

# EDUCATION WEEK

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## A Marshall Plan for Teaching

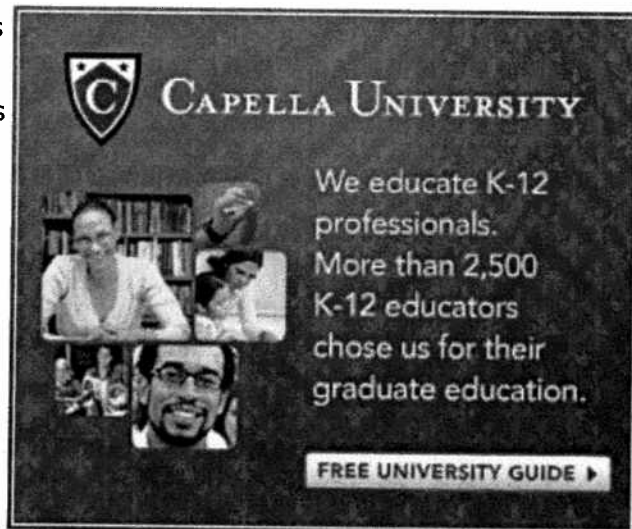
### What It Will Really Take to Leave No Child Behind

By Linda Darling-Hammond

Views about the No Child Left Behind Act are currently as divided as Berlin before the wall came down. But whatever one thinks about the 5-year-old federal law, it's clear that developing more-skillful teaching is a sine qua non for attaining higher and more equitable achievement for students in the United States. Without teachers who have sophisticated skills for teaching challenging content to diverse learners, there is no way that children from all racial and ethnic, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds will reach the high academic standards envisioned by the law. For this reason, one of the most important aspects of the No Child Left Behind legislation is its demand for a "highly qualified" teacher for every child.

Research indicates that expert teachers are the most important—and the most inequitably distributed—school resource. In the United States, however, schools serving more than 1 million of our highest-need students are staffed by a parade of underprepared and inexperienced teachers who know little about effective instruction, and even less about teaching English-language learners and students with disabilities. Many of these teachers enter the classroom with little training and leave soon after, creating greater instability in their wake. Meanwhile, affluent students receive teachers who are typically better prepared than their predecessors, further widening the achievement gap.

Some argue that this long-standing condition is not really a problem—that the revolving door of unprepared entrants is plenty good enough for the students in poor schools. This argument was made again this past November by the Hoover Institution, which published an article by researchers Thomas J. Kane, Jonah E. Rockoff, and Douglas O. Staiger looking at teachers' pathways into the New York City public schools. The study found that, while uncertified and alternatively certified teachers initially did less well than certified teachers in producing student achievement, especially in reading, most of the differences in student performance disappeared by the third year of teaching. Therefore, the article



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concluded, we need not worry about teacher training and certification for the teachers of disadvantaged students.

This argument is not supported by the study's own data, however. Most of the teachers who survived through year three had, by then, completed training and achieved certification. Many did not last that long. About three-fourths of the Teach for America recruits and half of the other uncertified teachers had already left. This constant attrition of underprepared teachers creates a harmful cycle in which students in poor schools are constantly learning from inexperienced and less-effective teachers. With estimates of the costs of beginning-teacher attrition averaging about \$15,000 per candidate, those who left also cost the city millions of dollars in wasted resources. With the same policies, an ongoing stream of new recruits will undereducate thousands more students stuck in schools that routinely hire these kinds of teachers.

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The study also dropped from its analysis classrooms serving large numbers of special education and limited-English-proficient students, those who most need teachers with greater levels of skill. In a study that colleagues and I conducted, we found that uncertified recruits did particularly poorly with limited-English-proficient students.

This is not smart policy. The notion that we can remain a world-class economy while undereducating large portions of our population—in particular, students of color and new immigrants, who are fast becoming a majority in our public schools—is untenable. Mostly because of these underinvestments, the United States continues to rank far behind other industrialized nations in educational achievement: 28th out of 40 nations in mathematics in 2003, for example, right behind Latvia. Meanwhile, leaders of countries like Finland that experienced a meteoric rise to the top of the international rankings have attributed their success to their massive investments in teacher education.

Most of the higher-achieving countries we consider peers or competitors now provide high-quality graduate-level teacher education designed to ensure that teachers can effectively educate all of their students. Preparation is usually fully subsidized for all entrants, and includes a year of practice teaching in a clinical school connected to the university. Schools receive funding to provide coaching, seminars, classroom visits, and joint planning time for beginners as well as veterans. Salaries are competitive with those in other professions and include additional stipends for hard-to-staff locations.

If we are serious about leaving no child behind, we need to go beyond mandates to ensure that *all* students have well-qualified teachers. Effective action can be modeled after practices in medicine. Since 1944, the federal government has subsidized medical training to fill shortages and build teaching hospitals and training programs in high-need areas—a commitment that has contributed significantly to America's world-renowned system of medical training and care.

Intelligent, targeted incentives can ensure that all students have access to teachers who are indeed highly qualified. An aggressive national policy on teacher quality and supply, on the order of the post-World War II Marshall Plan, could be accomplished for less than 1 percent of the more than \$300

billion spent thus far in Iraq, and, in a matter of only a few years, would establish a world-class teaching force in all communities.

First, the federal government should establish *service scholarships* to cover training costs in high-quality programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels for young and midcareer recruits who will teach in high-need fields or locations for at least four years. (After three years, teachers are more likely to remain in the profession and make a difference for student achievement.) Because fully prepared novices are twice as likely to stay in teaching as those who lack training, shortages could be reduced rapidly if districts could hire better-prepared teachers. Virtually all the vacancies currently filled with emergency teachers could be filled with well-prepared teachers if 40,000 service scholarships of up to \$25,000 each were offered annually. (Price tag: \$1 billion per year.)

Second, *recruitment incentives* are needed to attract and retain expert, experienced teachers in high-need schools. Federal matching grants could leverage additional compensation for teachers with expertise and/or additional responsibilities, such as mentoring or coaching. If matched by state or local contributions, stipends of \$10,000 for 50,000 teachers annually—based on systems that recognize teacher expertise, such as National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, standards-based evaluations, and carefully assembled evidence of contributions to student learning—could attract 100,000 accomplished teachers to high-poverty schools. An additional \$300 million in matching grants could be used toward improved teaching conditions in these schools, including smaller pupil loads, adequate materials, and time for teacher planning and professional development—all of which keep teachers in schools. (Price tag: \$800 million a year.)

Third, as is true in medicine, the Marshall Plan for Teaching should support *improved preparation*. Incentive grants (\$300 million annually) should upgrade all teachers' preparation for teaching literacy skills as well as standards-based content, and for teaching special education students and English-language learners. An additional \$200 million per year should be used to expand state-of-the-art teacher education programs in high-need communities that partner "teaching schools" with universities. As in teaching hospitals, candidates in these schools study teaching and learning while gaining hands-on experience in state-of-the-art classrooms. Effective models have already been created by universities sponsoring professional-development schools and by school districts offering urban teacher residencies that place candidates with expert teachers while they complete their coursework. These programs create a pipeline of teachers prepared to engage in best practice, while establishing demonstration sites for urban teaching. Funding for 200 programs serving an average of 150 candidates each, at \$1 million per year per program, would supply 30,000 exceptionally well-prepared recruits to high-need communities each year. (Price tag: \$500 million per year.)

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Fourth, providing *mentoring for all beginning teachers* would reduce attrition and increase competence. With one-third of new teachers leaving the classroom within five years, and higher rates of attrition for those who are underprepared, recruitment efforts are like pouring water into a leaky bucket. By investing in state and district induction programs, we could ensure mentoring support for every new teacher in the nation. Based on the funding model used in California's successful Beginning

Teacher Support and Assessment program, a federal allocation of \$4,000 for each of 125,000 beginning teachers, matched by states or local districts, could ensure that each novice is coached by a trained mentor. (Price tag: \$500 million a year.)

Finally, preparation and mentoring can be strengthened if they are guided by a high-quality *teacher-performance assessment* that measures actual teaching skill. Current tests used for licensing and federal accountability are typically paper-and-pencil measures of basic skills and subject-matter knowledge that demonstrate little about teachers' abilities to practice effectively. Performance assessments for new teachers in states like Connecticut and California have been strong levers for improving preparation and mentoring, and for determining teachers' competence. Federal support to develop a nationally available performance assessment for licensing would not only provide a useful tool for accountability and improvement, but would also help teachers move more easily from states with surpluses to those with shortages. (Price tag: \$100 million per year.)

In the long run, these proposals would save far more than they cost. The savings would include the more than \$2 billion now wasted annually because of high teacher turnover, plus the even higher costs of grade retention, summer school, remedial programs, lost wages, and prison sentences for dropouts (another \$50 billion, increasingly tied to illiteracy and school failure). A Marshall Plan for Teaching could help ensure that the United States, within only a few years, could place well-qualified teachers in the schools that most need them and give all students a genuine opportunity to learn.

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