

**Testimony of Rachelle Moore**  
**Member of the National Education Association, the**  
**Washington Education Association and the Seattle Education Association**  
**National Board Certified Teacher**  
**Before the**  
**Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee**  
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Thank you Chairman Alexander, Senator Murray, and distinguished committee members for the opportunity to speak today.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Rachelle Moore and I am a National Board Certified Teacher and a proud member of the National Education Association. I have been teaching first grade at Madrona K-8 in Seattle for five years, where the kids do not have the opportunities I have been fortunate to have. At Madrona, the majority of students are minorities, lack early educational experiences, and live in poverty.

I grew up wanting to be a teacher like my dad, who has been teaching high school arts for the past 35 years. As a child, I was fortunate to be afforded opportunities that helped prepare me to be a successful student, as well as for my career as a teacher. During my undergraduate years at the University of Washington, I took a detour and pursued a pharmacy career like my mom. Then I volunteered at Madrona and decided to follow my childhood dreams and become a teacher, hoping to close achievement gaps and empower the youth of the future—no easy feat for sure!

Every one of us supports the goal of student success and achievement. I would argue that those of us working directly in the education field or in government shaping education policy have an even greater investment. And it begins with asking: What is success? What is achievement? One measure of success is an individual student's growth over the course of an academic year, but that is just part of the story. We also need to consider the unique challenges and circumstances of each student's life.

There is no way to measure the intangibles in a student's life. There is no "average" student. Each student is shaped by individual experiences. And those experiences must be taken into consideration when shaping policies geared towards improving student success.

Research shows that teachers are the most important school-based influence on student learning. Accordingly, every student deserves to be taught by an excellent teacher. To ensure that is the case, we must do a better job of preparing and retaining high-quality educators. **And the best way to do that is to invest in the continuum that includes teacher induction, professional growth, and teacher leadership.** (Source: Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Nation's Future*, 2010)

I am pleased to say that unions in conjunction with their school districts across the country are working to enhance student learning with teacher induction programs based on the successful medical model. These programs pair novice teachers (residents) with experienced teachers (mentors) for an entire year. Such programs not only strengthen the teacher pipeline, they provide rich professional development.

For the past two years, I have been a mentor in the Seattle Teacher Residency, which is unique in that it is driven by teacher voices. This residency program was created by the Seattle Education Association, the University of Washington, the Alliance for Education and the Seattle Public Schools. The National Education Association has given a grant for the past several years to help to support this program. This partnership identifies the needs of our school district and takes steps to ensure that incoming teachers have the training and support they need to serve our diverse population of students. For example, when mentors found that residents lacked assessment knowledge, we took action to change coursework and fill the gaps. In collaboration, we provide monthly training within our mentor group to help them develop into teacher leaders.

A major goal of the Seattle Teacher Residency—shared by our network of community partners—is to keep participating residents and mentors in our school district for at least five years, thus providing continuity for our students and schools. Doing so is important because high-needs schools like mine often have difficulty retaining experienced and highly effective teachers. Novice teachers are often placed in high-need schools in communities that lack key resources and, as a result, where the students face many challenges. It's a very challenging environment to be placed in without proper support from more experienced colleagues.

Back in 2010, I was one of five new hires. I have seen more than a dozen K-8 teachers hired since then. In five years, we have retained just three of the teachers I started with in 2010. Imagine how difficult it is to gain traction as a school and provide consistency for students when you have to start fresh with a new batch of teachers each year. Imagine that each year, half those new teachers have no previous teaching experience. Imagine having a new administrator each year. Those are the realities in high-needs schools like mine and why it is so important to create and expand teacher residency programs, including opportunities for mentoring, professional development, and leadership training.

I chose to be a mentor because I believed in the investment the program makes in all teachers and wanted to help prepare new teachers to be accomplished in their practice. The co-teaching model our program uses also addresses student outcomes. Using student work as the basis for instruction, we help novice teachers develop their skills in planning, teaching, and assessing student progress. We also reflect on ways to improve teaching and learning, gradually releasing responsibility to those we mentor.

Last year, for example, I mentored a novice teacher named Kristen. I shared my knowledge of first-grade content with her and demonstrated how to manage a classroom, engage students in academic discourse, and modify instruction based on student learning. I served as Kristen's

coach, asking questions and pushing her to reflect on teaching and learning. I made my decisions as a teacher visible by thinking aloud and providing the reasoning for what I was doing. When Kristen observed me, I often pressed “pause” and engaged her in discussion about what was happening in a lesson and the adjustments I was making. Kristen saw how I encouraged student participation and used assessment to analyze student growth and adjust instruction to meet our students’ needs. I also helped Kristen learn to navigate the school district bureaucracy—everything from taking attendance to finding a substitute teacher. All of this helped smooth her transition from student to teacher. Kristen now teaches kindergarten in a school with seven of the twenty-two graduates of the Seattle Teacher Residency Program. The principals and peer teachers who work with them rave about how well-prepared they are.

Students benefit greatly from the co-teaching model in which two teachers are committed to the success of each student. The student-teacher ratio is lower, which allows us to differentiate instruction and spend more time working one-on-one with individual students. Instead of providing individualized instruction for just some of our students each day, with co-teaching we can meet the needs of all 20 of our students every day. Just last week, for example, my current resident Ben and I employed a strategy called parallel teaching: splitting the class in half to provide more opportunities for student participation and gathering data used to plan future lessons.

I am also proud of my work with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Both the residency program and board certification have provided invaluable learning experiences for me as a teacher, helping me grow in my practice as I strive to make the invisible visible to novice teachers. I have opened the doors of my classroom to colleagues and engaged in authentic discussions of teaching and learning. I have become an instructional leader in my school and district, and helped improve student learning beyond my own classroom.

I am hopeful that all parties will work together on ESEA reauthorization to ensure all students have equal educational opportunities. I am also hopeful that reauthorization will provide the resources necessary to support and retain teachers, such as investing in residency models and mentoring programs. Ultimately ESEA should invest in the continuum of the education profession that includes teacher induction, professional growth, and teacher leadership. Professional learning opportunities are essential to keeping great teachers in the classroom and helping them use data effectively: to identify what their students have mastered, where they need help, and what kinds of help they need. That means providing resources and support for the whole child—like good nutrition and health care—not just investing in high-quality teaching.

Teachers are as unique as the students they serve. We adjust our lessons to help our students learn. We see what works and what does not. We develop relationships within our schools, our school districts, and our states to help formulate effective teaching and learning practice. We are highly trained and committed professionals, the ones most invested in student success, the ones in direct contact with students day in and day out. Listen to our voices. Invest in us. Trust and support us.