

## **A Better System for Schools: Developing, Supporting and Retaining Effective Teachers**

*Barnett Berry, Alesha Daughtrey, and Alan Wieder*

### **Executive Summary**

Parents, researchers, and policymakers are clear that teachers have more impact on student achievement than any other school-based factor.<sup>1</sup> Yet not all schools have equal access to the most effective teachers. High-needs schools that serve large proportions of economically disadvantaged and minority students are least likely to recruit and retain teachers who are experienced, National Board Certified or most effective in boosting student test scores.<sup>2</sup> Thus, high-needs schools are more likely to be beset with teaching vacancies in math and special education,<sup>3</sup> and much more likely to fill classrooms with out-of-field, inexperienced, and less prepared teachers.<sup>4</sup> The strong links established between student learning gains and effective teaching practice suggest that the achievement gap might be better described as an effective teaching gap. How do we close that gap and provide effective 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers to every student?

The Obama administration's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and almost \$5 billion in Race to the Top funds, offer state and local policymakers as well as K-12 and higher education stakeholders some unique opportunities. Through these programs, states and districts could secure much needed resources to focus on identifying, preparing, and rewarding teachers in ways that "elevate the teaching profession and help recruit and retain great teachers and principals for underserved schools and communities."<sup>5</sup>

This report and a set of associated papers from the Center for Teaching Quality and Ken Futernick explore what it really takes to accomplish the goals of developing, supporting, and retaining effective teachers. Drawing on a recent Teachers Network survey of 1,210 teachers nationwide, as well as a wide array of related research, we find:

- Teachers whose students make the greatest achievement gains have extensive preparation and experience relevant to their current assignment (subject, grade level, and student population taught).
- Opportunities to work with like-minded, similarly accomplished colleagues – and to build and share collective expertise – are also strongly associated with effective teaching.
- Accomplished teachers who have opportunities to share their expertise – and serve as leaders (as coaches, mentors, teacher educator, etc.) – are more likely to remain in the profession.

- To teach effectively, teachers must have access to the people, resources, and policies that support their work in the classroom. This includes: (1) principals who cultivate and embrace teacher leadership; (2) time and tools for teachers to learn from each other, (3) opportunities for teachers to connect and work with community organizations and agencies that support students and their families outside the school walls; (4) evaluation systems that comprehensively measure the impact of teachers on student learning, (5) performance pay systems that primarily reward the spread of teaching expertise and spur collaboration among teachers.

Our nation has the capacity to make sure every child in every high-needs school in America has effective teachers. President Obama has called for our nation to “treat teachers like the professionals they are, while also holding them more accountable.”<sup>6</sup> Doing so means not only looking carefully at the research evidence but also listening to our most accomplished teachers and acting on their advice. They are ready, as the President has suggested, to “lift up their schools.”<sup>7</sup> Evidence from both a wide range of surveys and related research suggests strongly that many, many teachers are ready to respond to the President’s call. It is time to hear their voices and embrace their ideas for recruiting, preparing, rewarding, and supporting effective teachers — ones that all of our students and families deserve.

## Works Cited

- <sup>1</sup> Ferguson, R.F. (1991). Paying for public education: New evidence on how and why money matters. *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 28(2): 465-498; Hanushek, E.A. (1996). *School resources and achievement in Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland State Department of Education; Sanders, W.L. & Rivers, J.C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center; Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A. & Kain, J.F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica* 73(2), 417-58; Rockoff, J.E. (2004). The impact of individual teachers on student achievement: Evidence from Panel Data. *American Economic Review*, 94(2), 247-252; Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rockoff, J. & Wyckoff, J. (2007). *The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high-poverty schools*. CALDER Working Paper 10.
- <sup>2</sup> Sanders, W.L. & Rivers, J.C. (1996). Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center; Cavalluzzo, L. (2004). Is National Board Certification an effective signal of teacher quality? Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation; Goldhaber, D. & Anthony, E. (2004). Can teacher quality be effectively assessed? Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington; Humphrey, D.C., Koppich, J. E. & Hough, H. J. (2005, March 3). Sharing the wealth: National Board Certified Teachers and the students who need them most. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13(18).
- <sup>3</sup> Strizek, G. A., Pittsonberger, J. L., Riordan, K. E., Lyter, D. M. & Orlofsky, G. F. (2006). Characteristics of schools, districts, teachers, principals, and school libraries in the United States: 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- <sup>4</sup> Ingersoll, R.M. (1999). The problem of underqualified teachers in American secondary schools. *Educational Researcher*, 28(2). Retrieved September 15, 2008 from [http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty\\_research/docs/ER-RMI-1999.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/docs/ER-RMI-1999.pdf); Mayer, D. P., Mullens, J. E., & Moore, M. T. (2002). Monitoring school quality: An indicators report. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved September 15, 2008 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001030.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education (2009). American recovery and reinvestment act of 2009: Education jobs and reform fact sheet. Retrieved May 29, 2009 from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/overview.html>
- <sup>6</sup> Hass, C. (2009, March 10). President Obama on education reform. Organizing for America. Retrieved April 7, 2009 from <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/obamaforamerica/gGxNSK>
- <sup>7</sup> Hass, C. (2009, March 10). President Obama on education reform. Organizing for America. Retrieved April 7, 2009 from <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/obamaforamerica/gGxNSK>