

**Statement of Ellen Moir, Chief Executive Officer, New Teacher Center
To the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
April 15, 2010**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for this opportunity to provide input to inform reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The New Teacher Center (NTC) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to provide all new teachers in the nation with the type of high-quality induction and mentoring, instructional support and collaborative learning opportunities that will allow them to thrive as professionals and maximize their classroom effectiveness on behalf of their students.

Our philosophy on teacher effectiveness rests on an understanding that great teachers are made – not born. Regardless of the quality or source of their preparation, teachers in their first classroom face an overwhelming number of distinct challenges. Too many new teachers in each of your states struggle in isolation and navigate a steep learning curve as a result of a “sink or swim” approach to induction. It exacts a high price on new teachers, their students, and the entire school community.

A federal policy focus on new teachers is critical for demographic reasons.

- By some estimates, nationally, we will replace more than 50% of our teaching workforce over the next 7 years. This means over 1.5 million new teachers in our schools.

A focus of new teachers also is important from an equity standpoint.

- New teachers are disproportionately assigned to classrooms serving the most disadvantaged students and to schools more likely to be low performing, with rampant staff turnover, and poor working conditions.
- An up-front investment in these new teachers is far more cost effective to ensure they stay in teaching and receive induction support to accelerate their effectiveness in the classroom from day one.

Our nation must dramatically change the way we bring our newest educators into our schools and the teaching profession. Our data from work in states like California and Alaska and in urban school districts including Boston, Chicago and Durham show that if new teachers receive the right support that we know makes them better, they will be more successful in the classroom and be more likely to remain in teaching.

But too often, even when states have policies that require new teachers are supported, they are implemented sporadically and too many educators are not given the support they need to be effective. At NTC we have collected data from over 300,000 teachers across 10 states in just the past three years alone. As just one example:

We have data from one of our statewide administrations of our Teacher & Learning Conditions Survey in 2009 – to which over 42,000 educators responded – that shows:

- One third of the states’ first- and second-year teachers report that they were not assigned a mentor; and
- Of those that were officially assigned a mentor, approximately one third report that they:
 - *Never once planned instruction with their mentor,*
 - *Never once were observed in their classroom, and*
 - *Never once received support analyzing student work.*

These results are from a state which is consistently one of the top in the country on teacher quality... and which has *existing state laws and policies* on teacher mentoring!

Our research on these results consistently demonstrates that new teachers receiving more frequent and higher quality induction and mentoring support are significantly more likely to report wanting to remain in their current teaching position. Although Secretary Duncan has publicly stated his interest in being “tight on ends, and loose on means,” new teacher support is an area where the means are critically important. Lesser approaches do not achieve the desired results.

What does high-quality support for new teachers look like?

First, we are not talking about a “buddy system”. We are talking about concerted, targeted mentoring that advances teaching practice and accelerates new teacher effectiveness.

- Mentors should be experienced and effective teachers.
- Mentors should receive training and on-going support to help new teachers:
 - Plan daily instruction,
 - Analyze student work to assess learning,
 - Manage their classrooms, and
 - Differentiate instruction to individual learners.
- Mentors and new teachers should be provided *adequate time to work together* so that the new teacher continually develops.
- School and district leaders should be trained in what it takes to support a mentoring program and in understanding its overall benefits and cost effectiveness.

Second, states need to have systems in place that not only *identify* more effective and less effective teachers, but also *support and guide* all teachers -- *especially new teachers* -- *giving them feedback and learning opportunities* for professional growth.

A good example of a state that has recently done this is North Carolina. It requires all principals and teachers to be evaluated with a new instrument which is based on using data to improve their effectiveness and provides them with specific feedback for continuous improvement.

The current national policy conversation about teacher effectiveness is too narrowly defined, because focusing only on the so-called ‘best’ or ‘worst’ teachers will be a missed opportunity to strengthen the effectiveness of the vast majority in the middle who can achieve greater success if provided the right support.

At the New Teacher Center, we are pleased with President Obama’s recently released *Blueprint for Reform* for ESEA reauthorization.

1. The *Blueprint* finally puts the federal government’s “money where its mouth is.” With unprecedented funding to support states in their efforts to continually improve education, *each state will now be required not only to focus on improving student test scores, but also take a broader lens to the multiple factors that impact student achievement – the classroom teacher, chief among them.* And rightly so: Research and the experience of millions of educators prove that teachers are the most powerful school-based influence on student learning.
2. The new focus on teacher effectiveness and principal leadership will help strengthen the building blocks of school improvement – world-class educators. The teacher and principal evaluation tools being used in the states are in dire need of revision to reflect 21st century education and practices. At NTC, we believe teachers and principals should be evaluated with *multiple measures*, one of which should be growth in student learning.
3. Supportive working conditions: It is important to remember that what works to attract new teachers also works to retain experienced teachers. We are pleased that President Obama’s *Blueprint* requires states and districts to collect and report teacher survey data on working conditions in schools. This is a key data set for school improvement that policymakers previously have never had. That, too, is why the NTC is proud to be part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation “Measures of Effective Teaching” project. As part of the MET project, NTC is administering a teacher working conditions survey in identified large urban schools and districts.

The *Blueprint* is a good start and sets us on the right path toward reauthorization. However, I want to share THREE recommendations for what I believe the ESEA reauthorization should also include in order to help new teachers become quality career professional educators.

1. ESEA should ensure that states establish standards for induction and mentoring programs. Program standards should include:
 - Rigorous requirements about who is selected to mentor.

- Foundational training and on-going support for mentors.
 - Dedicated time for mentor-new teacher interactions.
2. ESEA should provide dedicated funding for the induction and mentoring of all new teachers for at least their first two years.
This funding stream should require accountability from states to ensure mentor program standards are being met.
 3. ESEA should hold states and districts accountable for giving new teachers the mentoring, support and teaching conditions they need to be successful.

One legislative proposal that would address several of our recommendations is Senator Jack Reed's Teacher and Principal Improvement Act. NTC is proud to support this legislation and we believe it is a necessary ingredient to strengthen the ESEA blueprint. We commend Senator Reed for his support of and dedication to America's teachers.

I want to end my comments with a sincere "thank you" for this opportunity to strengthen and support America's teachers and chart a course for excellence in teaching. With the funding commitment, the appropriate focus on teachers and school leaders, and the provision of the conditions, development opportunities and tools they need to be successful, I believe ESEA reauthorization is on the right track for success.

America's teachers – and students – are counting on us. Please let me know if there is anything that NTC can do to assist this Committee in its efforts.

Thank you.