Empowering Teachers with Choice: How a Diversified Education System Benefits Teachers, Students, and America

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Empowering Teachers with Choice: How a Diversified Education System Benefits Teachers, Students, and America

INDEPENDENT WOMEN’S FORUM

Education is the second largest U.S. industry, and female employees outnumber male employees by more than three to one. Since there are more career opportunities today than ever before, ensuring the teaching profession attracts talented women is an important public policy concern. However, since 1983, when A Nation at Risk, a landmark assessment of U.S. education, concluded that the “professional working life of teachers is on the whole unacceptable,” little has changed despite numerous state and national efforts. A fundamental shortcoming of those efforts is that they treat teachers as objects of change, not agents of change. In fact, educators are driving emerging reforms by starting schools where teachers want to work and parents want their children to learn.

Until recently, private schools were the only alternative to the traditional public-school system. Overall, private-school teachers are nearly twice as satisfied as public-school teachers with their working conditions. In the 1970s and 1980s, educators began advocating “chartered schools” or public schools that would abide by the same accountability and admissions requirements as district schools but would be run by teachers, have distinct educational missions, and serve general or targeted student populations. The first charter school opened in 1991, and today some 4,000 charter schools are educating nearly 1.2 million students. Although charter schools represent about three percent of all American schools, charter schools create an instructive microcosm of a diversified educational system and show how that system might benefit teachers and students.

At 82 percent, overall satisfaction rates among charter-school teachers are twice as high as their private counterparts and more than three times as high as their district counterparts. Two-thirds of charter-school teachers report high levels of satisfaction with the influence they have over curricula, student discipline, and professional development, as well as school safety, collaboration with colleagues, and their schools’ learning environments. On those same measures, slightly more than half of private-school teachers and slightly more than one-third of public-school teachers report high levels of satisfaction. These results suggest the teachers’ and students’ ability to choose their schools positively affects teachers’ and students’ experience at school. In contrast to our current system, which is dominated by assigned, government-run public schools, a more diversified system would offer teachers the same wide range of employment options other professionals currently enjoy. To attract quality teachers, schools would have to offer competitive salaries, flexible schedules, and a professional working environment in which teachers have autonomy to innovate and are rewarded for their success in educating students.
professional working environment in which teachers have autonomy to innovate and are rewarded for their successes.

In short, if their top concern were truly the well-being of teachers, organizations purporting to represent them, such as the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, would make diversifying the education marketplace—through charter schools, voucher programs, and other initiatives that increase parental choice—their top priority.¹

Although charter schools represent about three percent of all American schools, charter schools create an instructive microcosm of a diversified educational system and show how that system might benefit teachers.
Imagine if teaching resembled the medical or legal profession. Like doctors and attorneys, teachers would choose their areas and levels of specialization, and pick from a variety of employers that best match their unique specialties and interests. Similar to hospitals and law firms today, schools would operate according to various missions, attracting and serving general or specific populations. Schools would come in many sizes and operate in both the government and private sectors. To attract and retain the best and the brightest, schools would have to offer teachers competitive salaries, flexible work schedules, options for working standard or extensive hours, opportunities for rigorous career enrichment, and a professional working environment in which teachers have autonomy to innovate and are rewarded for their successes.

This kind of labor market already exists for teachers in other parts of the world. In Japan, for example, there is great demand for high-quality teachers and a diversified education system, comprised of a centralized national school system run by the Ministry of Education and decentralized supplemental elementary (juku) and secondary (yobiko) schools run by educators. These decentralized schools, ranging from very small schools, with one teacher instructing a handful of students, to nationwide chains enrolling as many as a million students. The schools also offer diverse curricula. Some schools offer specialized preparation for high school and university entrance exams. Others offer remedial, gifted, or general educational services. Still others provide non-academic instruction, including the arts and physical fitness.

The benefits to teachers of such a system are not only strong parental support and involvement, but as education scholar Andrew Coulson explains, “The opportunity to offer personalized instruction to truly motivated students is appealing to teachers disheartened by the disengaged, disinterested attitudes commonly found among students in compulsory schools. Salaries are generally good, . . . and top juku instructors can and do earn as much as professional Japanese baseball players.”

Such a diversified system fosters good teacher-school and teacher-student matches, and it also gets results. Japanese students consistently score at or near the top on international exams across a variety of subjects. There is no good reason such a diversified labor market for elementary and secondary school teachers could not exist in America, as it does for postsecondary educators.

A more diversified educational system would also channel current public demand for good teachers. A 2004 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll conducted for the Teaching Commission...
found that “73 percent of Americans said that getting good teachers is a high priority in their communities.” Research indicates that controlling for other variables, quality teachers can boost student learning by a full level in a single year and almost eliminate the achievement gap among low-income, minority students and other students.6

Ensuring a diversified labor market capable of attracting and keeping such teachers serves the individual good of students as well as the common good. According to economist Eric Hanushek of Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, performance on standardized tests generally, and math and science in particular, “is directly related to individual productivity and earnings and to national economic growth.” Hanushek estimates that if U.S. student performance simply remained comparable to that of their international peers throughout the 1980s instead of declining, “[Gross domestic product] in the United States would end up more than 4 percent higher than realized in 2002. With close to a $10.5 trillion economy, the unrealized gain for 2002 alone would amount to $450 billion, or more than the total annual expenditure on K-12 education.”7

Today, nearly a quarter of Americans are enrolled in educational institutions, making the educational system the second largest industry in the United States, accounting for about 13 million jobs, or four percent, of the civilian workforce. In fact, teachers outnumber nurses by two to one, and attorneys and professors by five to one. Since 1970, the number of elementary and secondary teachers in America has increased from 2.3 million teachers to 3.6 million in 2006, or 57 percent. By 2014, that number is projected to reach nearly 4 million. A diversified education system could therefore help ensure that the teacher labor market and the national economy remains robust.

A diversified system would also be more responsive to the needs of women, the teaching force’s largest constituency. For the past 40 years, roughly 75 percent of all elementary and secondary school teachers have been women, and today women outnumber men by more than three to one among full-time elementary and secondary school teachers. This trend is expected to continue. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) explains that “one of the reasons for the interest in teaching among women is the opportunity it affords to take time out to raise a family, which means there is likely to continue to be relatively strong interest in teaching as a profession among women in spite of increased job opportunities elsewhere.”

As wage parity between men and women is increasingly achieved across professions, ensuring that the teaching profession remains attractive to talented women is an important public policy concern. “For most of U.S. history, the nation has been able to operate schools at low cost by exploiting the trapped labor force of educated women who had few other opportunities,” notes MIT economics Professor Peter Temin, “Now schools must compete with other mentally and financially rewarding occupations as they recruit teachers.” Recent research by Harvard University economist Caroline M. Hoxby clarifies those findings.
Hoxby explains that “the likelihood that a highly talented female (one ranked among the top 10 percent of all high schoolers) will become a teacher fell from roughly 20 percent in 1964 to just over 11 percent in 2000.” Yet she finds that it is not higher salaries in other professions that are drawing talented women away from teaching, but rather the lack of merit pay in teaching:

[W]e cannot expect high-performing college graduates to continue to enter teaching if that is the one profession in which pay is decoupled from performance. Indeed, other professions have been raising the reward for performance over the past few decades. To attract high-aptitude women back into teaching, school districts need to reward teachers in the same way that college graduates are paid in other professions—that is, according to their performance.

In other words, when it comes to influencing a talented woman’s decision to enter a profession, money does matter, but merit pay apparently matters more. Lucrative paychecks alone do not lure highly motivated and dedicated individuals into their professions. Such individuals want to make a positive contribution to society. Nevertheless, in a free society, hard-working professionals deserve an equal opportunity to earn an honest, competitive living without barriers preventing them from being fairly compensated. As with public support for good doctors and attorneys, the Teaching Commission finds that having good teachers in their communities is a top priority for the overwhelming majority of Americans. This support suggests that parents would certainly be willing to pay more for good teachers to educate their children, just as they are willing to pay for quality medical care and legal services.

A prevalent notion is that paying teachers for performance would undermine collegiality. Survey results of educator schools from eight states where pay is based on performance indicate otherwise. Seventy percent of teachers agree or strongly agree that more effective teachers should be paid more. Likewise, when asked about the level of collegiality at their schools since enacting performance pay, 70 percent of teachers responded that the level of collegiality at their schools was high or very high.

Public- and private-school teachers’ perceptions about teaching and conditions at their schools differ significantly. On average, 22 percent more private-school teachers indicate they are satisfied with their class sizes and their school’s enforcement of student behavior rules, have the materials they need, and feel supported by fellow teachers, administrators, and parents than public-school teachers. Yet today, public- and private-school classrooms average about fifteen students. Since class sizes were first tracked in 1955, private schools
have halved their average pupil/teacher ratio from a high of 32:1 to less than 16:1. Likewise, public schools have reduced their average pupil/teacher ratio from a high of 27:1 to less than 16:1. However, the cost of reducing public-school class sizes is significant. For example, 20 states have launched class-size-reduction initiatives over the past two decades. In the 1999–2000 school year alone, those states spent in excess of $2 billion. In 1998, the federal government created the Class Size Reduction Program, which costs more than $1 billion annually. Meanwhile, data from the U.S. Department of Education show that private schools on average are half as expensive per pupil as public schools.

Even though public and private classroom typically have fewer than 16 students, 83 percent more public-school teachers indicate that paperwork and other routine duties, student misbehavior, tardiness, and cutting class interfere with their teaching. Alarmingly, survey responses of public-school teachers indicate that they are twice as likely as private-school teachers to sometimes feel that doing their best is a waste of time and more than four times as likely to worry about job security.

What follows is an examination of efforts to improve the teaching profession and the results to date. The next section examines a fundamental shortcoming of those efforts, namely that they treat teachers as objects of change, not agents of change. Subsequent sections consider recent reform efforts inspired and advanced by teachers to improve the profession. The results thus far are encouraging and suggest teachers have a vital role to play in the running and founding of schools.

Today, more teachers are creating the kinds of schools where they want to work and where parents want their children to learn. The schools those teachers left behind are taking notice because their employees now have more appealing teaching options. Such options empower teachers and contribute to an improved working and learning environment. These efforts are recent but promising. The final section considers the benefits to teachers if the emerging diversified education system were universalized, giving all teachers the same wide range of employment options other professionals currently enjoy.
Results to Date: Is Teaching Still Risky Business?

On August 26, 1981, then U.S. Secretary of Education T. H. Bell formed the National Commission on Excellence in Education and directed it to publish a report on the quality of education in America. The report, *A Nation at Risk*, was released in April 1983. According to the report, “The Commission found that not enough of the academically able students are being attracted to teaching; that teacher preparation programs need substantial improvement; that the professional working life of teachers is on the whole unacceptable; and that a serious shortage of teachers exists in key fields.” The Excellence Commission also concluded that salaries were so low many teachers had to supplement their annual income with part-time and summer work; and teachers have too little influence in critical professional decisions.

The Excellence Commission went on to make several recommendations that are condensed into four broad recommendations concerning teacher preparation, competitive salaries, teacher recruitment (especially in areas of critical shortage), and teacher retention. Accompanying each recommendation is a table summarizing the policies that states and the District of Columbia currently have in place designed to achieve them.

**Recommendation 1: Teacher Preparation.** “Persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, and to demonstrate competence in an academic discipline.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State requires subject-knowledge tests for high-school teachers for an initial license</td>
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<tr>
<td>Induction and mentoring program or policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>State requires a minimum number of weeks required for student teaching</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>State requires a basic skills test for an initial license</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>State requires high-school teachers to obtain a subject-area major for an initial license</td>
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<td>State requires a subject-specific pedagogy test for an initial license</td>
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Sources: Author's table based on data from *Education Week, Agent K-12* database; and Education Commission of the States (ECS), Recruitment and Retention: State Policy database.

Notes:
1. Table includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
2. Some states in the ECS database have policies, but information about them is not publicly available. Those states are included in the “Number of States” column.

It would appear that the teaching profession has come a long way over the past two decades. Currently, 43 states require subject-matter tests, 37 states require basic-skills tests,
and 25 states require pedagogy tests. In recent years, states have implemented more regulations governing teacher quality, standards for people entering the teaching profession, and accountability from education schools, including increased basic skills, mastery of subject matter, and pedagogy testing. Title II of the Higher Education Act, passed in 1998, also requires schools of education to submit accountability reports demonstrating that 85 percent of their students pass state certification exams. Today, passing rates of education-school graduates on the licensing exams are published in 29 states, and 14 states attempt to hold education schools accountable based on the achievement of students in classes taught by their graduates.

In a recent national survey of teachers, however, respondents report that in their experience at least a few or more than a few new teachers need more content knowledge in the subjects they teach (73 percent), while a very large number of new teachers need “a lot more” training to teach students who are discipline problems (45 percent), and students who are struggling (42 percent). Those responses are alarming given that 82 percent of the states currently have policies concerning induction and mentoring for new teachers, and over two-thirds have minimum student-teaching requirements. They also call into question the rigor of states’ certification process, which only 13 percent of principals and seven percent of superintendents think guarantees a teacher will be successful in the classroom. Those responses also likely reflect the consequences of a recent trend in many states lowering their certification standards to increase the number of recent graduates passing licensure exams.

Extensive alumni and faculty surveys conducted by the past president of Columbia University’s Teachers College, Arthur Levine, help shed light on this phenomenon. In his 2006 report, Educating School Teachers, Levine explains, “State standards for assuring quality control in teacher education programs today are weak.” Despite the fact that in 48 states and the District of Columbia low-performing education schools must be identified, Levine explains that the “rhetoric here is stronger than the reality, as only 13 states reported a total of 20 schools needing improvement.” The Teaching Commission also recently concluded that many teacher preparation programs “continue to lack rigor and real-world relevance.” Moreover, among the 19 states with policies setting minimum admission qualifications for undergraduates entering teacher-education programs, only three states recommend a “B-” grade point average, while 16 states require only a “C” or “C-.”

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Education Professors Mark Schug and Richard Western note that dissatisfaction with education schools dates back the mid-19th century. They add, “State licensure systems, intended by professional educators to serve as linchpins in a rational system of quality control, have similarly generated widespread discontent. . . . Observers note that within these systems, ill-defined, unfounded requirements
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and superficial program-evaluation procedures prevail behind the facade of elaborate state codes.\textsuperscript{36} Research also reveals that fewer than half of education professors had taught in elementary or secondary schools in the past 15 years, and one in six had no classroom experience.\textsuperscript{37}

Low standards undermine public confidence in the teaching profession and contribute to a general lack of respect for teachers, despite public acknowledgment of the importance of good teachers. Doctors and attorneys garner respect because the public knows admissions standards to medical and law schools are competitive, training is rigorous, and state licensure standards are high. States and education schools do teachers no favors by lowering the standards. States are likely motivated to do so by fears of teacher shortages. Yet the evidence shows that people who are not equipped for the teaching profession soon quit, leaving behind talented teachers who must contend with the disruption to their schools and students that high turnover rates bring.\textsuperscript{38} Adding insult to injury, low standards stigmatize quality teachers as being in an “easy” profession.

Levine concludes that education schools must become “professional schools focused on classroom practice…. Medical schools are rooted in hospitals; law schools look to the courts; journalism schools see their home as the media; and business schools focus on corporations. The work of education schools needs to be grounded in P-12 schools.”\textsuperscript{38} Levine concludes that “the job of a teacher education program is to prepare teachers who can promote student achievement. The measure of a program’s success is how well the students in its graduates’ classes perform.”\textsuperscript{40}

Recommendation 2: Competitive Salaries. “Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based. Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated.”

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<td>State has a pay-for-performance program based on student achievement growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluations are tied to student achievement</td>
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<td>National average teacher salary</td>
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<td>Low average beginning teacher salary (Wisconsin)</td>
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<td>High beginning teacher salary (Alaska)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High average teacher salary (District of Columbia)</td>
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Sources: Author’s table based on data from Education Week, Agent K-12 database; and Education Commission of the States (ECS), Recruitment and Retention: State Policy database.

Notes:
1. Table includes the 50 states and District of Columbia.
2. Some states in the ECS database have policies, but information about them is not publicly available. Those states are included in “Number of States” column.

The issue of competitive teacher pay dates back to the days of ancient Greece, and this issue followed the expansion of Western civilization to America. In 1776, Adam Smith argued,

The time and study, the genius, knowledge, and application requisite to qualify an eminent teacher..., are at least equal to what is necessary for the greatest practitioners in law and physic. But the usual reward of the eminent teacher bears no proportion to that of the lawyer or physician.\(^{41}\)

Little has changed since then. Only a third of states offer teachers signing bonuses, while fewer than one-third have outcomes-based salaries and evaluations procedures.

Much of the salary growth in other professions is driven by intensifying competition for top-quality employees among employers, who increasingly pay more for outstanding performance. In contrast, fewer teachers are rewarded for outstanding performance today than 50 years ago. Approximately 10 percent of school districts had a merit-pay system in the 1950s, dropping to fewer than four percent in the 1970s. Today, less than one percent of all teacher pay is currently based on performance, the same as in 1982 just prior to the publication of *A Nation at Risk*.\(^{42}\)

In private schools, competition for quality teachers is greater than public schools in part because average teacher salaries are lower. Averages, however, do not tell the whole story. To compensate for lower salaries overall, private schools minimize administration and strive for efficiency to devote limited resources to rewarding their best teachers. They also have a powerful incentive to remove consistently mediocre teachers to free up additional resources for bonuses to outstanding teachers. Private schools do this because parents who pay tuition expect top-quality teachers for their children. If private schools cannot offer them such teachers, parents will take their children and tuition dollars elsewhere. Consequently, private schools are twice as likely to pay their teachers differentiated salaries, and one third of them do not have a uniform salary schedule.\(^{43}\)

Uniform salary schedules compress all teachers’ salaries. Research indicates that such salary compression accounts for more than 75 percent of the decline in teacher quality.\(^{44}\) Current teachers appear to agree. An overwhelming majority of teachers (76 percent), especially new teachers (81 percent), say a few or quite a few teachers they work with do not do a good job and are simply going through the motions.\(^{45}\) Uniform salary schedules also make meaningful pay increases for teachers prohibitive. Simply raising all teachers’ salaries
so they at least match the national average would cost an estimated $8.5 billion under the current system because the salaries of mediocre teachers would have to rise as much as those of outstanding teachers.46

As a result, Levine explains, “Education is not a competitive choice for the nation’s most able young people, for whom law, medicine, and business . . . are far more appealing.”47 Because other professions pay competitive salaries based on performance, they are increasing at a significantly higher rate than teacher salaries. Consider that between 1994 and 2000 average worker salaries increased 43 percent (from $35,000 to nearly $50,000). Teacher salaries increased only 9 percent over the same period (from approximately $32,000 to $35,000). Thus average worker salaries increased at a rate of nearly five times faster than average teacher salaries.48 Nearly one-third of all college graduates certified to teach today do not enter teaching because of non-competitive salaries.49 Although not a majority, this rate is alarmingly high given that the number of certified teachers who never began teaching or left the profession within a few years has increased from 25 percent in the 1970s and 1980s to 40 percent today. Moreover, approximately 4 million people are trained to teach today but do not.50

Many teachers favor competitive salaries based on measures not typically used under a uniform salary system. A majority of teachers (53 percent) measure their success in terms of student mastery of knowledge and skills. Half of all newer teachers believe pre- and post-testing of students are a good way to measure teacher effectiveness. Teachers also say it is easy for them to recognize the best teachers among their colleagues (78 percent), and others would readily agree (72 percent).51 Newer teachers want ways to increase their salaries besides graduate coursework or more time spent in their districts (55 percent). They favor diversified pay based on evaluations by principals (78 percent), the amount of time and effort devoted to teaching (73 percent), and students’ academic progress (53 percent).52 By a margin of almost two to one, newer teachers believe how well they work is a better way to set teacher salaries than formal qualifications such as certification or degrees.53

State efforts throughout the 1980s and 1990s to make teacher salaries more competitive ultimately stalled, but interest in reforming those efforts is picking up steam. In 2005, governors in 20 states outlined teacher compensation plans in their State of the State addresses, and 14 of them proposed reforming the teacher-compensation system in their states. The favored approach today bases diversified teacher pay on incentives that include teacher knowledge, skills, and student performance. Minnesota adopted what is considered one of the most sweeping plans in July 2005 called Quality Compensation, or “Q Comp.” Schools that adopt Minnesota’s diversified teacher salary system instead of a uniform salary schedule are eligible to receive a portion of the $86 million set aside by the state for teacher pay increases, which translates into approximately $260 more per student in state aid. Local
teachers favor the “Q Comp” program because it has helped improve student achievement, professional development, and teacher salaries.54

Most efforts to diversify teacher pay, however, are occurring at the school or district level. In Douglas County, Colorado, for example, the County Federation of Teachers and the Douglas County Board of Education adopted performance pay for teachers as part of their 1993–1994 contract that was approved by more than nine out of ten teachers. Teachers in the district receive diversified pay in addition to their base salaries for individual and school-wide performance, skills- and knowledge-based pay, and additional responsibilities pay. Diversified pay amounts vary from an extra $250 to $500 for each additional skill acquired in accordance with district priorities, to $750 for additional responsibilities, $1,000 extra for advanced coursework and degrees, an additional $1,250 for outstanding performance, up to $1,800 extra for outstanding evaluations, and an additional $2,500 for Master Teachers and National Board Certified Teachers.55 Thus a new teacher in Douglas County, Colorado, could expect an increase in base salary of $31,000 by up to approximately $10,000, depending upon pay incentives.

Likewise, the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in the Los Angeles Unified School District implemented a knowledge- and skill-based diversified pay system in the 1998–1999 school year. Nearly all of the students at the school qualify for the federal free- and reduced-priced lunch program, and many students are English Language Learners. Diversified pay amounts vary from an extra $6,000 for additional education and National Board certification to teacher performance bonuses worth up to $14,700. For taking on leadership roles with added responsibilities, teachers can earn bonuses up to $4,000. Teachers meeting school goals for student attendance, discipline, parental involvement, and collaboration goals receive bonuses up to $2,000 total, and they also receive $2,000 bonuses for school-wide student achievement. A new teacher at Vaughn Next Century Learning Center could therefore see an increase in base salary of $41,000 by nearly $30,000, again depending upon the preferred pay incentives.56

The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), upon which Minnesota’s “Q Comp” program is based, is a promising reform that comes from the non-profit sector. Today 106 schools in nine states serving approximately 50,000 students participate in TAP, developed by the Milken Family Foundation in 1999.57 Under TAP, veteran teachers are promoted to “mentor” or “master teachers” and work with novice teachers to hone their skills and raise student performance. The program consists of multiple career paths for teachers, ongoing applied professional development, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation.58

The Madison School District in Phoenix, Arizona, participates in TAP. Under a uniform salary schedule, a new teacher with a bachelor's degree earning the lowest salary of $31,000 could expect a lifetime high salary of $57,000, an increase of 84 percent, only after many years in the district and additional coursework. A new attorney, in contrast, could expect a lifetime salary increase in excess of 200 percent.59 Milken Family Foundation’s Executive Vice President of Education Lewis C. Solmon, and former dean of the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, explains,
The flat salary schedule for teachers is a good reason for those in Madison to welcome the stipends of $6,250 that the district offers to its “master” teachers, who take a leadership role among the faculty, and the bonuses averaging $3,400 to teachers who exhibit outstanding classroom performance and student achievement.60

Compare those pay increases to the ones offered by the state. In 2000, Arizona voters approved a $0.006 sales tax increase for educational programs, and districts must direct 60 percent of those funds to the classroom. Of those funds, 40 percent must go toward performance pay; however, performance is not defined, and funds may also be directed toward increasing administrative pay. Since taking effect in 2001, average annual teacher salaries have increased only $1,900 as of 2005, less than $384 annually.61

In contrast, participating TAP teachers who achieve specified goals earn a bonus. Half of that bonus is based on a classroom evaluation of teaching skills not tied to student outcomes. One quarter of the bonus is tied to school-wide gains, while the remaining quarter is based on progress made by an individual teacher’s students. This structure promotes cooperation among teachers, while discouraging less effective teachers from benefiting from the success of more effective ones. Solmon explains, “That means, for instance, that a master teacher in Madison, Arizona, could get a bonus worth as much as 17 percent of his or her salary compared with the 2–3 percent bonus that current salary structures usually set as a cap for such expert teachers.”62 The evidence suggests that when teachers succeed, students achieve. Student achievement trend in TAP schools compares extremely well to comparable non-TAP control schools. In fact, more than two-thirds of the time TAP schools outperformed non-TAP schools.63

Recommendation 3: Recruit More Teachers in Areas of Critical Shortage. “Incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession, particularly in those areas of critical shortage.... Qualified individuals, including recent graduates with mathematics and science degrees, graduate students, and industrial and retired scientists could, with appropriate preparation, immediately begin teaching in these fields.”

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<th>Policies</th>
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<td>Alternative teacher preparation programs and/or alternative certification/licensure</td>
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<td>For paraprofessionals/teaching assistants to become certified teachers</td>
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<td>Work/life experience credit</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax credit or tax incentive policies</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s table based on data from the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Recruitment and Retention: State Policy database.

Notes:
1. Table includes the 50 states and District of Columbia.
2. Some states in the ECS database have policies, but information about them is not publicly available. Those states are included in “Number of States” column.

It is estimated that teacher vacancies in the United States cost nearly $5 billion annually.64 Today, every state and the District of Columbia offer financial incentives to attract teachers, including those in areas of critical shortage such as math and science. Fifty states have targeted recruitment programs, 37 states offer scholarships, and 36 states offer loan forgiveness programs. Support for such programs is high among teachers, especially newer teachers. For example, 63 percent of teachers support financial incentives for teachers who teach difficult classes with challenging students. Two out of three new teachers support such financial incentives. Financial incentives for educators who work in at-risk communities with low performing schools garner even more support from teachers overall (70 percent), increasing to three out of four new teachers.65

Alternative certification is an increasingly popular remedy for teacher shortages. New Jersey and Texas were the first states to begin using alternative certification programs in the mid-1980s. These programs are designed to attract and prepare older professionals looking to change careers, and these programs typically provide an intensive summer of training and a year of weekend meetings.66 The Clark County School District in Nevada has a particularly innovative alternative certification program for stay-at-home mothers. It offers the necessary courses at local elementary schools during their regular hours, which allows mothers to be in school during the same hours as their children. Because the program is offered at an actual school, it gives participants direct access to mentor teachers and real-world classrooms.67 Half of all teachers believe having different paths to the teaching profession is a good idea, and 56 percent of new teachers support alternative routes to teaching. Among all teachers who know colleagues who have alternative certification, 65 percent think they are of high quality, including more than three out of four new teachers.68

Alternative certification programs proliferated in 2001 with the passage of Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (now called the No Child Left Behind Act, or NCLB), Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers and Principals.
This provision encourages states to participate in federal programs designed to recruit qualified professionals from other fields by offering them alternative routes to teacher certification. Also, in 2001, the Department of Education created the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), which designed the Passport to Teaching certification exam and is currently developing the Master Teacher certification.69

Today, nearly one out of every three teachers entering the profession each year receives their certification through alternative routes.70 Alternative certification programs currently exist in 47 states, as well as in the District of Columbia.71 As of 2004, there were 538 such alternative certification programs nationwide that allowed 35,000 teachers to enter the profession. Had those programs not been available, nearly half of program participants would not have become teachers.72 Over the past 25 years, more than 250,000 teachers have earned their credentials through alternative route programs, most of whom did so in the past decade.73 Building on those efforts, in early 2006 President Bush proposed a $400 million American Competitiveness Initiative, which included a $25 million Adjunct Teacher Corps to encourage up to 30,000 math and science professionals to become adjunct high-school teachers.74

Still, teacher shortages in critical areas persist at a time when more teachers are approaching retirement age, and fewer young people are entering the teaching profession.75 The current teacher shortage, however, is not a problem of supply. It is one of distribution, with shortages in high-growth states as well as in specialized education fields such as math, science, special education, and English as a second language.76 Recent research further suggests that teacher supply and demand varies more within states than among states, which indicates the problem must be addressed at the school level.77

Existing recruitment efforts are also coming under fire as simple solutions to a complex problem.78 In fact, a June 2006 Business Week cover story criticized the states’ longstanding attempts to relieve teacher shortages: “The nation’s system for training and paying teachers is decades-old and clearly bankrupt. Half of all teachers leave the profession within the first five years. And because archaic regulations prevent schools from paying salaries attuned to market realities, the nation has an enormous shortage of math and science teachers.”79 In fact, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future blamed existing shortages in critical areas on “cumbersome hiring practices that prevented efficient and timely hiring and chased away good candidates.”80

John Merrow’s 1999 teacher shortage investigation for PBS concluded that teacher shortages are “self-inflicted wounds” caused in large part because “inept school districts cannot find the qualified teachers living under their noses.” Merrow documents numerous examples, including school districts assigning middle-school coaches to teach high-school English, history, and math, and licensed science teachers waiting up to two years for districts to review their applications only to be offered positions in bilingual education.81
It is instructive to consider how private schools recruit their teachers. Unlike school districts, which employ an average of nearly 1,500 teachers, private schools on average employ only 14 elementary teachers or 27 high-school teachers. As a smaller wage-setting unit, private schools are better able to adjust salaries to current demand for teachers in areas of critical need. Economics professors Michael Podgursky and Dale Ballou found that even after controlling for such factors as school location and school-year length, public-school special-education teachers were paid only 4 percent higher than teachers in other subjects, while private special-education schools paid their teachers 14 percent more. Likewise, math and science teachers in private schools are paid approximately 8 percent more than teachers in other subjects, and outstanding teachers across subjects earn bonuses of 10 percent above their base pay. In contrast, Podgursky and Ballou’s statistical analysis of total public-school teacher compensation found no discernable effect on the salaries of public-school math and science teachers or merit-pay recipients.82

Several non-government programs have emerged to combat critical teacher shortages. In September 2005, IBM launched its own pilot Transition to Teaching program to allow up to 100 employees interested in leaving IBM to become fully accredited teachers by reimbursing participants up to $15,000 for tuition and stipends while they teach as students.83 More established programs also show encouraging results. Since its inception in 1989, 17,000 Teach for America (TFA) corps members have helped 2.5 million students. More than 66 percent of TFA participants graduate from the country’s most competitive colleges, compared to 4 percent of their non-TFA peers, and they are teaching in areas with some of the hardest schools to staff. In fact, more than 4,000 TFA corps members work in struggling schools throughout 25 urban and rural regions nationwide today, up from 15 such regions just five years ago. Independent evaluations of the program find the quality of TFA teachers is high, and student achievement improves in schools that hire TFA teachers.84

For nearly 20 years, the Milken Foundation, in cooperation with state superintendents, has awarded nearly 2,000 outstanding teachers a $25,000 award. Of those teachers, 84 percent are still teaching, even though their qualifications make them highly desirable to other employers. Solmon explains that

46 percent of all teachers leave the profession in the first five years and...anecdotally, the Milken awards have created an aura of excellence about the profession that enhances the environment that our TAP research shows is so important to teacher retention. The very fact that these teachers have opportunities beyond the classroom increases the attractiveness of the profession as a whole.85

In Arizona, for example, some of the state’s most talented teachers are moving from non-TAP schools in affluent areas to TAP schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. What attracts them is “the more interesting professional development, the enhanced collegiality, and the opportunity to earn more by being effective,” according to Solmon.86
Recommendation 4: Teacher Retention. “[E]nsure time for curriculum and professional development…develop career ladders for teachers that distinguish among the beginning instructor, the experienced teacher, and the master teacher…. Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced licensure or certification policies</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards policies</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements for tenure</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other advanced licensure/certification policies</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights of tenure</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher recognition programs or policies</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leader and distributive leadership policies</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State requires time to be set aside for professional development</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State requires and finances mentoring for all novice teachers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Author’s table based on data from *Education Week*, Agent K-12 database; and Education Commission of the States (ECS), Recruitment and Retention: State Policy database.

Notes:
1. Includes the 50 states and District of Columbia.
2. Some states in the ECS database have policies, but information about them is not publicly available.

Nearly every president since Harry Truman has urged comprehensive efforts to combat teacher shortages, but many experts now say those efforts reflect the “wrong diagnosis” and a “phony cure.” In addition to the various recruitment measures in place to attract teachers discussed previously, all states try to retain quality teachers by offering advanced licensing and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards policies. Forty-eight states also have tenure policies, 45 states have teacher recognition programs, and 42 states have teacher leader policies. Only 16 states require time for professional development and only 15 states require time for mentoring new teachers.

Yet the rising generation of teachers wants such opportunities for collaboration. Boston College’s Marilyn Cochran-Smith writes “that full opportunities to participate in induction and mentoring programs that are focused on improving children’s learning have a statistically significant impact on the likelihood of teachers staying longer in the classroom.” Consider the standard practices of other professional fields, as Levine explains:

Yet upon graduating from medical school, new doctors are not rushed into the operating room and asked to oversee open-heart surgery. Instead they go through an internship and a residency, gradually gaining knowledge and experience under the guidance of experienced practitioners. New lawyers who join a law firm do not enter a courtroom right away to serve as lead counsel in a murder case, but work for a partner and get experience and increasing
responsibility…. They want to train their new hires in their own way. But the teaching profession fails to assume that role—only 15 states currently require and support induction programs in the schools for new teachers.89

Similarly, in other professional fields, including academe, tenure is a distinction that recognizes years of outstanding work. However, 58 percent of the elementary and secondary education teachers view tenure as a protection against the threat of losing their jobs to newcomers who might be paid less, and only 28 percent see it as a measure of hard or excellent work.90

Teachers are evenly divided about whether the professional development they have received helped make them better teachers, indicating that the quality of such programs varies widely. Research confirms that this variance, along with several other factors, can limit the effectiveness of professional development for teachers.91 Thirty-eight percent of teachers also believe their professional development was not immediately useful in the classroom, especially 42 percent of veteran teachers.92

Conventional wisdom used to hold that increasing retirement rates largely account for teacher shortages. Consequently, recruitment efforts to increase the sheer numbers of new teachers took on greater urgency than retaining veteran, experienced teachers. This emphasis also meant attention shifted to external factors outside of schools, such as increasing the numbers of education majors and graduates passing state licensing exams. Less attention was paid to the internal, organizational school factors that affect teacher retention.

The reality is that the number of new entrants to teaching and re-entrants to teaching exceeds the retirement rate. As Richard M. Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education puts it, “[M]ost of the hiring of new teachers is simply to fill spots vacated by teachers who just departed. And, most of those departing are not doing so because of gray hair.”93 The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future concludes, “The number of teachers leaving for non-retirement reasons is about three to one.”94 In fact, there is a growing consensus that school staffing problems are what Ingersoll calls “a revolving door” as

large numbers of qualified teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement such as teacher job dissatisfaction and teachers pursuing other jobs…teacher recruitment programs—traditionally dominant in the policy realm—will not solve the staffing problems of such schools if they do not also address the organizational sources of low teacher retention.95

Data show a high and fairly consistent annual turnover rate among teachers, averaging just over 14 percent from 1988 to 2000.96 That rate is higher than professors (9 percent) or science and technology professionals (4 to 9 percent), but lower than nurses (18 percent) and federal clerical workers (30 percent).97 Yet, because the teaching workforce is so much larger than nearly all other professions, the current turnover rate translates into more than one million teachers in transition annually, or nearly a third of the entire teacher workforce.
moving into, between, or out of schools in any given year.\textsuperscript{98} To stem the tide, schools scramble to hire less experienced teachers, who quickly become overwhelmed and leave as well.\textsuperscript{99}

The top three causes of turnover according to teachers are family or personal reasons (40 percent), job dissatisfaction (29 percent), or pursuit of another job (27 percent). The primary sources of dissatisfaction among teachers who switch schools or leave the profession altogether also underscore the importance of school structure for retaining good teachers. Poor salary, poor administrative support, and poor student discipline are the top three reasons cited by teachers who switch schools and those who leave the profession. Among those who leave, salary is the primary reason (61 percent), and poor administrative support is the main reason teachers leave for another school (51 percent).\textsuperscript{100}

Teachers often pursue another job to earn higher salaries, and many of the highest paid teachers still earn less than the lowest paid school administrators.\textsuperscript{101} By allowing multiple career paths for teachers, TAP is a promising model that allows teachers to hold a variety of teaching positions depending on their talents and interests, including those of career, mentor, and master teacher. As teachers advance in their profession their salaries rise, which means good teachers do not have to leave the profession to earn better pay.\textsuperscript{102} The results to date are very encouraging. As Business Week reports, “Teacher turnover in TAP schools is just half the national average. And in most TAP schools, test scores have been significantly higher.”\textsuperscript{103}

Ingersoll sums up why state efforts to date have not been effective in retaining top teachers:

We can recruit all kinds of qualified people and persuade them to go into teaching, but if they get into jobs that aren’t well-paid and don’t have particularly good working conditions in which they’re given little say in the way schools operate, it’s not going to really solve the problem because a lot of these people will leave.\textsuperscript{104}
Teachers as Agents of Change, Not Objects of Change

For all the noble intentions informing the recommendations of *A Nation at Risk*, as well as the efforts by states to achieve them, “Overall, the lack of progress...has been discouraging,” as Excellence Commission member and Nobel Prize-winning chemist Glenn Seaborg sums up. The explanations education scholars offer for this lack of progress are varied, but they share a common theme: efforts to date have assumed teachers are *objects* of change rather than *agents* of change. The limitations of reform efforts so conceived were evident within a few years of *A Nation at Risk*’s release. In 1986, nearly 100 research universities formed the Holmes Group. In 1990, the Holmes Group released an extensive report titled *Tomorrow’s Schools* with its own recommendations, which began, “The critical question is not ‘What does the teacher do?’ It’s ‘What does the teacher get the kids to do?’ Basically we’re talking about teaching as an act of leadership.”

Yet under the current school structure, the Holmes Group suggested teachers are being set up for failure:

People have taken for granted that a good teacher must be able to “manage” 150 kids every day and that even good teachers will be able to “reach” only a few of their students. This is not good enough. Now people are saying that all students should learn. Teachers know they can’t meet such a standard within the current constraints. The definition has changed but the conditions of work have not.

The Holmes Group recommended schools have greater autonomy, where teachers “plan the school; revise the curriculum; teach and supervise student teachers; reflect on, experiment with, and evaluate their own teaching; join in research; meet with parents and with community agencies; and design staff development that’s relevant to all this.”

The Holmes Group concludes that schools based on those principles would allow “new work norms and expectations to take shape there.” In turn, they would flourish as a species and add great variety to the ecology of education. One reason for creating them is to promote diversity and experimentation in an educational landscape that often looks flat and monotonous. We think it’s time for educators to help reshape a reform movement that...often has bypassed the education profession...we can begin shaping the contexts in which we work. We are the ones to start building tomorrow’s schools—today.

The idea for teachers to take a leadership role in founding schools, however, originated long before *A Nation at Risk* or the Holmes report, *Tomorrow’s Schools*. In 1974, the late...
Ray Budde, a professor of educational administration at the University of Massachusetts Graduate School of Education, presented a seminal conference paper titled “Education by Charter”—in fact, it was this paper that coined the phrase “charter school.” Budde argued for a district contract design that would allow teachers to use innovative educational methods and even manage schools. It was only after the release of *A Nation at Risk* that Budde published his paper, which resonated well beyond academic circles.

Albert Shanker, the late president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), is widely credited with popularizing the concept of charter schools. In 1985, just two years after the release of *A Nation at Risk*, Shanker began advocating for public-school choice because a greater diversity of schools would increase the likelihood of a good match between the interests of teachers and their students. Unlike Budde, Shanker envisioned separate schools created by teachers, or parents with teachers, who wanted new curricula or teaching strategies to improve instruction and student learning. In 1991, that vision became a reality when Minnesota passed legislation allowing the country’s first charter school to open. Within just five years, more than 250 charter schools were operating in 10 states. Shanker concluded, “[A]s far as I’m concerned every school should be a charter school.”

Significantly, teachers and parents “were the driving force behind charters” in approximately three out of five cases, according to the U.S. Department of Education in 1997. Within just a few years, that figure increased to nearly three out of four cases. The top reasons cited for founding a new charter school were to realize a particular educational vision (67 percent) and serve a special student population (20 percent). Those who converted a pre-existing district school into a charter school cited autonomy as their primary motivation (50 percent) followed by the desire to realize a particular educational vision (28 percent). These reasons remain the primary reasons educators, parents, and former school-district personnel give for founding charter schools, and today nearly 4,000 charter schools are educating almost 1.2 million students in 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Such dramatic growth in the number of charter schools suggests teacher advocates were correct in their belief that teachers must be *agents*, not *objects*, of educational change. The following section considers what makes educator-founded schools so popular and the prospect of them serving as models for improving the teaching profession.
Teachers as Leaders: A Better Model for Reform

The sheer growth of student enrollment suggests schools founded by educators are popular with parents. Such popularity, as well as student achievement, is the subject of growing body of research. A review of that literature is beyond the scope of this analysis, which considers charter schools as a reform model for improving the teaching profession and working conditions for educators. In a recent national survey of public-district-school teachers, nearly six out of 10 said they would be interested in working at a charter school that was run and managed by teachers. Fewer than two out of 10 each said they would either not be too interested or not interested at all in teaching at such a school. This suggests the teaching labor market among public-school teachers is diversified. Their employment options should be, too.

One way to gauge the popularity of charter schools among teachers is to compare the growth of teachers in public-district schools, private schools, and public-charter schools. Based on available data from the Common Core of Data through the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there are 3.1 million public-district-school teachers, 409,000 private-school teachers, and an estimated 50,000 charter-school teachers today.

Many factors can contribute to the increase in the number of teachers across the public and private sectors. Nevertheless, from 1975 to 1990, the number of private-school teachers grew 39 percent—four times the growth of public-school teachers over the same period. From 1990 to 2006, however, the growth of public-school teachers far exceeded that of private-school teachers, 23 percent compared with 15 percent. Given the dramatic growth of public-charter schools, it is likely that many teachers who might otherwise have been attracted to private schools may have decided to teach at public-charter schools instead.

Given that fewer younger people are entering teaching today, it is important that the profession regain its attraction to prospective and returning teachers, as well as other professionals from other fields. It is also important to retain quality teachers. Survey findings from the Hudson Institute reveal that if charter-school teachers were not teaching in a charter school, more than one in four say they would do something else entirely. From this response survey authors gather that “charter schools are tapping into sources of instructional horsepower not attracted to more conventional schools.” The charter model represents a powerful means for diversifying and bolstering the teaching profession. The growth of charter-school teachers since 1991, averaging 4,200 annually, compares very well to that of alternative certification programs, averaging 10,000 annually, which have been in place twice as long. Such growth is more impressive given that district schools outnumber charter schools by 24 to one.
Teacher surveys also indicate what attracts teachers to different school settings. Figure 1 summarizes teacher survey responses on important measures of job satisfaction and general working environments by school setting.

**Figure 1: Teacher Satisfaction Levels and Working Conditions by Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Public, District</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public, Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence evaluating teachers*</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence hiring teachers/staff*</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite satisfied overall***</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied with student motivation to learn</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied with support from parents</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied with student discipline and behavior</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence student discipline*</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence professional development*</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report high levels of teacher/staff collaboration*</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always feel safe in school</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with teaching salary**</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied with class size</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied with school learning environment</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence curriculum*</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
1. No national survey has yet been conducted comparing public district, public charter, and private-school teachers’ respective satisfaction levels and opinions about working conditions. The author matched similar questions and responses using multi-state surveys in most cases.
2. Questions followed by an “*” indicate charter responses came from the Pioneer Institute’s survey of Massachusetts charter schools. Those responses were used because there were no comparable national charter school teacher survey data available. The Pioneer Institute survey was selected because more of its questions most closely resembled questions asked on national surveys of district public school and private school teachers. However, related questions posed to charter-school teachers in Arizona, California, and Pennsylvania yielded similar response rates.
3. Regarding “satisfied with teacher salary,” an additional 26 percent of charter-school teachers responded that they were “very satisfied.”
4. Charter-school teachers’ response to being “quite satisfied overall” represent the percentage of charter teachers who hope to return to their schools next year.
On every measure of satisfaction and working conditions, more public-charter-school teachers give favorable responses than public-district-school teachers. Likewise, more private-school teachers give favorable responses than public-district-school teachers on every measure except influence over hiring teachers or staff. However, the difference is slight at 15 percent compared with 14 percent. Significantly, a majority of public-charter-school teachers respond favorably on 11 out of 14 measures, while private-school teachers respond favorably on only six measures. On no measure did a majority of public-district-school teachers answer favorably.

On overall satisfaction with teaching at their schools, four out of five public-charter-school teachers respond favorably, compared with two out of five private-school teachers and one out of five public-district-school teachers. The 44 percent favorable response from public-district-school teachers concerns the influence they have over curricula. Likewise, 68 percent of the private-school teachers respond most favorably when it comes to class size and the influence they have over curricula. After overall satisfaction, 76 percent of the public-charter-school teachers also respond most favorably to the influence they have over curricula. When it comes to professional development, public-charter-school teachers are almost twice as likely as their district and private counterparts to have an influence over professional development (63 percent compared to 33 percent and 36 percent, respectively).

The least favorable response from public-district-school teachers (8 percent) concerns their influence over teacher evaluations. In contrast, over twice as many private-school teachers (19 percent), and more than four times as many charter-school teachers (35 percent) respond that they have an influence over teacher evaluations.

Survey responses also reveal a correlation between the influence teachers have over student discipline and behavior and their general satisfaction with the learning environment in their schools. Among public-district-school teachers, only three out of 10 report being satisfied with student discipline and behavior or having an influence over student discipline, compared with about four out of 10 each among private-school teachers and six out of 10 each among public-charter-school teachers. The level of teachers’ satisfaction with their schools’ learning environments reflects those responses. Four out of 10 public-district-school teachers report being very satisfied compared with about five out of 10 private-school teachers and six out of ten public-charter-school teachers. Those responses suggest teachers have an important role to play in cultivating a quality learning environment for students, and that student learning is hardly beyond their control when teachers are empowered.125

Given that fewer younger people are entering teaching today, it is important that the profession regain its attraction to prospective and returning teachers, as well as other professionals from other fields. It is also important to retain quality teachers. Survey findings from the Hudson Institute reveal that if charter-school teachers were not teaching in a charter school, more than one in four say they would do something else entirely.
Contrary to common opinion that private-school students are easier to educate, in part because of greater parental involvement in their children’s education, 51 percent of public-charter-school teachers are very satisfied with their students’ motivation to learn, compared with only 36 percent of private-school teachers and 23 percent of public-district-school teachers. Yet 52 percent of private-school teachers report being very satisfied with parental support, compared with 38 percent of public-charter-school teachers and 26 percent of public-district-school teachers. Those responses further indicate that external, non-school factors do not override the importance of good teachers when it comes to student learning. Furthermore, those responses suggest the ability of teachers and students to choose their schools, rather than being assigned to them, positively affects both.
Conclusion: Choice Benefits Teachers, their Students, and the Country

Since 1983, when *A Nation at Risk* concluded that “the professional working life of teachers is on the whole unacceptable,” little has changed despite numerous state and national efforts:

- Most states and the federal government have policies regulating teacher preparation and certification. Still, three out of four teachers on average report new colleagues are inadequately prepared in their subject areas, and quite a few teachers they work with do not do a good job or are simply going through the motions.

- Most teachers favor competitive salaries based on the amount of time and effort devoted to teaching and students’ academic progress. In districts with diversified performance pay programs, teacher bonuses are significantly higher, collegiality and teacher retention is higher, and student achievement is improved. Yet less than one percent of all teacher pay is currently based on performance, the same as in 1982 just prior to the publication of *A Nation at Risk*.

- Most states offer financial incentives, alternative certification, and other programs to remedy teacher shortages. Yet those practices have not improved working conditions because they do not give teachers or schools more autonomy over salary, hiring, and curriculum practices. Consequently, many of the highest paid teachers still earn less than the lowest paid administrators, teacher shortages in areas of critical need persist, and about half of all teachers leave the profession within five years.

A fundamental shortcoming of those programs is they treat teachers as objects of change, not agents of change. Educators are driving emerging reforms by starting schools where they want to work and parents want their children to learn. The Holmes Group’s conclusion encapsulates the spirit of recent efforts: “We think it’s time for educators to help reshape a reform movement that…often has bypassed the education profession…we can begin shaping the contexts in which we work. We are the ones to start building tomorrow’s schools–today.” The express goal of emerging reform efforts led by teachers is diversifying the education system to foster a variety of schools where innovation and experimentation can flourish.

Until recently, private schools, representing about one quarter of all American schools, were the only alternative to public-district schools. Research by the U.S. Department of Education finds private-school teachers are nearly twice as satisfied overall as public-school teachers with their jobs and the working conditions at their schools. In the 1970s and 1980s,
however, educators began advocating a new breed of “chartered” schools. Such schools would be public schools and abide by the same accountability and admissions requirements as district schools; however, they would be run by teachers, have distinct educational missions, and serve general or targeted student populations. The first charter school opened in 1991, and today some 4,000 charter schools serve nearly 1.2 million students nationwide. As a reform model, charter schools founded by educators hold great promise for filling the void left by prior state and national reform efforts to improve the teaching profession and working conditions for educators.

Charter schools build on the successes of efforts like TAP and Teach for America. Representing 3 percent of all American schools today, they help create an instructive microcosm of the benefits of a fully diversified educational system for teachers. They also allow for a richer comparison of teachers’ opinions on important measures of job satisfaction and general working environments. At 82 percent, overall satisfaction rates among charter teachers are twice as high as their private counterparts and more than three times as high as their district counterparts. An average of two-thirds of charter-school teachers report high levels of satisfaction with the influence they have over curricula, student discipline, and professional development, as well as school safety, collaboration with colleagues, and their schools’ learning environment. On those same measures, slightly more than half of private-school teachers and slightly more than one-third of public-school teachers reported high levels of satisfaction.

These results suggest the ability of teachers and students to choose their schools positively affects both. Unlike an assigned schooling system, a diversified system would foster good teacher-student matches and offer teachers the same wide range of employment options other professionals currently enjoy. To attract quality teachers, schools would have to offer competitive salaries, flexible schedules, and a professional working environment in which they have autonomy to innovate and are rewarded for their success in educating students. Such a system exists in Japan, and teachers benefit from having strong parental support, motivated students, and salaries that rival Japanese baseball professionals. A diversified education system also gets results given that Japanese students consistently score at or near the top on international exams across a variety of subjects.

Ensuring a diversified labor market capable of attracting and keeping quality teachers serves the individual good of students as well as the common good. Student achievement, especially in math and science, directly relates to individual earnings and national economic growth. Had U.S. student performance simply remained comparable to that of their international peers throughout the 1980s instead of declining, the GDP would have been 4 percent higher than realized in 2002, or $450 billion—more than the annual national K-12 education expenditure. Given the pressing and persistent need for quality teachers, there is no good reason a diversified education system should not exist in America as it does for postsecondary educators.
Endnotes

1 For example, the National Education Association (NEA) supports increased funding for Pell Grants, which allow low-income undergraduates to use public dollars to attend any postsecondary school of their choice—public, private, religious or secular. Yet it opposes public funding in President Bush’s 2007 budget for similar types of scholarships for K-12 students. See “President’s Budget Cuts $1.5 Billion from Education, Eliminates 44 Programs,” NEA News Release, February 6, 2007, http://www.nea.org/newsreleases/2007/nr070206.html.


3 Coulson, Market Education, 227. Teachers also take full advantage of technology to reach thousands of students. Id. 385. See also Robert L. August, “Yobiko: Prep School for College Entrance in Japan,” in Robert Leestma and Herbert J. Walberg, eds., Japanese Educational Productivity (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies of the University of Michigan, 1992), 290.


11 T.D. Snyder, A.G. Tan, and C.M. Hoffman, Digest of Education Statistics 2005 (NCES 2006-030), table 4 (2006). In 2014, there will be an estimated 3.4 million public elementary and secondary school teachers (6 percent increase) and 451,000 private elementary and secondary school teachers (9 percent increase).


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17 *Id.* (quotation from 56).


33 *Id.* 14 n.12.

34 “Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action,” The Teaching Commission, 2004, 34.


> Thirty-four states report they have moved or are moving in this direction. And the U.S. Department of Education recently awarded contracts to North Carolina and Tennessee to build P-12 longitudinal data collection systems. Those states have been leaders in promoting value added assessment and tracking individual student achievement growth over time. Ten additional states are being considered for participation in the program.

*Id.* 106.


42 Andrew J. Coulson, *Market Education: The Unknown History* (New Brunswick, CT: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 146; David Tyack and Larry Cuban, “Tinkering Toward Utopia (Cambridge,


48 Caroline M. Hoxby, “What Has Changed and What Has Not” in Our Schools and Our Future...Are We Still at Risk? ed. Paul E. Peterson (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 96–97 & 100. Salary increase percentages are author’s figures derived from Hoxby, figure 18, 100.


52 Id.


54 Id.
55 Id. 8, 10-11.

56 Id. 8, 11-12.


60 Id.


63 Id.


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71 Id.


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86 Id.


98 Id. 11.


105 Paul E. Peterson, “Are We Still at Risk?”, preface to *Our Schools and Our Future… Are We Still at Risk?*, ed. Paul E. Peterson (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2003), 7.


107 Id. 69.

108 Id. 67.

109 Id. 67 & xi-xii.


111 The study was published as *Education by Charter: Restructuring Schools and School Districts* (Andover, MA: The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast Islands, 1989).
112 Richard D. Kahlenberg, “Albert Shanker’s Legacy,” 7. This is the unabridged version of “Philosopher or King,” Education Next, Winter 2003, 34–39. Both are online at http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/3398521.html (page references are to the unabridged version).


114 Minnesota was the first state to pass charter legislation in 1991, and the first charter school to open a year later was City Academy in St. Paul, which now has 15 teachers according the “City Academy High School Annual Report, 2004–2005,” http://www.cityacademy.org/background.htm.


119 For a list of more than 40 studies on charter school achievement through 2005, see Appendix C in Robin J. Lake and Paul T. Hill, eds., Hopes, Fears, & Reality: A Balanced Look at American Charter Schools in 2005, National Charter School Research Project, Center on Reinventing...


This figure is the author’s estimate based on 2004–2005 school year data from the NCES Common Core of Data, which lists 46,465 teachers at charter schools for 38 states and the District of Columbia for the 2003–2004 school year. The number of teachers for many charter schools was missing, however, and no figures were provided for Arizona or Illinois. The estimate of 50,000 is conservative. Arizona figures are 2002 estimates prepared by Prepared by Arizona State Senate Staff on August 7, 2002, for charter school fingerprinting legislation requiring fingerprinting of charter school personnel, S.B. 1008, http://www.azleg.state.az.us/legtext/?45leg/5s/summary/s.1008gov_finalrevised.doc.htm.


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