring,” a logical consequence of *NCLB*’s high-stakes testing that ties mentoring to teacher effectiveness and student learning. A second trend is a varied pool of beginning teachers that includes people moving into the teaching field from other professions. The third trend is a new type of mentors, made necessary because the number of suitable mentors is shrinking as the expectations for mentoring is growing. One solution is a mentor team, rather than the traditional one-on-one approach. A final trend is the need to make mentoring programs a part of the emerging school culture. Ganser argues that school districts officials looking to implement a mentoring program need to be aware of these trends when deciding what kind of program to create.

More information on the *American School Board Journal* is available at:  
<http://www.asbj.com/>



## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELEASES FINAL REGULATIONS FOR NCLB: Regulations Include Clarifications on Teacher Quality**

After receiving over 700 comments from approximately 140 parties in regard to proposed regulations for the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, **U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige** issued final regulations to further clarify federal, state, and local responsibilities under *NCLB*.

Critics of the final regulations, including state school boards, had asked education officials to build more flexibility into the law, but were denied their request. Instead, education officials stressed across-the-board improvement as a way to preserve the intent of the law. Schools that do not show yearly progress toward their goals face consequences such as paying for transportation to other schools and providing supplemental services such as tutoring.

## U.S. Department of Education Releases Final Regulations for NCLB

(Continued from p. 5)

As for teacher quality, the final regulations included several clarifications on alternative certification routes for teachers. The law requires all core academic teachers to be fully certified through traditional or alternative routes by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Middle or high school teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and demonstrate competency in their subject area by passing a rigorous state test, or through completion of an academic major, graduate degree, or comparable coursework.

There had been some uncertainty about whether individual teachers who are enrolled in, but have not yet completed, alternative certification routes should be considered "highly qualified." The final rules specify that these teachers must show satisfactory progress toward earning full certifications while receiving support through the process from mentors, professional development, or intensive supervision.

The rules also require states and districts to detail specific steps to ensure that minority students and students from low-income families are not taught by underqualified teachers at higher rates than other children. States must also report back on their progress.

*A summary of final regulations for NCLB is available at: [http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/11-2002/regs\\_sum.html](http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/11-2002/regs_sum.html)*



### **SEN. EDWARDS RELEASES EDUCATION PLAN: Focus on Recruiting Quality Teachers, High School Graduation**

In the last of three speeches about "some ideas for our country's direction," potential Democratic presidential candidate **Sen. John Edwards (D-NC)** outlined a sweeping education plan to give every student the opportunity to go to college and to place a good teacher in every classroom. In his November 21 speech at the University of Maryland, Edwards called education the "key to opportunity," and listed improvements that he would make to strengthen education from kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level and open the doors at America's colleges and universities. (The complete speech is available at: [http://www.senate.gov/~edwards/speeches/2002/educ\\_11-21.html](http://www.senate.gov/~edwards/speeches/2002/educ_11-21.html))

For elementary and secondary schools, Edwards focused on better teachers and listed initiatives to transform American high schools. As a way to better reward teachers and improve teacher quality in our hardest-to-staff schools, Edwards proposed a nationwide program that would pay for the education costs of college students who make a five-year commitment to teach in high-need areas and a \$5,000 home mortgage credit for teachers who buy homes in the poor communities where they teach. He also suggested increasing the pay of teachers with the toughest assignments in the poorest districts and doubling the current \$3 billion the federal government spends on teacher quality.

Edwards' recommendations to transform high schools include increased funding for public school choice, smaller school size, and rigorous, college preparatory coursework for all students. He also called for doubling the funding for GEAR UP and TRIO, two

programs with proven track records for helping disadvantaged students progress through the academic pipeline from middle school through college. Currently, these programs only reach 10 percent to 20 percent of eligible students.

In its report *Every Child a Graduate*, the Alliance for Excellent Education made many of the same points Edwards argued for in his speech, namely, greater funding for GEAR UP and TRIO as well as financial incentives to recruit and retain teachers in hard-to-staff districts. Some of Sen. Edwards' recommendations were taken from his own experience while working his way through college. He stressed that the experiences and support from which he benefited are not available to enough of today's students:

*Without [the] combination of support from loving parents, terrific teachers, and public schools at every level, I would never be standing here today. Unfortunately, that combination is getting harder and harder to find in America. Too many kids are trapped in schools that don't work. Too many kids who beat the odds and succeed in school can't afford to go on to college, even as kids with the most advantages get special privileges. We have to change that. In America, no child should be able to take success for granted, and every child should be able to go as far as his God-given talents and hard work will take him.*



### **NATION'S GOVERNORS ISSUE AN S.O.S.: State Governors Look to Federal Government as State Budget Shortfalls Continue to Balloon**

A recent report by the National Governors Association cited plunging tax collections and soaring medical costs as major factors that have led to the worst fiscal problems for states since WWII. In 2002, 46 states faced a collective budget shortfall of \$49.1 billion. According to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, the nation's governors are placing much of the blame on the federal government and its new mandates, on last year's \$1.35 trillion federal tax cut. (The article is available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A16274-2002Dec5.html>). Meanwhile, the White House says that it must deal with the same poor economy and rising health care costs that state governments are experiencing. In addition, a report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities noted that 43 states enacted major tax cuts from 1994 to 2001, costing the states \$40 billion in lost revenue annually.

The federal government, however, is not entirely blameless. Both last year's tax cut and this year's stimulus bill included tax cuts and breaks that directly decreased state revenues. In addition, the recently passed *No Child Left Behind Act*, "envisioned spending nearly \$28 billion on new educational testing and teacher training," according to the article, "but the Bush budget requested \$22 billion, and so far, Congress has approved nothing." Just last Monday, a group of governors met with Secretary Paige to demand adequate funds to cover the law's new mandates.

**Straight A's: An Update on Public Education** is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events both in Washington, D.C., and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. The Alliance for Excellent Education is a non-profit organization working to make it possible for America's 6 million at-risk middle and high school students to achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life.