

What Matters Now: A New Compact for Teaching and Learning



A CALL TO ACTION

COMMISSIONERS 2016

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The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) was founded in 1994 as a bipartisan effort to engage education policymakers and practitioners to address the entrenched national challenge of recruiting, developing, and retaining great teachers in order to ensure that all students have access to quality teaching in schools organized for success.

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What Matters Now: A New Compact for Teaching and Learning

“We propose an audacious goal... America will provide every student with what should be his or her birthright: access to competent, caring, and qualified teaching.”

— *What Matters Most: Teaching and America’s Future*
National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996

TWENTY YEARS AGO, a report by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) changed the national discussion about what must be done to improve America’s schools so that all students experience success. The Commission drew attention to the overlooked fact that the most important school variable affecting student achievement is the teacher. It called for us to create schools designed for success and establish the conditions in schools in which teachers and students could thrive. It made recommendations affecting every aspect of the teaching career, from recruitment and induction, to retention and recognition.

And while many of the recommendations from 20 years ago took hold, all too often potentially powerful improvement strategies are buffeted by political winds or the changing priority of the moment. Since *What Matters Most* was released, we have seen significant but uneven progress. We have raised standards for teacher education, focused preparation more on clinical practice, and developed performance assessments to determine if candidates are classroom ready. We have paid special attention to new teachers and know more about what types of preparation, mentoring, and induction lead to teacher retention and positive impact on student achievement. But even in these areas where we have made significant progress, including raising the percentage of first-year teachers reporting they participated in induction from 50% to 86% in the past two decades, the quality and implementation of these programs has been uneven and haphazard.ⁱ

Where there has been positive change, it has not been systemic enough. We aren’t creating the policies and supports across all schools that help all educators teach well or placing teachers in schools where they are most needed.

For instance, while we know that students who have highly qualified teachers make more academic progress than those that do not, teachers with temporary or alternative licenses are more likely to work in high-poverty districts.ⁱⁱ And despite evidence from both international and U.S. studies that show that focused professional collaboration improves teacher retention, satisfaction, and self-efficacy, the majority of teachers never teach together (54%) or even visit each other’s classrooms (50%).ⁱⁱⁱ

It is our challenge to keep and develop the teachers we have and stem the costs of teacher turnover—as much as \$2.2 billion annually.^{iv} Anywhere from a quarter to half of new teachers leave the field in the first four or five years. Fewer people are lining up to take the place of teachers who leave: enrollments in traditional and alternative preparation and certification routes dropped by 20% in 2013-14 alone.^v Half of college students surveyed believe the teaching profession has become less prestigious^{vi} and only five percent of high school students reported that they intended to pursue a career as an educator, a percentage that has dropped each year since 2010.^{vii}

Finally, as we look over the past two decades, we are struck that as a nation we continue to struggle with providing access to great teaching and learning for **all students**. The current education system simply does not work for millions of students, many of them Black and Hispanic students and students from low-income families. Over the past 25 years, the achievement gap between high- and low-income students has continued to worsen.^{viii} If we fail to act now, the gaps will continue to widen, leaving more and more students behind, or worse: we may graduate students with the promise that they are prepared for college and careers when in fact they are not.

Seizing the Moment

So why, in spite of these challenges, is this Commission as optimistic today about prospects for the future as it was 20 years ago? Because we are entering a new era of teaching and learning in which the teacher is not the target of reform but rather is the primary engine driving improvement.

The nation is poised to introduce policy that is not dictated by politics, but determined by what works based on evidence and the professional judgment of educators. As we write this, states and districts are developing new and more locally-driven accountability plans under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The Commission believes that this is a new opportunity to think differently about how schools are organized, how accountability is structured, and how teachers are supported—all so that teachers can learn, lead, and be successful with the diverse population of students they are charged to educate.

We have squeezed all we can out of the hard rind of econometric formulas. Now it is time to activate the human factor—the motivation and intelligence of students and educators—to reorganize schools around what drives learning. This will require strengthening relationships among teachers through collaboration, offering opportunities for teacher leadership, and providing supports for teachers to become highly accomplished instructors. It also will require a new relationship between teacher and student, as well as between students and community members, through more active and deeper learning. This approach, in which changes in teaching and learning drives significant changes in schools themselves, we believe, can bring inspiration and innovation into the classroom, and enable teachers to challenge traditional norms of school and classroom to usher in a new type of education system that will work for all.

As we shed the heavy shackles of the industrial-era system of schooling in order to maximize learning for each individual child, we believe that educators can sow the seeds of discipline, creativity, excellence, and tolerance so that the next generation can create new fields of endeavor, confront threats to our environment and co-existence,

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS:

The commission is calling for a new compact with teachers in order to capitalize on this moment in time when policy and practice are shifting toward more engaging and relevant teaching and learning for all students. Teachers will have more agency and new roles and leadership opportunities, and will in turn be supported by a system of aligned resources and supports. These efforts will be supported by a new shared accountability that encourages collaboration, use of data within a context of continuous improvement, and teacher-led professional learning. In order to accomplish this, the Commission is recommending that:

1. **Policymakers should establish and broadly communicate a new compact with teachers**
2. **Every state should establish a Commission on Teaching, Learning, and the State's Future**
3. **States and districts should codify and track whether all schools are “organized for success”**
4. **Teacher preparation should be more relevant and clinically-based**
5. **States should support all new teachers with multi-year induction and high-quality mentoring**
6. **Education leaders should evaluate ALL professional learning for responsiveness and effectiveness**

and use wise judgment in addressing the many tradeoffs that come with difficult choices.

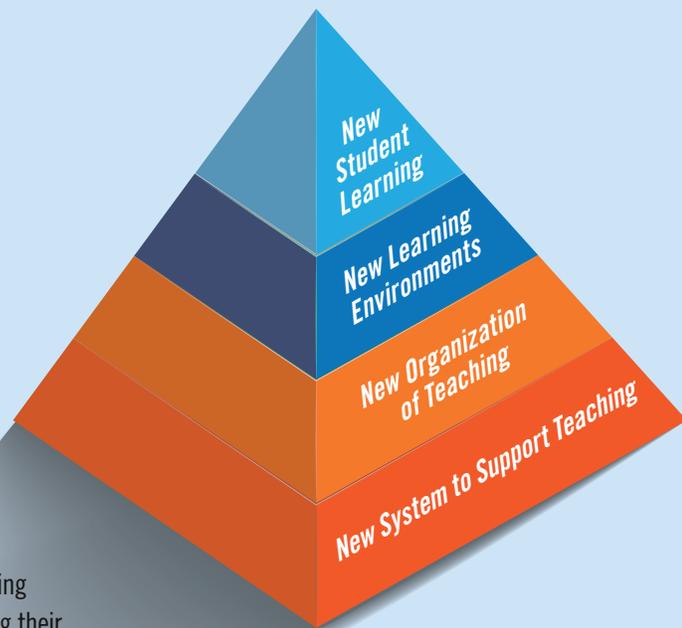
This is our chance to get things right. Building on a system of standards and accountability, it is now time to put our faith in the people who teach and lead as they learn and grow. We can invest in teaching now or squander yet another opportunity to help every student succeed.

A New Compact

Teachers at the Heart of the System

We need to help our teachers stay in the profession and thrive by empowering them to develop a system that is more flexible, innovative, and customized. By having more say in their professional learning, leadership roles and school culture, educators could remake their own jobs and their schools from the inside out while continually adjusting what they do based on evidence and results. In this environment, we need to ensure that teachers have the time and opportunity to shift their methods from encouraging students to find the “right” answers to helping students “own” what they learn and apply it in their daily lives. And we must do so for every child, no matter what they bring to the classroom, and help teachers value the diversity of their students, turning their array of experiences, talents, creativity, skills, grit, and drive into our country’s greatest strength.

This new way of thinking about teaching and learning will drive a new system that asks much of teachers but gives them the supports they need to be successful throughout their careers. Essentially, the new system will establish a new compact between teachers, states, and districts; between teachers, students, parents; and the education system as a whole.



This new compact and system of teaching and learning says to students:

- We’re going to expect more of you as you create and seize the opportunity to show what you can do.
- We’re going to change how and what you learn in school to match how you learn best.
- We’re going to build a system that gives you access to great teachers.
- We’re going to challenge you as never before but we’ll let you direct more of your learning.
- We’re going to use new tools and approaches to teaching that will inspire you and your teachers.
- We’re going to develop all your talents to prepare you for success in school, work, and the world.

This system says to educators:

- We’re going to expect more of you as you create opportunities to teach, lead, and develop.
- We’re going to change the ways schools work to make them great places to teach and learn.
- We’re going to pay you so that you want to come and you won’t be in debt when you start.
- We’re going to prepare you so that you will be successful and want to stay.
- We’re going to treat you as professionals and elevate your ability to do what’s best for the students you teach.
- We’re going to listen to you and give you more voice about what needs to happen to help your school and the system improve.
- We’re going to ensure that you have quality mentoring and opportunities to learn with your peers.
- We’re going to hold you accountable for performance and hold ourselves accountable, too.

The system says to parents, the community, and other stakeholders:

- We’re going to ensure that all students, regardless of who they are and where they live, will become well-educated, productive, and engaged members of society.
- We’re going to ensure that schools no longer operate in a vacuum, disconnected from both their communities and the effects of technology that are transforming our work, our culture, and our lives.
- We’re going to attract the strongest teachers to every community so that every student has the opportunity to succeed and excel.
- We’re going to ensure that parents are partners in learning, that their input is valued, and that we work hard to ensure they are engaged participants.
- We’re going to give you the tools to be advocates for your students and citizens.

With these shared commitments, we will be able to gain traction in our efforts to help all students and schools achieve at their highest levels.

Leveraging Seismic Shifts

By seizing the moment created by some major shifts in society and education, we can create this new system. By capitalizing on new knowledge and research that have emerged in the field of education in the past two decades, teachers can be supported to emphasize depth rather than breadth of knowledge and can encourage connections across disciplines and contexts—leading their students to more critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving experiences.

First and foremost, the diversity of our students is both an opportunity and a reason for transformation. The current system cannot serve the needs of students who represent the range of backgrounds, experiences, and contexts we see in today’s classrooms. Today, most of the nation’s 50 million public school children are students of color and a full quarter of students live in poverty.^{ix} More than four million of today’s students are English language learners, whose families speak more than 450 different languages.^x More than six million students have identified disabilities or special needs; many more are as yet undiagnosed.^{xi} Issues related to race and inequality are part of the day-to-day fabric of all of the nation’s schools. We simply can’t keep doing things the way they have always been done. Rather than viewing diversity as not fitting in the current design, we need to change the design to make learning relevant and meaningful for all students.

We can meet the needs of all students by calling on a growing body of research on the **science of learning** that provides us with a more nuanced understanding of children’s development at different ages and stages; the neuroscientific underpinnings of their academic, social, and emotional skills; and the teaching strategies that may be most effective for students of different ages and abilities. Similarly, **knowledge of human development** has grown and been shared with educators, policymakers, and the public who recognize that a child’s success in school depends on a constel-

“ We have squeezed all we can out of the hard rind of econometric formulas. Now is the time to activate the human factor. ”

lation of factors, in and out of school, and that learning is also dependent on a child’s health and safety, social and emotional development, and disposition toward learning. There is growing understanding about the need for educators to develop strong relationships with students to know what interests them to encourage students to pursue their own learning with perseverance and passion.

To leverage this new knowledge, teachers and students need to tap **new technologies** that have disrupted the way we teach and learn and compel us to shift from the traditional knowledge-transfer model to learning that is self-directed, collaborative, and dynamic. The teacher-learner relationship has the potential to change dramatically as classrooms become more “open” via voice, video, and text-based collaboration. Students and teachers can access a world library of primary sources, blended learning environments, new ways to demonstrate and share knowledge, and more. Technology also has the potential to make personalized learning a reality by tracking each student’s performance and providing relevant instructional resources and support to *all* students—including those who are struggling and those who have surpassed grade-level expectations.

In addition, **new ideas about data and evaluation** are causing us to rethink how we measure progress and target improvements in education, from individual classrooms up through federal agencies. Our ability to collect and analyze data about teaching and learning has increased significantly in recent decades, as has the focus on improvement science. The randomized control trials and experimental designs that have dominated education research

To support local, state, and national implementation of these system changes, the Commission has developed a comprehensive companion guide (www.nctaf.org) that offers data, examples of implementation, and recommended reading and resources to put these changes in place.

for many years are rigorous, but also time-consuming, expensive, and of limited practical use. In contrast, **improvement science** aims to provide timely, useful feedback. It pairs researchers with networks of practitioners to develop practical tools that help teachers understand how well an instructional strategy or assessment works, for whom, and under what conditions. In education and in other sectors, the result has been that, “large networks have organized around complex problems and brought about remarkable change.”^{xii}

Efforts to make learning more real-life, technology-enabled, and extended beyond school has required the teaching field to identify **new sets of competencies and roles** to be effective. Teachers now take on new roles as teacher leaders, learning designers, facilitators, networkers, and advisors.^{xiii} In addition to mastering content and pedagogy, teachers also need to curate digital learning resources and integrate technology into instruction, personalize learning, and focus on all aspects of students’ social emotional development. Teachers are also increasingly seizing leadership roles; speaking up about policy decisions at the local and state level; and providing important input about their own development, pathways, schools and profession.

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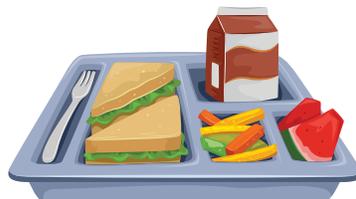
A New Vision for Learning and Teaching

Schools and districts across the United States are already leveraging the shifts and opportunities of the past 20 years to create new teaching and learning environments that inspire students and teachers to plumb the depths of their potential.

In these schools, students are active learners who initiate what they study, learn to ask questions, and uncover answers for themselves. They demonstrate mastery of subject matter as they will be required in future learning and careers—by

A SNAPSHOT OF TODAY’S STUDENTS

Most of the **50 MILLION** public school children are **STUDENTS OF COLOR**



25% OF CHILDREN in the US live in poverty AND **51% of children in school qualify for reduced and FREE LUNCH** *

More than **FOUR MILLION** of today’s students are English language learners, whose families speak more than **450 DIFFERENT LANGUAGES**

More than **SIX MILLION STUDENTS** have identified disabilities or **SPECIAL NEEDS** (many more are undiagnosed)



* See https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/majority-of-us-public-school-students-are-in-poverty/2015/01/15/df7171d0-9ce9-11e4-a7ee-526210d665b4_story.html and the SEF site for more info.

“The new learning environment is rich in inquiry and problem solving, self-directed learning, new technologies, and global and community connections.”

writing papers and proposals, making presentations, and by organizing and managing events in which they take a lead role. Learning is more meaningful and relevant. Students study interdisciplinary areas of knowledge—science, history, math, music, and literature—by doing authentic projects such as ones that examine the relationship between climate change and natural disasters or public health strategies to address new diseases. Guided by their teachers and the principal, students in these schools become progressively more involved in the things that matter to them. Extending their learning, students may work with a biotech firm or medical lab to conduct real research, or develop an exhibit in a local museum.

Such experiences for students happen because the teachers themselves are inspired and the educators in the school have established a commitment to making teaching a collective effort to ensure that all students have opportunities to succeed. Their teaching is reflective of their excitement about the subjects and disciplines they teach and about teaching in general. Their work is dynamic and collaborative, and their professional relationships extend beyond the walls of their classroom and their school. They are connected to other teachers in their fields, including those who teach at different grade levels, and to others across the country or across the globe. These learning environments are nurtured in what one educator has called a culture of “high expectations grounded in teachers’ own scholarship, the demands of a rich curriculum, assessments that get at ‘un-measurables’ like critical thinking, and a high international standard of performance... The operating assumption is that nobody is ever a finished product, that people learn collaboratively, and that everyone continues to grow personally and professionally throughout his or her life.”^{xiv}

These schools are still the exception. We have a responsibility to learn from what they do and to learn from the education leaders who have brought the vision to life so that we can show what is possible in establishing this new compact for teaching and learning that will benefit all students.

The new system for teaching and learning must be aligned in support of a new organization of teaching in which teachers have time to collaborate and have the collective authority to manage resources for their own learning, and in which policy and community structures are coordinated to enrich, deepen, and personalize student learning. The new learning environment will be focused on deep inquiry and problem solving; encourage self-directed learning; exploit new technologies and global and community connections; and will address all aspects of student development, including social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. This environment can be created if we simultaneously change how we organize what teachers do—creating new roles and leadership opportunities and develop a better system of support to enable quality teaching to flourish.

Key Conditions for Building the New System

Teaching has been called the essential profession, the one that makes all others possible. But what makes great teaching possible? How do we establish a system of teaching and learning that ensures that teachers are well paid and well prepared, have strong instructional leaders in their schools, experience quality professional development, and find opportunities for inspiration and satisfaction in their work?

Facilitating supportive conditions that ensure great teaching is a complex task because it requires a shift from a prescriptive response to one that is attuned to local contexts, resources, and needs. Stakeholder input is key—from teacher preparation programs, school districts, and community organizations, as well as individual teachers and administrators.^{xv} Organizing for success must meaningfully involve teachers as expert resources and drivers of change. Many reforms have failed because they leave teacher training, capacity building, feedback, and buy-in to the end of the process.

As we work to ensure that all of our students have equitable access to great teaching, we must move away from a focus on individual teachers toward a vision of teaching as a collective endeavor. Simply strengthening the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual teachers will not deepen the impact of teaching. Instead, we must recognize that the conditions and contexts in schools and districts impact teachers' ability to do their best work and to remain teaching in schools where they are most needed.

The Commission has identified the following **key conditions** at both the school level and the systemic level that are required for great teaching to flourish.

New Teaching Dynamics

What we all want for student learning cannot be achieved without skillful, effective teaching. Powerful, content-rich, connected learning requires that teachers have content and pedagogical knowledge; social-emotional competencies to build caring, respectful relationships in their classrooms; and a commitment to improving their own practice and to professional collaboration that leads to improved learning by both teachers and students.^{xvi} It requires that the dynamics of teaching change so that teachers act as learning strategists who move among a range of roles—project designer, facilitator, networker, and advisor, depending on what is needed most. Caring, competent teachers use a range of pedagogical approaches that empower students to become self-directed and responsible learners, but also establish strong relationships that allow them to better understand what interests and motivates students.

Teachers become networkers, connecting student learning to real-world questions by ensuring frequent opportunities for students to interact with professionals and content experts. This includes seeking out people in the community they can draw upon to enhance their teaching, enrich their curricula and projects, and provide students with greater access to a wide range of knowledge and perspectives.

The vision for the future must also include conceptualizing and respecting teaching as a professional continuum, rich with opportunities for growth, leadership, collaboration, and meaningful impact.

“Many reforms have failed because they leave teacher training, capacity building, feedback and buy-in to the end of the process.”

A Commitment to Collaboration and Growth

Supports at the school level have to provide the structure for teachers and students to learn and act in these new flexible, connected, and responsive ways. The way teachers work and learn together should model the way we want students to work together. If we want students to develop the deeper learning skills of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving, then this must be the type of professional learning that teachers experience, too. We can't expect teachers to teach in ways that they themselves may have never experienced.

Research has shown that collaboration among educators positively affects student achievement, teacher quality, and school success across all types of schools and grade levels.^{xvii} Teachers need regular, frequent, and structured opportunities to work together to develop curricula; design learning experiences; create assessments; devise ways to improve their individual practice; analyze student work and strategize about the best supports for specific students; help each other with questions related to content, pedagogy, or cultural competence; and share feedback.

In a system that supports continuous development and growth for teachers, educators can work collaboratively to develop individual professional learning plans that target select growth areas. These plans then feed into a school-wide professional learning plan along with student achievement data, staff surveys, and other measures for use at the school level. Districts can then work with school leaders to develop professional learning that aligns with the needs identified by individual teachers and school leaders. In many districts, systems for instructional improvement (such as coaching, mentoring and peer assistance) are entirely separate from the

“Where teachers have opportunities for leadership and influence over school-wide decision-making, they’re significantly more likely to stay in the profession.”

mechanisms for formal evaluation and teacher accountability. While there are compelling justifications for preserving this firewall, all too often it means that teachers receive uncoordinated and sometimes conflicting feedback about their performance.^{xviii} In addition, it also means that the quality of formal evaluation gets compromised as overburdened principals attempt to

observe and provide meaningful feedback to dozens of staff members. Below we address how the system can better support closing these gaps.

Modern Roles and Structures

When individuals develop into great teachers, we should do everything we can to encourage them to stay close to the classroom. Where teachers have opportunities for leadership and influence over school-wide decision-making, they’re significantly more likely to stay in the profession. What’s more, initial research suggests that instructional quality also improves in schools that offer teacher leadership opportunities.^{xix}

Well-designed, flexible roles allow expert teachers to meet their own needs for new challenges and career

ELEVATING THE PROFESSION THROUGH ACCOMPLISHED TEACHING

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was founded to elevate the teaching profession through defining and certifying accomplished teaching and has increasingly focused on mobilizing the leadership of accomplished teachers. National Board Certification, a profession-developed measure that is rigorous, peer-reviewed, and performance-based, can serve as a lever to systematically build the quality of the teaching workforce by acting as a goal that teachers aspire to and as a platform for teachers to grow and to become leaders in their schools, districts, states, and the profession.

There are 112,000 Board-certified teachers across the country, half of whom work in high-need schools.^{xxi} As in other professions such as medicine, engineering, and architecture, teaching can establish a professional career continuum that encourages every teacher to aim for accomplished practice from the start of their career, to work in school-based teams to demonstrate and improve their knowledge and skills, and to expand their impact as accomplished teachers through a variety of leadership roles.

RECRUITING MORE BLACK MEN INTO THE PROFESSION

Clemson University's Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program focuses on increasing the number of Black men who become teachers. By offering tuition assistance, a cohort model, academic supports, and a faculty support system, the program is a promising model for how to recruit new teachers from diverse backgrounds into teaching and support them as they begin their career journeys.

Since 2004, more than 150 men have gone through the Call Me MISTER teacher-training program and become educators in South Carolina elementary and middle schools – many of them in the highest need schools. Approximately 95% of them are still teaching in South Carolina.* The program has also expanded to additional colleges and universities in South Carolina and other states including Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

* <http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/education/2016/04/30/they-call-him-mister/83617258/>

advancement while also addressing critical school and district needs. In his book *Teaching 2030*, Barnett Berry coins the term “teacherpreneurs” for those in hybrid roles who combine teaching responsibilities with other duties such as mentoring, facilitating professional learning experiences, engaging in community outreach, or providing specialized student support services. Berry notes that some of these teachers also spend time working closely with researchers on studies of teaching and learning, or conducting policy analyses that are grounded in their everyday classroom experiences.^{xx}

As roles and responsibilities shift, structures must respond and support accordingly. Distributed leadership involving teachers, teacher leaders, and principals sharing responsibility for many aspects of the school's operation including budgeting, hiring, scheduling, leading meetings, and organizing professional learning is emerging as a promising model in this regard. Research points to a positive relationship between distributed leadership, school improvement, and student achievement.^{xxii} Teacher satisfaction typically improves as well: for example, in one recent survey utilizing the Employee Net Promoter Score (a measurement of loyalty and engagement used across multiple industries) the scores of teachers in schools with well-functioning distributed leadership models averaged between 45 to 55%, while the general teacher population scored -18%.^{xxiii}

None of this diminishes the vital role that principals play in creating the conditions for successful schools. Great princi-

pals establish the culture and working conditions that enable teachers to pursue their own development, collaborate with their colleagues, and invest the time and effort needed to know their students. They foster a productive school environment, act as instructional leaders in many cases, and are integral to meaningful whole-school improvement.^{xxiv}

Aligning Supports for Teaching and Learning

Supporting these shifts requires deliberate and careful alignment of the systems that recruit and prepare new teachers, support them as they develop, and provide them with feedback and resources as they develop in the profession. These systems need to be aligned in order to have real impact and cause lasting change. As educators implement new changes, the determination of what policies and practices remain should be based on the extent to which they first and foremost meet the needs of the students, and secondarily the educators who are implementing the changes. No one has the time or the money to layer new structures over old ones that aren't working, so decision-makers must be ready to eliminate ineffective strategies and tools. Following are several areas where this approach can be applied.

Teacher Recruitment

Teacher shortages continue across the country, most notably in urban and rural schools and in critical subject areas such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). These well-documented and chronic shortages leave schools and districts scrambling at the beginning of each year. In addition, there is a real need to recruit teachers who reflect the demographics of today's students. Currently, more than 80% of the teacher workforce is White and female, while students of color now make up the majority of the student population; a mere two percent of the nation's 3.4 million teachers are men of color.^{xxv} A diverse teacher population is beneficial to all students. Studies show academic gains in math scores, as well as reading and vocabulary scores for Hispanic and Black students when their teachers were of the same race. Research also shows increased matriculation, reduced dropout rates, fewer students placed in special education, and increased placement in advanced and gifted and talented classes when Black and Hispanic students are paired with same-race teachers.^{xxvi} We need to better understand local recruitment needs and develop more effective responses that recruit teachers who address each community's specific shortages.

Teacher Preparation

Research shows that when prospective teachers receive good training, they are far more likely to stay. One recent study found that first-year teachers who had entered the profession with strong pedagogical training were twice as likely to stay beyond their first year than their peers who received less intensive training. For the purposes of this study, robust training was defined as an array of courses covering methods, materials selection, learning theory and psychology, along with at least a full semester of clinical experience that incorporated observation of others and feedback on their own teaching.^{xxvii}

Successful teacher preparation programs are grounded in a strong vision of good teaching, with a robust and integrated clinical practice component. Successful candidates experience subject matter content and pedagogy in the authentic settings of K-12 classrooms and reflect on what

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they are learning through aligned coursework that involves intensive study of child development, the science of learning, cultural contexts, culturally responsive teaching, curriculum, assessment, and subject-specific instructional strategies. Effective programs prepare candidates to address complex standards and assessments by teaching content in a way that focuses on depth over breadth, builds higher order critical thinking and problem solving skills, and that makes connections across disciplines.

The Commission is advocating for a full year of student teaching in carefully selected placements, with diverse students and supervising teachers who model excellent instruction, supported by structured reflection and discussion that help teacher trainees analyze their experiences and their own effectiveness. The best clinical experiences encourage student teachers to participate in all aspects of the school, including parent meetings, home visits, and community outreach; school-based support services for students; and faculty-led initiatives and projects aimed at improving student engagement and achievement. This kind of participation helps fledgling teachers grasp the broader context for great teaching and deeper learning and begin to develop the skills they will need to collaborate in the service of school improvement throughout their careers.

Finally, to ensure that new teachers are “profession ready,” performance assessments need to be in place as a condition

PROGRAMS THAT BRIDGE THE GAP

Programs based at universities across the country are working to bridge the gap between the traditional course-based approach and the more clinical approach. For example, The Integrated Bachelors/Masters (IB/M) teacher preparation program in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut has

been engaging teacher candidates in extensive clinical practice for more than 25 years. Students participate in clinical placements in nine partner school districts across the state, every semester of the three-year program, culminating in masters' students completing a yearlong 18-hour per-week internship.

of full licensure. Studies have found that teachers' scores on performance-based assessments are positively associated with their effectiveness when they later become full-time teachers.^{xxviii} Performance assessments also help district and school leaders select candidates who can teach well and they can deliver other important benefits. States, school districts, universities and other institutions are also using performance assessments to accredit and continuously improve teacher preparation programs; as a capstone requirement of teacher preparation program completion; a condition for moving from a probationary to a professional license; and as a tool to differentiate induction for teachers who need more time and support. Yet currently, only 12 states have policies in place requiring a state-approved performance assessment as part of program completion, for state licensure, and/or for teacher preparation program accreditation/review. Three other states are considering making it a requirement of program completion or licensure.

Linking Preparation and Practice

The Commission advocates for a stronger link between preparation and practice — moving from “hand off” to supportive partnerships. Programs that support clinical experiences with strong partnerships with K-12 schools and districts are emerging as a way to prepare new teachers for the schools in which they will teach and new teachers with a stipend as well as supports and induction as they launch their careers. Feedback to teacher preparation programs from K-12 schools and districts that is designed for improvement and alignment rather than accountability can be used to strengthen not only

the clinical aspect of the teacher preparation program, but also the coursework and faculty advising.

Teacher preparation programs—such as professional development schools and urban residency programs, that are built on strong formal partnerships with K-12 schools and prioritize clinical practice in authentic settings—produce graduates who feel better prepared to teach and are rated as stronger than other new teachers by employers and independent researchers.^{xxix} And they have been successful in addressing critical shortages, as in Boston's residency program where 49% of entrants are candidates of color.^{xxx} Such programs can also act as a catalyst for experienced teachers' reflection and improvement, as a result of engaged professional learning and mentoring.^{xxxi} In some residency partner arrangements, the school and district work with the teacher preparation program to identify program priorities and strategies that will help them meet their hiring needs and overall goals.^{xxxii}

Support for New Teachers

High-quality induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers result in more teachers who stay in the profession and improved achievement for their students. In a review of 15 empirical studies regarding the impact of induction programs, Richard Ingersoll and Michael Strong concluded, “Beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction performed better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing workable lesson plans, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful

“Shared accountability means that if teachers are to be evaluated on their effectiveness, states and districts must provide appropriate tools, resources, supports, and development opportunities.”

classroom management.” Ingersoll and Strong identify some of the most important features of high-quality induction: having a mentor teacher in the same subject area, common planning time with teachers in the same subject area, and regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers. Induction is even more powerful when mentors receive formal training and have release time to provide one-on-one observation and coaching in the classroom, demonstrating effective methods and helping them solve immediate problems of practice.^{xxxiii}

Some induction programs recruit, carefully select, and train expert teachers to act as mentors, while others simply call for volunteers. According to one study of beginning teachers who participate in induction, just 81% benefitted from a mentor’s ongoing guidance, and only about half reported common collaboration and planning time with others in their grade level or subject area. What’s more, fewer than 20% of all inductees reported a reduced teaching load or simplified schedule.^{xxxiv} This is in sharp contrast to countries where a higher than average percentage of teachers report that their teaching time is reduced in order to provide additional professional development time, adjusted based on teachers’ years of experience and classroom observations.^{xxxv} The mentor role is an especially high-leverage one to attend to in policy and resource discussions. In a recent New Teacher Center study, 93% of new teachers who experienced a well-structured mentoring relationship said it improved their practice, and new teachers who had additional mentoring were able to significantly improve their students’ learning outcomes.^{xxxvi}

Professional Learning

A strong professional learning and growth system builds on the pre-service and early career development that a teacher has experienced earlier in their career trajectory. A coherent, standards-based system of development and support starts with strong preparation and comprehensive induction for new teachers and leads to accomplished practice.

To support teaching and learning effectively, new practices must focus on tapping into the expertise of practitioners, facilitating learning through collaboration, and ensuring opportunities for growth and development. Professional development that is “done to” teachers has proven ineffective and costly. Like other professionals, teachers place enormous value on being listened to and involved meaningfully in their own growth and development. And the effectiveness of this involvement is borne out in the research. Studies find that teacher-led experiences enable participants to strengthen their knowledge of academic content and how to teach it, while taking into account local needs and circumstances—qualities of professional learning that teachers especially value. Research also shows that teachers are more likely to try classroom practices that have been modeled for them in professional development settings by other classroom teachers.^{xxxvii}

A new paradigm of professional learning has emerged in contrast to the traditional and typically ineffective professional development. It is an important shift that the Commission supports. Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning describe research-based characteristics of effective professional learning and provide powerful indicators to guide school and district leaders in planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving professional learning experiences.

Professional learning is especially relevant to teachers when it addresses job-embedded needs, such as understanding data and assessment, building cultural competency, and offering strategies that are effective with students with learning disabilities. Assessment literacy, for instance—the understanding of types of assessments and various formative tools—is valuable in helping teachers better understand how to measure and track student learning and growth in order to adapt their teaching, but also in helping teachers be advocates for effective assessment systems

RETHINKING ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As part of its “Moving Your Numbers” initiative, the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) reported on the work of five districts to rethink assessment and accountability in order to increase the achievement of students with disabilities. Educators in each district experienced a shift from an individual or departmental perspective towards a sense of collective responsibility for student success.

All five districts used assessment and accountability data as a tool for reflection, analysis, and planning. NCEO notes “the notion of monitoring was redefined — from a heavy-handed gotcha, to a joint responsibility for continually gauging progress and holding each other accountable for reaching common goals. Fear and isolated practice were replaced with collective, open dialogue among adults across the system.”^{xxxix}

in their schools and communities.^{xxxviii} Professional learning focused on building cultural competencies is a valuable strategy for teachers of all races to learn and appreciate so they can incorporate cultural knowledge into their teaching. This can be especially important in schools and districts where the racial demographics are changing.

Shared Accountability

In a shared accountability structure, all stakeholders — from student to state policymaker — are accountable for their role in the system and their contributions to success. This is in contrast to strategies that lay the responsibility of student success at the feet of an individual principal or teacher. Shared accountability is a strategy that differentiates which roles are responsible for particular actions, uses data analysis to determine and document progress against common indicators, and informs the continuation or adjustment of the shared plan accordingly.

In order to do this well, we need to go beyond traditional indicators of readiness such as completion of a teacher preparation program or years of classroom experience. We must redesign current evaluation processes in which teachers are minimally observed using a simplistic checklist and not offered any feedback or opportunities for growth. It is critical to recognize teacher evaluation as part of a shared accountability system, meaning that if teachers are to be evaluated on their effectiveness, colleagues, lead-

ers, and policymakers must be responsible for responding with appropriate tools, resources, supports and development opportunities. In addition, while it is important to be able to identify areas in need of improvement, it is not usually the case that evaluation tools and processes inform or support the development of teachers’ skills and knowledge (individually or collectively) or the professional development priorities for schools and districts.^{xl}

Accuracy and fairness require multiple measures utilized for the purpose for which they were designed. Student achievement measures provide information about the effectiveness of a teacher’s classroom practice, but too much weight on student test scores (which only measure outcomes) can obscure student growth. Teacher evaluation must be based on a meaningful and well-communicated standards, and include multiple and appropriate measures including student achievement data, multiple observations (in some cases by trained peers), and progress aligned to common professional goals.

Effective evaluation and accountability systems are built on a foundation of thoughtful standards that incorporate goals for student progress and great teaching. An evaluation and accountability system should be flexible enough to allow teachers to adapt their instruction to the learning needs of students and to support teachers as they use student-learning evidence to reflect on their teaching. This requires evaluations that take into account multiple measures, including indicators of student growth such as

A BETTER APPROACH TO TEACHER EVALUATION

The Massachusetts state teacher evaluation system is adaptive to where teachers are in their career and development. Assessments differ depending on teachers' experience level, and the resulting professional development plans differ depending on what teachers need. There are two separate scores: teachers' summative performance and student impact. (Systems in other states fold student impact into the summative score.) Teachers work

together to define individual and collaborative learning goals.^{xlii} The state provides a variety of training needed for evaluators, observers, and teachers dealing with many different mandates by leveraging their implemented professional learning communities and to dispel the view that evaluation is punitive, communicates with teachers about the developmental purpose of the system.

effectiveness: lower rates of student remediation, special education placements, dropout services, and much more. In addition... if such a human capital strategy helps close the achievement gaps between U.S. students and higher-performing systems abroad, and between students of color and their white counterparts, the impact on GDP over time would dwarf the investment in higher-caliber teacher recruits in the years ahead.”^{xliii}

Some districts have developed mechanisms to move toward a more evenly distributed salary schedule and provide additional compensation for teachers working in high-poverty schools and/or who consistently receive strong performance reviews. In addition, disparities in per student spending and local tax revenues translate into real differences in the teaching and learning conditions present in schools, including safe facilities, manageable class sizes and teaching loads; the availability and quality of books, curriculum materials, libraries, technology, science labs, facilities and support personnel; and time for professional learning and common planning.^{xliv}

“More time” is the item that tops many teachers' wish lists, especially time to work with colleagues who teach the same subjects, share the same students, or have the same professional learning interests. Some high schools have secured seven to 10 extra hours of shared time per week by hiring more teachers and fewer non-teaching personnel. This enables them to offer a streamlined curriculum with fewer low-enrollment courses; organize time in

longer blocks, thus reducing teaching loads; and use times when students are participating in clubs and internships for teacher collaboration. Some elementary schools have allowed teachers to teach four full days of core classes each week. They spend the fifth day planning together in teams and pursue professional learning, while their students rotate to resource classes in music, art, computer lab, physical education, library, and science lab. Other schools have found shared planning time by reducing specialization and pull-outs, integrating special education teachers into teams, and eliminating separate Title I classes to reduce the size of groups for all students. Still others “bank” time by slightly lengthening instruction each day and freeing up an afternoon weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly for professional collaboration.^{xlv}

Community Support

Recognizing that a child's success in school depends on a constellation of factors in and out of school, schools must attend to the “whole child,” which includes physical health and safety, emotional well-being, and disposition towards learning. This involves scaffolding learning experiences for students in ways that are compatible with their personal experiences to date as well as their family, community, and cultural patterns. Similarly, teachers and school leaders should also encourage service learning and involvement in internships and apprenticeships, during and after school and through summer opportunities. To

do so, educators must know, engage, and work collaboratively with their students, families, and communities. The most effective way to do this is to engage the community as a learning and development partner in the education process, rather than look for an endorsement of an already-developed initiative.

Although family and community involvement has been an explicit component of many federal programs since the 1960s, these programs have often been viewed as supplemental, rather than integral to academic goals.^{xlvi} What is needed is a systemic, integrated approach to community engagement that helps teaching and schools be more responsive to the community and in turn encourages the community to be more engaged and supportive of teachers and teaching. In addition, some states, such as Kansas, Maryland, and Ohio, have developed such standards and used the PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships as a starting point for their work.

Many parents and community members stand ready to work with educators to strengthen teaching and learning. We need to develop and share more research-based models of effective community-school collaboration, models that go beyond the token ways that families and community members typically have been invited into schools. For example, the Community Schools model and practices extend the learning community beyond the school walls to link with programs open to the community such as university courses, health and wellness centers, career training facilities, as well as cultural and nonprofit organizations. Often these programs may be co-located at the school site, reinforcing the concept of the school as the hub of the community.

Families and community members seeking more information about research-based instructional practices, educational reforms, and school-community partnership strategies can participate in initiatives like the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)'s Parent Engagement Education Program or the Harvard Family Research Project's Parent University Network, which currently encompasses more than 100 programs across the country.

“ We need to develop and share more research-based models of effective community-school collaboration, models that go beyond the token ways that families and community members typically have been invited into schools. ”

Making the Transition

Years of focus on improving standards and accountability have gotten the nation only so far. It's time to establish a new system of teaching and learning that combines forces and resources and focuses on addressing crucial challenges in teaching that affect student success. As governors, state chiefs, and superintendents put in place new accountability frameworks, it is time to focus on the policies that affect teaching and learning and to think through what will make all teachers better, more inspired, and more entrepreneurial in their work. This call to strengthen teaching is not for teachers sake, but to reposition our system of schooling to inspire students to learn in ways that they learn best. It offers a new vision of what needs to happen to create schools designed for success that will continually improve.

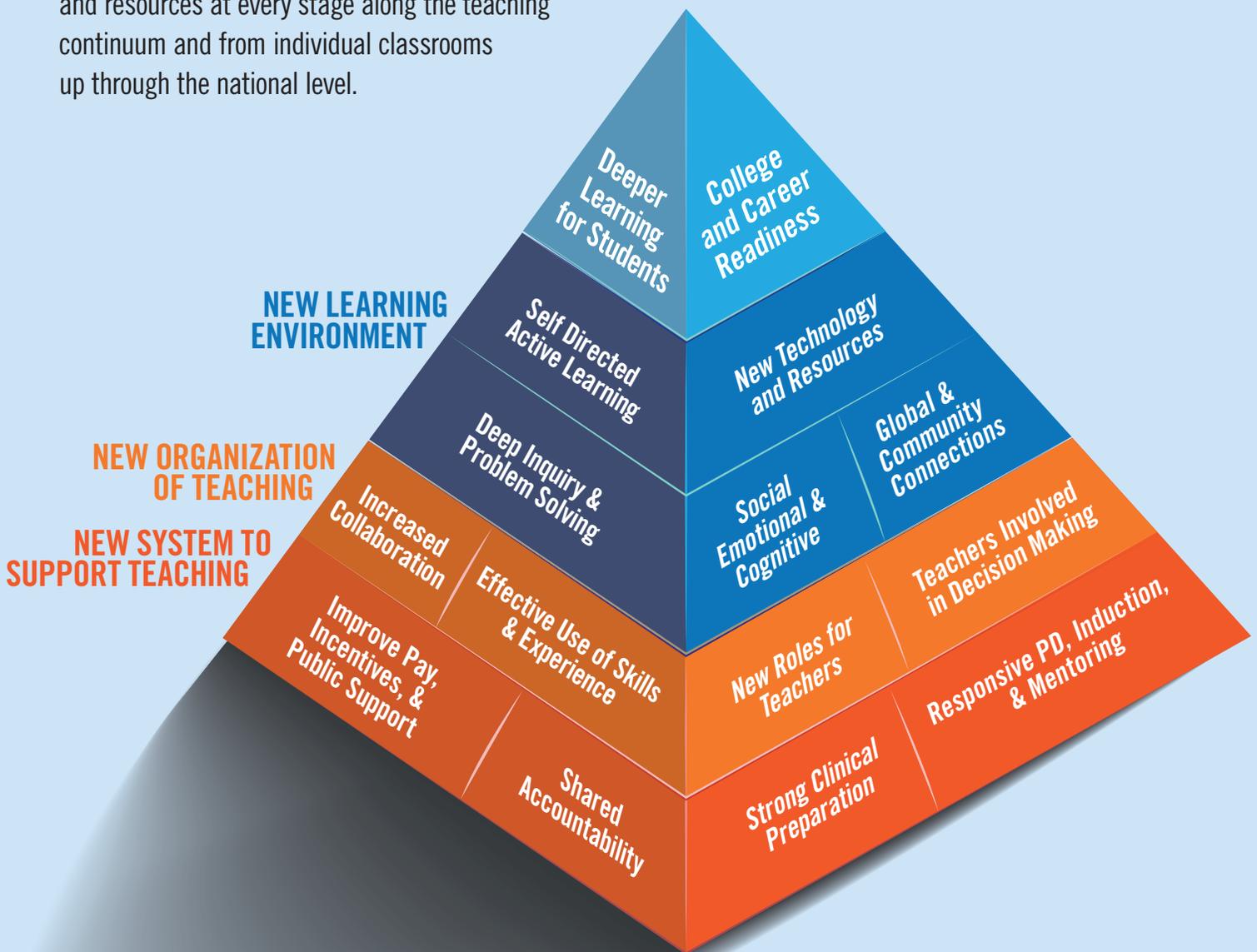
As a nation, we have a choice to make. Will we view educators and the students they serve as a problem or put all the talent that they have to work to address the problems we face? By investing in the success of our 3.5 million teacher learners and leaders and 50 million student learners, we can transform our schools into more active and engaging centers of learning that meet our highest expectations for what education can be. The recommendations that follow show how we can bring about the change needed to ensure that all the work that went into setting goals, standards and accountability structures will have the desired payoff for teachers, students, and society as a whole.

Recommendations — The Way Forward

We must come together to demand that every child in America has access to schools designed for deep, rigorous, personalized learning led by competent, caring teachers.

We are calling for nothing less than a new system of teaching and learning in the United States that represents a dramatic transition from how schools are currently organized, but builds from what we know is possible.

Given their role at the heart of learning, the system begins with teachers, who are the key to how we will structure America's schools to serve all students well. Put simply, effectively facilitating the kind of learning that leads students to develop the skills and knowledge they will need in today's and tomorrow's world depends on great teaching. Great teaching requires skilled, supported teachers who work collaboratively to meet the needs of their students and school. Ensuring broad and sustained access to great teaching and deeper learning depends on having well-aligned systems and resources at every stage along the teaching continuum and from individual classrooms up through the national level.



In order to achieve this vision, the Commission recommends the following:

1. Policymakers should establish and broadly communicate a new compact with teachers

State and local policymakers — including school and teacher leaders — can contribute to the momentum behind the new system by clearly establishing a new policy direction that:

- Acknowledges the potential of teachers to drive improvement if given support and resources
- Treats teachers as life-long learners on a trajectory toward accomplished practice
- Increases teachers' access to capacity building and tools required to improve student learning
- Prioritizes greater collaboration and continuous improvement for both students and teachers
- Celebrates teacher agency and creates training and structures for teacher leaders
- Formalizes educator-led bodies, such as educator standards boards or advisory councils, as part of the policymaking process

2. Every state should establish a Commission on Teaching, Learning, and the State's Future

The shifts and supports required to support a new teaching and learning system are complex, interrelated, and require time and investment. Therefore, states will need multi-stakeholder commissions to assess whether they are meeting the needs of today's — and tomorrow's — students. Each state's commission will:

- Conduct an asset map and needs assessment of policies and practices with regard to teacher recruitment, teacher preparation, teacher retention, teacher practice, expectations for student learning, and professional learning
- Create a strategic plan for improvement based on local assets, standards, and priorities
- Examine state learning standards and how they are translated into rubrics to govern the teaching and learning process
- Review the form and character of statewide learning assessments and accountability systems

3. States and districts should codify and track whether all schools are “organized for success”

No one factor ensures student and teacher learning. Rather states should establish (or use existing) indicators of whether schools are organized to maximize access to learning opportunities, such as:

- Familiarity with, and ability to use, research on how students learn, what effective teacher practice looks like, assessment literacy, cultural competencies, and effective professional learning strategies
- Support and capacity building for teachers to make shifts toward improved student outcomes for all students
- Technology employed to personalize learning, broaden access to deeper learning experiences, and support collaboration for both students and teachers
- A demonstrated commitment to recruiting, retaining, and developing great teachers
- Protected time — at least 15% — for professional collaboration such as shared assessment work, co-teaching, and observations of colleagues' classrooms
- A system of shared accountability that is focused on improvement
- Meaningful engagement of family and community through projects, workplace partnerships, and a commitment to collecting and using data and information from community feedback

4. Teacher preparation should be more relevant and clinically-based

To stem chronic shortages and turnover and to improve teachers' experience and efficacy, it is particularly important that pre-service teachers gain significant experience with real classrooms. Therefore,

- Teacher preparation should include a year of clinical experience
- Coursework should include social-emotional as well as academic learning, and experience in culturally knowledgeable and responsive practices
- Performance assessments, proven to be a reliable way to ensure that beginning teachers are competent to lead a classroom,^{xlvii} should be used as a strong indicator of teacher readiness
- Teacher preparation programs and school districts need to invest in and strengthen their partnerships to improve teacher candidates' effectiveness and retention

5. States should support all new teachers with multi-year induction and high-quality mentoring

New teacher induction and mentoring leads to improved teacher retention, satisfaction, and efficacy. Yet currently only a few states provide this critical foundation for their teachers. States should:

- Require a multi-year induction program as a licensure requirement
- Provide sustained program funding
- Require multi-year mentoring, with carefully selected and trained mentors
- Consider additional release time for new teachers as is done in other countries
- Consider pilot programs that provide differentiated induction for teachers from different pathways

6. Education leaders should evaluate ALL professional learning for responsiveness and effectiveness

We must raise our sights for professional learning. The design should be done at the school level with a high degree of teacher input and a focus on real day-to-day instructional issues. We need to make a commitment to evaluate all teacher professional development programs to determine whether they:

- Allow a significant portion of teacher professional learning be teacher-led, driven by individual professional learning plans and tied to teacher evaluation
- Provide ongoing opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and project-based learning
- Expose teachers to new ideas and ways of working that are relevant to them and their schools
- Map to research-based tools and guidelines
- Are tracked by cost and evaluated regularly
- Align with and support teachers to achieve high professional teaching standards

7. We all must adapt to the world of expanded learning opportunities

The structures and operating principles of the entire education system need to adapt to the reality that learning and teaching has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. To do so:

- School and teacher leaders should cultivate community partnerships to provide students with authentic learning experiences beyond the classroom walls through project-based learning and workforce connections
- Pre-service and in-service supports must be provided for teachers to experience effective community engagement strategies as well as purposeful uses of technology to expand the learning environment
- State and district officials need to study—and where necessary, alter—school laws and regulations about use of instructional time and barriers to learning opportunities that extend learning from school to community, educational, and cultural agencies
- States also may seek to develop pilot efforts to develop new school models that push the boundaries of where, how, and when students learn

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The opinions herein are those of the Commission alone. To download a copy of the *What Matters Now: A New Compact for Teaching and Learning* and/or the companion guide, please visit www.nctaf.org.



National Commission on Teaching & America's Future

1525 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 705 Arlington, Virginia 22205 202.429.2570

www.nctaf.org

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