

## Great Teachers for Great Schools

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*National Staff Development Council, National Education Association, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals*

Teacher quality is the single most important factor influencing student learning and achievement. **Studies have found that 40 to 90 percent of the difference in student test scores can be attributed to teacher quality.** While considerable attention has been paid to teacher preparation, there is a significant unmet need for high-quality professional learning for teachers and principals throughout their careers.

The world's highest performing school systems share one thing in common: an intense focus on and investment in developing effective teachers and school leaders. A 2007 report by McKinsey & Co. demonstrates that **effective school systems stay on top by improving instruction through continuous professional development** and by creating systems and targeted support to ensure that all children benefit from effective instruction. Research shows that **teachers who engage in 30-100 hours of professional development per year boost student performance by approximately 21 percentage points.**

Professional development that ensures quality teaching for all students promotes educators sharing responsibility for student success and engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement. **When teachers and principals collaborate and learn regularly from their peers through professional learning communities they improve their teaching and raise student outcomes.** Recent studies have found that peer learning and mentoring, especially for beginner teachers, leads to a "spillover effect" in which educators become more effective when their colleagues' quality improves.

But despite the evidence, few educators experience the high-quality professional development and teamwork that would enable them to be more effective in meeting the needs of all students, with **the average U.S. educator spending only 14-16 hours a year in professional development.**

The Great Teachers for Great Schools Act takes meaningful action to improve this critical element for improving American schools by **1) defining high-quality professional development consistent with research and best practices; 2) providing resources for high-need school systems to develop comprehensive professional development that promotes instructional improvement; and 3) evaluating the impact of professional development on teacher effectiveness and student achievement.**

- **Strengthens the definition of professional development:** To ensure that teachers and principals engage in professional development that improves student achievement, the Great Teachers for Great Schools Act advances a new definition of professional development in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that is based on research and best practices. This definition will ensure that all educators engage in this cycle of continuous improvement that includes analyzing data, determining student and adult learning plans, designing joint lessons that employ evidence-based strategies, providing coaching to support improvement of classroom instruction and application of new learning, and assessing the effectiveness of educator learning. This new definition fosters collective responsibility, promotes job-embedded learning, provides classroom-based coaching, and seeks outside expertise when needed. The legislation also builds the

capacity of teachers and principals in high-need districts through systematic, sustained, coherent, school and team-based, job-embedded professional development.

- **Provides \$500,000,000 of targeted resources for high-need LEAs to build capacity for comprehensive professional development:** This funding will enable LEAs to improve teacher, principal, and other instructional staff quality through the development of a comprehensive system of professional development that increases principals', coaches', and teacher leaders' knowledge and skills in clarifying school improvement goals; analyzing school and student data to inform improvement efforts; selecting and implementing intervention strategies; increasing pedagogical and content knowledge in academic subjects that are aligned to student learning goals; and designing, creating, and evaluating the results of curriculum-based diagnostic and performance assessments. It also enables LEAs to increase principals' knowledge and skills establishing a shared vision of school success among all school stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community organizations; establishing the school as a professional learning community; and promoting the effective use of data by educators.
- **Requires a rigorous evaluation to determine the impact of professional development:** To ensure that professional development results in improved teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, the legislation requires the professional development programs to include a formal evaluation system to determine the effectiveness on teacher instructional practice, student learning gains, teacher retention, student graduation and college readiness rates, student attendance rates, and teacher effectiveness. The evaluation must also ensure that coaches, teachers, and schools are using data to inform instructional practices and that the professional development is integrated and aligned with the State's school improvement efforts.
- **Targeting schools in need of improvement:** Grants will be awarded to states via Title I formula and then competitively to high-need school districts, with priority given to districts with high shares of low-income students and with graduation rates of less than 65%.