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Contact: Kerri Lyon, 917-348-2191

MAKING EDUCATORS EXCELLENT: TEACHERS RELEASE BLUEPRINT FOR OVERHAULING TEACHER PREP PROGRAMS AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTING EVALUATIONS

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Recommendations by Classroom Teachers Envision Better Training and Support to Be Successful

New York, June 19, 2013 –Now that New York City finally has a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in place to identify instructional strengths and weaknesses, education leaders must turn their attention to ensuring teachers have the preparation and support they need to succeed in the classroom, Educators 4 Excellence (E4E) members said today.

E4E policy team members are issuing recommendations, in two separate reports, to overhaul teacher preparation programs and implement new evaluation effectively.

The first paper, ***“Preparing for the Classroom: A Vision for Teacher Training in the 21st Century,”*** seeks to improve the quality of teacher preparation programs that currently result in one third of teachers feeling unprepared to enter the classroom, according to the American Federation of Teachers. Among the recommendations, E4E members believe schools of education need more rigorous entrance and exit standards and should require a full clinical year of student teaching under the tutelage of effective educators. Prospective teachers should have to provide evidence of student growth to graduate from their program.

The second paper, ***“Getting It Right: A Blueprint for Effective Implementation of the NYC Teacher Evaluation System,”*** recommends steps to ensure policymakers, administrators, and teachers succeed in implementing New York City’s new teacher evaluation system. The Policy Team recommends an intensive, ongoing training around the new system to ensure that evaluation is a tool for providing teachers meaningful feedback and support. Additionally they suggest schools utilize peer observation and study groups within schools to provide teachers with tangible opportunities to improve their practice.

“Our teacher-led policy teams have shown tireless enthusiasm for ensuring that our policy debates are guided by individuals with a personal stake in these critical issues,” said **Jonathan Schleifer, Executive Director at Educators 4 Excellence-New York**. “Making sure our schools foster a culture of learning and achievement for students and educators alike is a top priority. Strengthening the teaching profession through better pre-training and on the job support is central to achieving that goal.”

Two teams of teachers from 30 New York area public schools developed the policy recommendations over the past three months. The teachers reviewed research, interviewed stakeholders and experts, and surveyed almost 200 E4E members in New York City to find out what strategies would be most helpful.

Teacher Preparation

In order to be effective, teachers must be prepared to meet a classroom of students from day one. Unfortunately, teacher-training programs aren't getting the job done. A recent American Federation of Teachers survey found one in three teachers feel unprepared to enter a classroom and half of teachers leave within the first five years. E4E members recommend a complete overhaul of these programs based on the following principals:

Want It: A rigorous admission process

- *Teacher preparation programs should require potential candidates to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and have admission requirements that include a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0.*
- *Teacher preparation programs should have a thorough screening process for admission that includes and assesses a candidate's "soft" attributes.*
- *Teacher preparation programs should be required to collect and publish data on alumni feedback, retention and effectiveness in the classroom.*

Learn it: Knowledge and skills with immediate implications for the classroom

- *Teacher preparation programs should employ instructors who have had experience in the classroom with demonstrated effectiveness in their field.*
- *Teacher preparation curriculum should cover five areas of knowledge: strategies, content, diversity, context and theory, and design.*

Live it: Meaningful clinical practice and support from master educators

- *Prospective teachers should observe a wide variety of classroom settings prior to student teaching to make an informed decision about their area of focus.*
- *Prospective teachers should be thoughtfully and deliberately paired with an experienced, highly effective cooperating teacher who takes responsibility for their success in the classroom as a student teacher for one full school year.*
- *Student teachers should be observed and receive concrete, targeted and actionable feedback.*
- *Teacher preparation programs should identify creative ways to make extended student teaching financially feasible for their students.*

Prove it: A demonstration of mastery, effectiveness and professionalism

- *After completing classroom and clinical training, prospective teachers must demonstrate their readiness to teach by proving their effectiveness in the classroom through a series of formal assessments.*
- *After completing their teacher preparation program, prospective teachers should pass a CCSS aligned examination, demonstrating their ability to teach to the new standards.*
- *Prospective teachers should pass a rigorous defense to earn their master's degree that includes classroom observations, reflection and data that demonstrate adequate student growth.*

“It would make a tremendous difference to our profession and to our students to have every teacher go through a more rigorous preparation program,” said **Bill LaMonte, member of the Teacher Preparation policy team**. “Transforming what the next generation of teachers can do on day one, from, running a highly effective classroom to planning effective lessons, can be a game-changer for our students.”

Teacher Evaluation Implementation

Following a two-year negotiating process, this month New York State Education Commissioner John King issued a teacher evaluation system for New York City that will go into effect in September. The system contains multiple measures that promise to improve instruction, but implementing this system for 75,000 educators remains a daunting task. E4E members recommend the city and individual schools taking the following steps to ensure effective implementation:

1. Effective Training

- *Evaluators and teachers should receive comprehensive training, phased in over time, focused on how to use the Danielson Framework.*
- *Evaluators and teachers should also be trained on how to give and receive feedback and have constructive conversations about strengths and areas for growth.*

2. Thoughtful Observation Schedules

- *Teachers' observation schedules should be organized to prioritize support and development.*
- *Principals should have manageable portfolios, particularly principals in large schools or who lead teachers who teach specialty areas they are unfamiliar with.*
- *Highly effective teachers should be leveraged as trained observers.*

3. Timely Feedback and Targeted Professional Development

- *Feedback should be delivered in a timely fashion.*
- *Feedback should be tied to meaningful and targeted professional development opportunities.*
- *An emphasis should be placed on building a community of professional learning in schools*

4. Systemwide Review and Reflection

- *An extensive reflection process using system-wide surveys should be used to gather feedback on the evaluation system and its implementation.*
- *An independent recommendation committee should make suggestions for improvements to the system.*

“Like professionals in any other field, New York’s teachers want to excel, and now, for the first time, they will be in the position to receive meaningful feedback about their performance, and opportunities for improvement and professional growth,” said **Annie Gallagher, a member of the Teacher Evaluation Implementation policy team.** “Implementing the new evaluation system with fidelity will require patience, but has real potential to deliver a powerful learning experience to the city’s 1.1 million school children.”

To inform these recommendations, the two teams studied successful models and state laws from across the country, and conducted a survey of 170 E4E-NY members.

To view the full reports, visit www.educators4excellence.org/teacher-policy-teams/issues-and-papers/ny-teacher-preparation and <http://www.educators4excellence.org/teacher-policy-teams/issues-and-papers/ny-teacher-evaluation>

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For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table – the voice of classroom teachers.

Educators 4 Excellence (E4E), a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers. With a quickly growing national network of over 10,000 educators united by the E4E Declaration of Teachers’ Principles and Beliefs, E4E teachers can learn about education policy and research, network at E4E’s event series with like-minded colleagues and important education policymakers, and take action by advocating for teacher-created policy recommendations that lift student achievement and the teaching profession.

For more information, please visit www.educators4excellence.org.