



# ISSUE BRIEF

## TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS

### BACKGROUND

Research indicates no other school-related factor has a greater impact on student achievement than the quality and effectiveness of the student's teacher. Further, research also points to school leadership as having the second highest impact on improving the learning environment. School districts nationwide face challenges involving teacher and principal recruitment, retention, and effectiveness, particularly in high-need subjects and hard-to-staff schools. The pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Administration initiatives such as Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund and School Improvement Grants have introduced substantive reform options into the lexicon of teacher and leader preparation, credentialing, compensation and evaluation. These include 1) using multiple measures of effectiveness, including student achievement, 2) improving and aligning teacher preparation programs with K-12 systems, 3) aligning teacher and leader effectiveness across a p-12 continuum, and 4) implementing innovations to meet the needs in high-need subjects and schools. The federal government should play a limited, but helpful role by assisting states and districts in meeting the challenges of recruiting, retaining and rewarding quality teachers and principals for its students.

### Recent Congressional and Administration Action:

**ESEA reauthorization** - The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee approved a bill in October 2011 to reauthorize the ESEA. The bill makes teacher and principal evaluations systems an allowable use of state Title II grants, but it is not required. If a state chooses to use state Title II funds for evaluation systems, those systems must be consistent with the Teacher Incentive Fund program - which means that student achievement must have a significant part in the evaluation system.

**Waivers** - While the ESEA reauthorization is under consideration by Congress, the U.S. Department of Education is offering waivers to grant states relief from some mandates in No Child Left Behind. Teacher quality is one of the areas that states must address in their waiver requests. States must be prepared to adopt guidelines for teacher evaluation and school districts must customize and apply them locally. Eleven states submitted waiver requests in November 2011: Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The deadline for the next wave of waiver requests is mid-February 2012.

**Teacher preparation** - The Department also announced an initiative to improve teacher preparation by rewarding effective programs and improving the quality of colleges of education. Linking student achievement back to the students' teacher preparation program is a component of the initiative, as is a new Presidential Teaching Scholarship program to fund scholarships for future educators to teach high-need subjects or fields, and teach for at least three years in high-need schools.

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#### OFFICE OF ADVOCACY

## NSBA POSITION

Hiring and staffing decisions, as well as professional development programs, are the responsibility of local school districts. Therefore, personnel decisions, including teacher and principal recruitment, retention, compensation and evaluation, are local responsibilities carried out in the context of collective bargaining and other local circumstances.

NSBA urges the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Administration to provide funding for research and implementation that supports a broad range of locally developed strategies to improve teacher and principal effectiveness to increase student achievement through: professional development, fair and evidence-based evaluation systems, alternative certification and credentialing programs, and other reforms, including:

- Provide incentives to states and districts to help recruit, retain and reward effective teachers and principals in schools that most need them, and for subjects with shortages (e.g. math, science, foreign languages, special education). Incentives should include support for locally-designed performance pay programs. Recruitment and retention incentives and funding (e.g. Title II of ESEA) should cover a portfolio of spending options for districts to reflect unique local conditions;
- Invest in professional development initiatives to enable educators to effectively teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including the use of technology to transform learning;
- Fund, facilitate and disseminate quality research, best practices and innovations on effective teaching and school leadership; and,
- Assist in broadening the pool of new and effective teacher candidates by supporting programs that offer alternative routes to certification that can help increase the number of minority teachers, as well as mid-career professionals. All teacher preparation programs should collaborate with states and local districts to meet their needs, and be held accountable for the quality and preparation of their program's graduates.
- Expand federal support focused on effective school leadership, through partnerships with universities and promotion of research-based programs.

Finally, Congress and the Administration should *refrain* from creating state and local mandates, such as:

- Establishing new set-asides of federal funding streams, given stagnant and shrinking federal funds.
- Mandating certain reforms as a condition of receiving Title II or other federal formula funds, such as new academic standards, needs assessments or evaluations systems, or mandating professional development for personnel outside K-12 education.
- Mandating specific criterion, credentialing, qualifications and other requirements for teacher and leader evaluation systems.

Success will ultimately depend on the collaborative and ongoing efforts of school and community leaders and the institutions that prepare teachers and principals. Congress should be mindful of that fact as it considers legislation that aims to strengthen teacher and principal effectiveness. NSBA believes the federal government should play a limited, but not unimportant, role by assisting states and local school districts in their teacher and principal recruitment, retention and professional development efforts through targeted incentives and fewer federal restrictions.

*For additional information, please contact Lucy Gettman, director of federal programs, at the National School Boards Association, at 703-838-6763, by e-mail, [lgettman@nsba.org](mailto:lgettman@nsba.org).*