

Ticket to Teach

Ticket to Teach is the first in Democrats for Education Reform's series on the "New Normal" for public education in 2011.

Executive Summary

Over the last century, there have been dozens of reports and calls to action to improve teacher preparation, pay, performance, and prestige. Last year alone, there were several.

Unfortunately, such declarations have never been followed by any tangible long-term change. The fact is that significant action could begin now, if only our elected leaders and others in positions of authority could muster the necessary energy and political will.

A good first step would be to take seriously what Secretary of Education Arne Duncan calls “The New Normal” and make a serious and determined effort to better deploy dozens of programs already on the books,ⁱ which are incredibly—frankly, embarrassingly—unknown, underutilized, or ineffective:

- hundreds of millions of dollars in available **federal loan forgiveness** for teachers who serve in high-need schools, specialties (e.g., bilingual and special education) and subject areas (math and science). This is voluntary differential pay that does not require changes in contracts;
- **federal tuition scholarships** of up to \$4,000 per year (i.e., “TEACH”)—3 years old and still not fully implemented—to recruit the best and brightest to hard-to-staff schools and disciplines;
- income-contingent loan repayment for teachers, with smaller monthly payments and a complete write-off of any existing balances after 10 years of service for all teachers.
- un-enforced and underdeveloped accountability provisions under the Higher Education Act that require states to identify low-performing schools of education and take appropriate corrective action, including ultimately shutting down the poorest performers.

But we shouldn’t stop there.

We propose a “Ticket to Teach” for the next generation of educators—an “all hands on deck” effort between government, higher education, and the private sector—to create a new social contract with teachers that couples higher expectations and professionalization with commensurate pay, support, and prestige.

We think the model that the Obama Administration has adopted through Race to the Top, under which the federal government acts as venture philanthropist to fund groundbreaking reform efforts assembled by key state and local stakeholders, is a promising one.

As such, we propose that the bulk of funding for “Ticket to Teach” would come via better use, deployment, and integration of existing federal programs for pilot states and districts. These funds would be supplemented as needed by targeted federal planning and start-up investments, state and local matches, and venture philanthropy.

Ticket to Teach

Building a 21st Century Teaching Force

We propose an “all hands on deck” effort between government, higher education, and the private sector to create a new social contract with teachers that couples higher expectations and professionalization with commensurate pay, support, and prestige.

New investments by the federal government and private philanthropists have launched literally hundreds of state and local policy initiatives to improve teacher effectiveness.

Most of these efforts aim to develop better teacher evaluation systems and to target professional development and support to those teachers who need it most. Some go a step further and use

evaluations to determine certification, promotion, and tenure. The most ambitious will tie higher performance and increased time commitments to a more generous and accelerated schedule of salary and benefits.

“We say to these young people, ‘We’re going to make a deal with you. We are not going to pay you a lot of money, but we are going to give you a lot of time off.’ It’s a terrible message we’re sending.”ⁱⁱ

—Geoffrey Canada
President of Harlem Children’s Zone
September 2010

These initiatives are groundbreaking. They will inform education reform efforts for years to come. **But they will fall far short of their potential unless they are accompanied by equally ambitious reforms in teacher recruitment, training, pay, and retention.**

A recent report by McKinsey and Co. found that the countries with the highest achieving students make a concerted effort to recruit, develop, and retain the “top

third+” candidates to the teaching profession. In contrast, in the U.S, more than 90% of the highest-achieving college students say they are not even considering becoming teachers: “Of [reasons given] the most important job attributes include prestige and peer group appeal, but compensation is the biggest gap between teaching and their chosen professions.”ⁱⁱⁱ

If current calls for changes in teacher training and pay are not to go the way of previous such proclamations, they must be accompanied by decisive action. We propose piloting an “all hands on deck” partnership—between federal, state, and local governments, institutions of higher education, and non-profits—to create a “Ticket to Teach,” a new social contract with prospective teachers that couples higher expectations and professionalization with a commensurate level of pay, respect, and recognition, so that every student has an effective and committed teacher.

“The U.S. does not take a strategic or systematic approach to nurturing teacher talent...we have failed to attract, develop, reward, or retain professional teaching talent on a consistent basis.”^{iv}

—McKinsey and Co.
September 2010

Is This The Moment?...

2010 McKinsey and Co. see a “*rare window of opportunity*” because “*more than half of today’s [3 million] teachers—will be eligible to retire within the next decade.*”^v

We agree. But it must be kept in mind that such opportunities—to improve teacher recruitment and preparation, implement performance-based evaluations, increase pay, and boost prestige—**have been missed in the past.** Our opportunity for success this time will only be realized **if we radically depart from what has previously been tried.**

1920 Henry Wyman Holmes, esteemed dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education declared (when the number of teachers in the U.S. was 680,000):

“A more serious conception of the place of the teacher in the life of the nation is both necessary and timely. [I urge] changing the systems that support poorly trained, paid and esteemed teachers.”^{vi}

1972 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education policy paper on “performance-based accountability” for teachers and training programs:

“[T]he student preparing to become a teacher must be able to demonstrate his ability to promote desirable learning or establish behaviors known to promote it...the training institution is itself held accountable for producing able teachers.”^{vii}

1979 “Introduction to the Foundations of Education,” (Allyn and Bacon):

“Although much remains to be done to bring about performance-based teacher-education programs and...performance-based teacher certification, the concepts have merit and will probably be implemented in some form in the next few years.”^{viii}

1986 “The Holmes Group” a blue ribbon panel of Education School Deans:

“The best professional education in medicine, business, and law in the world can be found here in the United States. There is no doubt that our universities can do an equally outstanding job for teachers. The only question is whether they will.”^{ix}

1996 National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, citing the need to hire 2 million teachers over the next decade:

“In European and Asian countries, teachers are highly respected, well compensated, and better prepared; by the standards of other professions and other countries, U.S. teacher education has historically been thin, uneven, and poorly financed.”^x

2009 Katherine Merseth, Director of Teacher Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, at a teacher quality forum in Washington, DC:

“It’s high time that we broke up the cartel...Of the nation’s 1,300 graduate teacher training programs, only about 100 [are] doing a competent job; ‘the others could be shut down tomorrow.’”^{xi}

...Yes. If There Were Ever A Moment To Professionalize Teaching Training And Pay, This Is It.

Every field that is responsible for socially valued, high-stakes outcomes (e.g., law and medicine) ultimately undergoes a transformation through which its failure to keep pace with societal expectations and advances in knowledge are recognized. In turn, this leads to qualitatively different approaches to professional training and pay, and enhanced prestige.

The current and unprecedented wave of education reform has been called the “quiet revolution” and a “national movement.” If the same urgency, enlistment of intellectual talent, and sense of magnitude were directed at the fundamental systemic reforms needed to transform the entire teaching profession, the successes achieved over the next decade could actually live up to the hype.

Change won't be easy.

In the decade after the 1910 “Flexner Report” issued its indictment of physician recruitment and training, dozens of medical schools were closed. The ones that remained open operated under more rigorous professional standards that made life more difficult both for universities and aspiring doctors. **But no one since has ever advocated we go back to the 19th century model of preparing doctors.**

The social contract under “Ticket to Teach” would be this: we will provide high-caliber teacher-candidates a seamless system of high-quality preparation, in-service, professional development, and support through their first three to five years. We will maintain high expectations and rigorous accountability. In return, we will subsidize candidates' educations and pay them based on our expectations and their performance.

“All callings are dignified in the scale of modern society exactly in proportion to the mental powers exercised in each, and to the degree of cultivation requisite for entering on the duties.”

—*The Lancet*, 1857

We think the model that the Obama Administration has adopted through Race to the Top, under which the federal government acts as venture philanthropist to fund groundbreaking reform efforts assembled by key state and local stakeholders, is a promising one.

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The current wave of K-12 education reform has been called a “quiet revolution” and “national movement.” If the same sense of urgency were directed at the systemic reforms needed to transform the entire teaching profession, the successes over the next decade could actually live up to the hype.

Ticket To Teach (T3)—Overview

“Ticket to Teach” would launch pilot efforts that vertically integrate pre-service recruitment, rigorous coursework and practicums, tuition assistance, internships/residencies, professional development, scrupulous evaluation systems, higher pay and financial incentives for placement and performance, and tenure reform. Other approaches to improving teacher quality have been piecemeal. T3 would stand apart because it will be comprehensive, coordinated, and cost-effective.

Under “Ticket to Teach,” the White House and the U.S. Department of Education would:

Focus, repackage and systematize existing resources to recruit, train, and support prospective and existing teachers. Three examples:

- There are several federal **student loan forgiveness programs** for qualified teachers who serve in a low-income school or teach a hard-to staff subject area.^{xii} In effect, this is differential pay for quality and placement that does not require renegotiation of state and local contracts.

Only 14,000 of the 600,000 first to fifth-year K-12 teachers in the United States now tap the up-to \$17,500 the federal government has set aside for federal student loan forgiveness for those who choose to teach in high-need schools and subject areas. We think the number of those potentially eligible could be 3-5 times that.

- The federal **TEACH grant program** awards scholarships up to \$4,000 per year to individuals that plan to teach in a public or private elementary school that serves low-income students and/or in a high-need specialty such as ESL or special education.^{xiii}

Right now there are only about 36,000 TEACH recipients in the entire U.S. even though estimates are that more than a million new teachers will enter the field over the next decade. Those who participate in alternative certification programs are not even eligible.

Moreover, because TEACH grants are not part of any aligned effort to place and retain teachers in high-poverty schools and high-need specialty areas, the Obama Administration estimates that 80% of recipients will not complete the necessary service requirements and will have to pay their scholarships back as loans—a loss to these teacher-scholars, and to students who most need high-quality instruction.

- The feds also offer **income contingent loan payment plans to all teachers**, which lower monthly payments and **automatically discharge debt entirely** for all teachers after 10 years of service.^{xiv}

None of these programs is well-marketed to potential or current teachers, and none, as far as we can tell, is integrated into any effort to recruit the best and brightest into teaching or to build human capital in high needs districts or schools.

Ticket To Teach (T3)—Overview (continued)

Forge partnerships between cohorts of individual teacher candidates, K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations and non-profits, and alternative teacher preparation programs.

The current federal program designed to do this—the **Teacher Quality Enhancement Program** (\$143 million in FY 09 alone)—was found by the Government Accounting Office to have poor accountability and few notable outcomes.

Hold Teacher Training Programs Accountable

Right now, the federal government provides \$4 billion annually in subsidies to teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities through student and institutional aid, with no accountability for results.

Some standards are on the books now, but they are not worth the paper they are printed on. The threshold to earn a teaching certificate from a school of education is far too low. And even though schools of education still award diplomas to their students after they fail state licensing exams, virtually every teacher preparation program in the country, unlike those in law or medicine, reports a misleading 100% pass rate for its “training program” graduates. Whether those who fail the licensing test enter teaching via other means, or transition to another field entirely, is anyone’s guess. Either way, serious questions are raised about the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of programs that engage in these bait and switch reporting and degree awarding practices.

So far, the Obama Administration has not issued the regulations needed to interpret and implement new accountability provisions for teacher preparation programs signed into law in 2008. They should do so as soon as possible, including requiring states to take “corrective action” against teacher training programs that persistently fail.

Follow candidates into their first 5 years of teaching with internships, residencies, high-quality professional development and higher, performance-based pay.

The federal government provides \$3 billion annually for these purposes under Title II of ESEA/NCLB alone. Studies consistently find that most programs conducted by states and local school districts with these funds are woefully diffuse and ineffective.^{xv}

“Ticket To Teach”—Specific Elements

In its 2011 budget,^{xvi} the Obama Administration proposed consolidating dozens of teacher and school leader training and development programs into three key initiatives. This is not likely to be a politically viable approach, even under a Republican Congress, because, as President Bush found when he tried consolidation in 2001, every small program has a Senator or Representative that champions it.

Further, Obama’s plan did not incorporate some of the key, big money programs—such as the loan forgiveness and scholarship funds described above—that could help attract high quality prospective teachers. Nor did it integrate elements like accountability for teacher education programs that are already on the federal books but are not being leveraged by states.

We think a better approach from both a policy and political perspective would be to give cutting-edge states and/or districts a chance to apply, via incentive funds for planning and start-up, to integrate federal, state, and local K-12 education programs, along with institutions of higher education, non-profits, and philanthropic organizations, to improve the quality of the teaching force overall, and to redress inequities in students’ access to effective teachers as a function of race, family income, or zip code, from recruitment and training to induction and retention.

Ticket to Teach

| Purpose | Activities |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Recruit/ Attract | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Outreach2. Selectivity3. Scholarships4. Stipends5. Loan Forgiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Candidates must be recruited from the top third of our nation’s college students.• Contract would specify expectations and service commitment and bundle student aid and financial rewards.• Goal: \$65,000 starting salary and top end of at least \$150,000.^{xvii} |

“Ticket To Teach”—Specific Elements (continued)

| Purpose | Activities |
|-------------------|--|
| 2. Prepare | <p>Consortia (Must be Multi-disciplinary)</p> <p>Can be run by an entity in or outside an institution of higher education. If run by a University, must be at level of University President.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either way, it must include experts with strong grounding in science and practice of learning e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Medicine ◦ Psychiatry/Psychology ◦ Brain development ◦ Identification and assessment of learning disabilities ◦ Behavior management ◦ Math ◦ Foreign language re: ELL’s ◦ Other subject areas • Consortia would have upfront agreements with schools where teaching candidates will be placed. • Consortia must include alternative preparation programs like Teach for America and The New Teacher Project. • Consortia must include residency and internship programs. • Intensive outreach would be done to recruit candidates from underrepresented ethnic minorities and to provide intensive supports to the institutions of higher education and teacher preparation programs in which they are enrolled. • The program would have to develop an advanced, state-of-the-art curriculum that is interdisciplinary and covers: research based approaches to reading instruction, mastery of mathematics (algebra at minimum) and interpretation of statistics and other quantitative data; identification of learning disabilities, including experience in administering the industry assessments that identify such disabilities and certification in their use. It would also have to provide training in effective and appropriate student discipline and classroom management. |

| Purpose | Activities |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 3. Induct and Retain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates would agree to a 3-5 year commitment in the school in which they teach. • Rewards would be back-loaded to incentivize retention in high-need schools and in the profession. • All teachers would complete a one-year residency before they become a teacher of record. • Beginning teachers would get extra time for lesson planning, interaction with colleagues, professional development, and mentoring. |

Endnotes

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