



Straight A's

Public Education Policy And Progress



TEACHER EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN: Senior Democrat Offers Legislation Featuring Teacher Incentives and Induction Programs for New Teachers

On May 24, **Representative George Miller (D-CA)**, the senior Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, unveiled a new initiative to attract and retain highly qualified teachers and principals for all of America's public schools. Miller's proposed legislation, the Teacher Excellence for All Children (TEACH) Act of 2005, would provide incentives to increase the supply of outstanding teachers and create support systems, such as mentoring and induction, to retain public elementary and secondary school teachers and principals.

"The most important single factor in determining a child's success in school is the quality of his or her teacher," Miller said. "We all remember a teacher—or several teachers—who made us proud of ourselves for what we accomplished and helped us face our future with hope and confidence. My bill is a major legislative initiative that will attract our most talented teachers to the classrooms of our nation's toughest public schools—and encourage them to stay there."

According to Miller, the country will have to hire more than two million new teachers over the next decade. At the same time, very few of the nation's best students consider careers as teachers. Research has shown that students with high SAT and ACT scores are much less likely to choose teaching as a career. Those who do are twice as likely to leave the profession after only a few years. To help grow the supply pool and attract the nation's best and brightest students, Miller's legislation would provide grants of up to \$4,000 each year for four years to high-achieving college students. Students would receive the grant money while still in school in return for a four-year commitment to teaching after they receive their degree.

In addition to drawing more individuals into the teaching field, the TEACH Act would also work to retain teachers once they enter. When the final school bell rings this year and students across the nation head out the door for summer vacation, too many of their teachers will also be leaving the classroom—permanently. More than 200,000 teachers, nearly 6 percent of the teaching workforce, will not return to teaching next fall. Estimated conservatively, American schools spend more than \$2.6 billion annually replacing teachers who have dropped out of the profession. In *Tapping the Potential*, the Alliance for Excellent Education reported that comprehensive induction programs are critical to retaining new teachers, even when other factors such as salary, school conditions, and the teacher's personal background are taken into account.

The TEACH Act would offer grants to school districts to develop state-of-the-art teacher induction programs that provide new teachers with a minimum of three years of extensive, high-quality, comprehensive induction into the field of teaching. Beginning teachers are routinely

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assigned the most difficult classrooms, without the requisite professional support or demonstration of what it takes to help their students achieve; this is one of the major factors that causes almost a third of new teachers to leave the profession within their first three years.

As part of their induction program under the TEACH Act, new teachers would receive structured mentoring from veteran teachers who are certified and teach in the same subject area as they do. They would also receive common lesson-planning time to collaborate with their mentors, other teachers, and school leaders across all levels of experience. The program would include a standards-based assessment of every beginning teacher to determine whether the teacher should move forward in the teaching profession.

In an effort to recognize outstanding veteran teachers, the TEACH Act would provide grants to states to develop and implement statewide data systems to study the value-added effectiveness of elementary school and secondary school teachers. Research has shown that the most effective teachers can boost their pupils' learning by a full grade level relative to students taught by less effective teachers. Replacing an average teacher with a very good one for five years in a row can, for instance, nearly erase the gap in math performance between students from low-income and high-income households. The act also promotes the establishment of "teacher career advancement ladders," which would augment the salaries of teachers who expand their knowledge and skills and take on new professional roles such as mentor and master teachers.

According to the requirements of No Child Left Behind, states must ensure that all of their teachers are highly qualified by the 2005-06 school year. At the high school level, a "highly qualified" teacher must have a college major or otherwise be able to "demonstrate knowledge" of the subject taught. However, more than one-third of children in grades 7–12 are currently taught by a teacher who lacks both a college major and certification in the subject being taught. Rates of "out-of-field teachers" are especially high in high-poverty schools. To combat the high numbers of classes taught by out-of-field teachers, the TEACH Act would provide funding for school districts to pay higher salaries to exemplary highly qualified teachers and principals who transfer into the hardest-to-staff schools. Teachers in traditionally hard-to-staff subjects such as math, science, and special education would receive extra incentives.

More information on the TEACH Act is available at http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ed31_democrats/rel52405.html.



NCES RELEASES 2005 CONDITION OF EDUCATION: Report Includes Special Analysis of Teacher Workforce and Teacher Mobility

Public elementary and secondary enrollment reached an estimated 48.3 million in 2004 and is projected to increase to an all-time high of 50 million in 2014, according to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *The Condition of Education* is an annual, congressionally mandated report that serves as a one-stop shop for education statistics. While it contains little new information, the report effectively summarizes important developments and trends in education. This year's version also contains a special analysis that describes the teacher workforce and the movement of teachers into and out of this workforce.

According to the report, the percentage of minority public school students increased from 22 percent in 1972 to 42 percent in 2003, primarily due to growth in Hispanic enrollments. In addition, the number of children ages five to seventeen who spoke a language other than English at home more than doubled between 1979 and 2003.

“These trends illustrate why we are focusing so much time and energy on closing the achievement gap that exists between groups of students,” **U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings** said. “We want to ensure that students are empowered with the math and reading skills they will need to succeed in college and compete for jobs.”

According to the report, while some progress has been made in mathematics, scores in reading continue to lag. Citing statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the report noted that the mathematics performance of fourth and eighth graders improved steadily from 1990 to 2003, but reading scores stagnated. Students in large central city public schools continued to lag behind their peers, with reading and mathematics scores that were lower on average than those of students in rural or suburban areas.

In its analysis of teacher data for the 1999–2000 school year, the NCES report said that a total of about 3,450,000 teachers worked in public and private elementary and secondary schools across the country and represented about 2.7 percent of the overall U.S. workforce that year. As shown in the chart below, schools had to replace a larger percentage of teachers at the start of the 1999–2000 school year—546,000—than at the start of any of three other years that were surveyed. This number represents the number of teachers who transferred to another school plus the “leavers”—teachers who left the profession altogether. The chart also includes a breakdown of why individuals left the teaching profession. Both teachers who left teaching and teachers who transferred at the end of 1999–2000 reported a lack of planning time, too heavy a workload, too low a salary, and problematic student behavior among their top five sources of dissatisfaction with the school they left.

Number and Percentage of Public and Private K–12 Teachers Who Did Not Teach in the Same School the Following Year, by Turnover Categories

Turnover Categories	1987–88		1990–91		1993–94		1999–2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Transfers at the end of the year	218,000	8%	209,000	7%	205,000	7%	269,000	8%
Leavers	173,000	6%	174,000	6%	213,000	7%	278,000	8%
Retired	35,000	1%	46,000	2%	48,000	2%	66,000	2%
Took other job	64,000	2%	56,000	2%	90,000	3%	126,000	4%
Went back to school	11,000	<1%	13,000	<1%	8,000	<1%	12,000	<1%
Left for family reasons	48,000	2%	33,000	1%	35,000	1%	47,000	1%
Other	14,000	1%	25,000	1%	30,000	1%	26,000	1%
Total turnover at the end of the year	391,000	14%	383,000	13%	418,000	14%	546,000	16%

NOTE: All numbers are estimates with confidence intervals varying from $\pm 2,000$ to $\pm 34,000$. Denominator used to calculate the percentage is the total number of teachers in the workforce during the year. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education 2005*

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According to the report, approximately 17 percent of the total teacher workforce were new hires at their schools at the beginning of the 1999–2000 school year. However, only a relatively small percentage of the workforce—about 4 percent—were “brand-new teachers,” individuals direct from college or from other fields who decided to try their hand at teaching. The other 13 percent were experienced teachers who were transferring from one school to another.

Using this information, the report noted that increased teacher turnover “does not necessarily mean that there will be greater proportions of inexperienced teachers in the classroom.” Given the small percentage of the total teacher workforce that brand-new teachers represent (4 percent), the report also said that, absent a “major change in the dynamics of the workforce, attempts to improve the supply of new teachers can effect only small changes in the teacher workforce each year.”

In 1999–2000, among all teachers at all grade levels, an average of 12 percent were teaching out-of-field, meaning that they had neither an undergraduate or graduate major nor certification in the field of their main teaching assignment. Middle schools were most likely to have teachers leading a class outside their field. Among public middle school teachers, 8 percent of social science teachers, 11 percent of English teachers, 13 percent of science teachers, and 18 percent of mathematics teachers were teaching out-of-field. Among public high school teachers, the numbers were much lower: 2 percent of social science teachers, 2 percent of English teachers, 3 percent of science teachers, and 5 percent of mathematics teachers were teaching out-of-field.

The complete report is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/>.



SOUTHERN COOKING: New Report Focuses on Graduation Rates Crisis in Five Southern States, Notes Lax Enforcement of NCLB Accountability, Potential for Improved Economies

Graduation rates in the southern part of the United States were several points lower than the national average in 2002, according to estimates by **Christopher Swanson of the Urban Institute**. According to his analysis, high schools in the South graduated only 64.5 percent of their students, with African Americans (55.3 percent) and Latinos (56.3) faring far worse than their white (70.5 percent) and Asian (82.2 percent) peers.¹

A separate report, *Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis in the South*, by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, focuses on five of the states—Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina. These states report graduation rates in 2002 ranging from a high of 85 percent in North Carolina to a low of 62 percent in Georgia. However, when the more reliable method developed by Swanson was used, the graduation rates fell far lower. According to the report, “lax enforcement” of the No Child Left Behind Act’s graduation rate requirements

¹ The southern region is defined as the District of Columbia and the sixteen states that practiced legally imposed segregation prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*. They include West Virginia, D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Virginia.

has led to different reporting methods and state Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals that are “virtually useless.”

As the report notes, the southern region of the United States offers itself as a unique test case for a study of graduation rates because of its student makeup and history of unlawful school segregation. While the South has always been home to a majority of African Americans and has seen a very large influx of Latino students over the past years, it continues to have many predominately white schools with concentrated poverty, making it very different from the rest of the country, which has few such schools. However, as the report demonstrates, these poor, predominately white schools are just as likely to have very low graduation rates as urban schools that house poor, predominately African-American students.

Upon further examination, the report found that very few schools in these five states “beat the odds” and graduated a higher than expected percentage of their students. Using a method from researchers at Johns Hopkins University, the report found a “dearth” of schools that had a “promoting power” of at least 80 percent, and where at least 40 percent of students qualify for free lunch and 25 percent or more of students are black or Latino. (Promoting power is defined as a school’s success in moving students from grade to grade, averaged over three years.)

In Georgia, the report did not identify a single school that met the criteria. In Florida, there were only two such schools, with four in North Carolina, twelve in Louisiana, and fifteen in Mississippi. When considering all high schools in the South, **Professor Robert Balfanz**, who led the Hopkins researchers, found that only 5 percent high schools in the South graduate at least 90 percent of their students. He also found that while over half the high schools with low graduation rates in the South are high-poverty schools, most do not receive Title I funds.

Meanwhile, these schools’ accountability, at least in terms of improving their graduation rates, is almost nonexistent. As the report notes, neither the individual states nor the U.S. Department of Education seem to place making improvements in graduation rates at anywhere near the high level of importance that they assign to achieving higher test scores. Over the last few weeks, state after state has issued press releases touting higher test scores in reading and math, while turning a blind eye to the fact that portions of their student population continue to graduate at around 50 percent.

“Although Congress inserted graduation rate accountability provisions into the No Child Left Behind law, the lax enforcement on this accountability indicator at both the state and federal level has rendered this requirement virtually useless,” the report notes. “While states must meet stringent requirements to improve test scores or risk serious sanctions under this federal law, they face few consequences for failing to improve graduation rates.”

In North Carolina, for example, all students and student subgroups must improve test scores, step by step, until they reach 100 percent proficiency in reading and math by 2014. If any subgroup misses one step, the school fails to make AYP and faces eventual sanctions such as district takeover. In contrast, while the state has set its graduation rate goal of 90 percent, it needs to make only the most minimal improvement, and subgroups are never required to show improvement, to meet AYP. If, for example, minority students continued to graduate at very low

New Report Focuses on Graduation Rates Crisis in Five Southern States

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levels, but white students improved enough to raise the district graduation rate by as little as 1/10 of 1 percent over the prior year, the district would be considered to have made AYP.

The failure to graduate so many students is not without cost—it impacts both the individual and the region’s economic and social future. “Dropping out is related to failure in the job market and to criminal activity,” the report reads. Noting that failure to graduate from high school triples the likelihood of being imprisoned, the report also found that incarceration spending increased between 1980 and 2000 in every one of the states surveyed, from 60 percent in North Carolina to 201 percent in Mississippi. According to **Professor Russell Rumberger of the University of California at Santa Barbara**, the 114,382 students who were officially reported as dropouts by the five states combined during the 2002-2003 school year will cost a total of \$29.7 billion dollars in lost wages, ranging from \$1.2 billion in Mississippi to \$12.1 billion in Florida.

Given these statistics, the southern states could make great progress in improving their economies and communities with a significant investment toward keeping students in school until graduation. “A renewed commitment to keeping more students in school until they graduate from high school is not just sound educational policy; it is sound economic, public safety and criminal justice policy,” the report reads. “Increasing on-time graduation rates offers a win/win strategy that will not only improve the region’s economic vitality, but will predictably reduce crime, lower incarceration costs, and salvage lives in the process.”

The complete report is available at

http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/dropouts/dropouts_south05.pdf.



NEWSWEEK DECISION TO RANK “BEST” HIGH SCHOOLS BY AP AND IB NOT SO SMART, SAYS ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION PRESIDENT

In its May 16 issue, *Newsweek* published a list of America’s best high schools based on which schools were getting as many students as possible ready for higher education. The magazine used a formula developed by *Washington Post* columnist **Jay Mathews** that ranked schools based on participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) tests that were written and graded by outside experts. While Mathews concedes that there is much to debate about the value of standardized tests and AP in particular, he maintains that “no other standard works as well to measure a high school’s success at challenging all students to perform at a high level.”

In a letter that was published in the May 30 issue of *Newsweek*, **Alliance for Excellent Education president and former West Virginia Governor Bob Wise** commended the magazine for its recognition of the crisis in America’s high schools, but argued that successful high schools are “complex entities that defy efforts to rank them by simple criteria.”

“All of the high schools listed by *Newsweek* are obviously educating **some** of their students well,” Governor Wise wrote. “Those young people who are taking AP or IB classes are no doubt better prepared than many of their peers for the demands of college or other postgraduate

training. But less than 60 percent of U.S. high schools participate in the AP program, and fewer than 500 schools in this country offer an International Baccalaureate degree.”

Wise noted that many of the one hundred best high schools from Mathews’s list are considered “in need of improvement” by the U.S. Department of Education—in most cases because some subgroup of their students are not making Adequate Yearly Progress. Nor does Mathews’s analysis take into consideration how many students in the schools enroll in the ninth grade but drop out prior to graduation.

While Wise acknowledged that rigorous coursework is a necessary element of a successful high school education, he maintained that students also need “caring, well-trained teachers, effective programs to help them raise their literacy levels, individual learning plans that help them achieve their academic objectives over a four- or six-year period, personalized learning centers, relevant curricula, and a variety of other supports that will make the difference between success and failure.”

In concluding, Wise applauded the schools that made the list, but urged parents and community leaders to “look at all of the factors that go into making successful schools as they rate the high schools in their neighborhoods and beyond.”

More information on *Newsweek*’s “America’s Best High Schools” issue is available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7761678/site/newsweek/>.

Governor Wise’s complete letter to *Newsweek* is available at <http://www.all4ed.org/press/NewsweekLetter.pdf>.

I Want My MTV!: Gates Foundation Partners with Music Television Network to Stress Importance of a High School Diploma

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a new partnership with MTV to raise young people’s awareness about the importance of finishing high school with the skills needed for college. The joint project is called “think MTV: Education” and will inform millions of young people with a focus on low-income and minority students. The project will offer key facts about the importance of graduating from high school and provide resources on how to prepare for and gain access to college.

“We’re thrilled that MTV is getting the message out, having this told through the eyes of the kids themselves. And we think it can make a huge difference,” said Bill Gates, cofounder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “As students expect more, it actually helps the system to change. It’s not only great for those kids but this whole momentum we want to build about having great high schools—[young people] can be part of what helps that happen.”

More information on the partnership, as well as an MTV News interview with Bill Gates, is available at http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Education/TransformingHighSchools/Schools/Announcements/announcement_052405.htm.

Straight A’s: Public Education Policy and Progress 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 nonprofit organization working to make it possible for America’s secondary school students to achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life.



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