

## 2012 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: GETTING TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS TO THE STUDENTS WHO NEED THEM MOST



The Roundtable Discussion on serving high needs student populations drew about 30 people. Laurie Calvert, a former teacher in Candler, NC and a 2010 Alumni Washington Fellow who now serves as Teacher Liaison for the U.S. Department of Education, facilitated the discussion. Participants were asked to discuss the topic and record their responses in terms of what's working, steps the U.S. Department of Education could take, and steps participants could themselves take now. Following the table discussions, Ms. Calvert invited volunteers to distill the key ideas from his or her table discussion.

Key themes among successful current practices include relationships, data use and strong instruction, professional development, mentoring, and a focus on student learning. Recommended steps that the U.S. Department of Education could take included more funding, support for teacher preparation, additional school support, and positive publicity about schools and teachers. Participants identified three key areas where education leaders could take action now: cultivating positive attitudes, fostering excellent teaching, and supporting teacher autonomy.

### ***What's Working: Relationships***

- *Relationships among teachers, administrators, students, and parents enable the school to meet goals and hold ourselves accountable.*
- *Supportive principals taking instructional leadership role.*
- *Community – sense of loyalty to the school means not much turnover.*
- *Knowing the students well; knowing their families well.*
- *Clear understanding that we are all in this together.*
- *Respect and trust are vital to keeping the good teachers.*

### ***What's Working: High-Quality Instruction and Data Use***

- *Implementation of Common Core Standards with emphasis on reading, writing and speaking.*
- *Ask: Why do we do this? Then Toss out ineffective methods.*
- *Extended learning day.*
- *Differentiation of instruction.*
- *Data driven; reflection with immediate intervention for areas in need of mastery.*

- *Assessments that are ongoing and varied; more teacher input.*
- *Cooperative, relevant learning activities.*
- *Data meetings and common assessments.*
- *Response To Intervention.*

### ***What's Working: Professional Development***

- *Teaching strategies delivered in PD... building-level support to educators.*
- *Teacher buy-in for self-evaluation and reflection.*
- *Departmentalize – allow teachers to teach to their own strengths.*
- *Technology intervention for teachers.*
- *Online professional learning for all teachers (e.g. gifted certification).*
- *Campus-led staff development by empowered staff.*
- *Professional Learning Communities – monthly or more often, with guided study for identified students.*
- *Book studies.*

### ***What's Working: Mentoring***

- *Teachers on probationary period for 3 years.*
- *Mentors – weekly meetings with curriculum specialist(s).*
- *New teachers must have mentor teachers or consulting teachers planning together.*

### ***What's Working: Focus on Student Learning***

- *Putting top teachers with students who are underperforming.*
- *Student placement: don't place a needy student with a first year teacher.*
- *Match students with teachers (personality, patience).*
- *Provide smaller groupings for teachers with special education students; may need paraprofessional.*
- *Academic intervention plans – kids get pulled – using Title I techs and paraprofessionals.*
- *Saturday school implemented for needy students after the 2nd grading period.*
- *Flexibility to assign staff and student groups.*
- *Classes switch by abilities all day; enrichment and remedial.*
- *Freshman Academy – “Boot Camp” after failing benchmark test, means 7<sup>th</sup> hour of instruction each day, weekend or breaks classes also. Parents are in on this.*

### ***USDE Steps: Funding***

In addition to a more general request for increased funding, participants raised issues of schools competing with each other for limited funds.

- *Fully fund exceptional children's program, early childhood program.*
- *Challenge corporations to fund educational initiatives and to provide educational child care programs.*
- *Provide funding for highly qualified interventionists for Title I and special education.*
- *More support with IEP process for special education and more funding for Autism.*
- *Increase block grant to provide \$\$ incentives to best teachers and principals who want to change.*
- *Ensure competitive salaries with the business world.*

- *Provide funds for reduced class sizes.*
- *Provide opportunities for student scholarships with incentive funds rather than Race to the Top funds.*
- *Provide funding to teachers willing to teach in low performing schools.*
- *Give teachers with difficult groups grants.*
- *Provide some professional development programs that will not cost the local districts.*
- *Provide bully pulpit for recruitment and opportunity grants.*
- *Stop using federal funds to pit state against state – too much competition creates pressure to jump through hoops rather than create real changes. Remove competition for funds.*
- *You tell us to collaborate, but your grants are all based on competition...need grants for all!*

### ***USDE Steps: Teacher Preparation and Training***

- *Support better teacher preparation programs.*
- *Grants for training and teacher education.*
- *[Offer] incentives for going into education.*
- *At college level, ensure strong teacher preparation programs.*
- *Provide forgiveness on student loans for teachers who pursue advanced degrees.*
- *Provide grants for continuing education.*
- *Education incentives that are tied to loan forgiveness with specific criteria. Pay teachers more so the best and brightest can be recruited.*

### ***USDE Steps: Supporting Schools***

- *[Offer] Wellness support; recognize that learning addresses the Total Child.*
- *Local control of testing and assessment criteria to drive learning of the Common Core standards.*
- *Set basic guidelines to add/ensure required planning time for each learning day for teachers.*
- *Allow redesign learning days based on local needs.*
- *Portable retirements and portable license credentials; now every state is different and very hard to make change.*
- *National norms for primary grades so that students are identified earlier.*
- *Coordinate national evaluation system that is FAIR.*
- *Continued collaboration among states.*

### ***USDE Steps: Public Relations***

Participants felt that education is frequently portrayed negatively in the media and would like the Department to focus more on positive news. Sample comments:

- *Create positive educational segments for the news...sustain the effort beyond election years!*
- *Create a national movement with positive advertising.*

### ***What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Cultivate Positive Attitudes***

The importance of presenting positive messages and school climate was stressed, for example:

- *Celebrating success.*
- *Showing kids what is available beyond where they are.*
- *Successful teachers are those who believe in students; successful students are those that believe in themselves.*

- *Work with media to recognize schools for what we are doing well.*

### ***What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Foster Excellent Teaching***

- *Work with teacher colleges on what training is needed to improve the quality of new teachers.*
- *Relationship building.*
- *Find the best teacher available and get out of their way.*
- *Allow time for training/meaningful professional development.*
- *Benchmark with exemplar schools.*
- *Peer observation.*
- *Changing the mindset, equipping teachers.*
- *Reward excellence.*
- *Urge college prep programs to implement opportunities for prospective teachers to “work” in classrooms in high school and college classes early on.*
- *Influence teacher education programs to teach the idea of “community”.*
- *Useful mentoring programs that are consistent through grants and federal funding.*
- *Is there a collection of methodologies and best practices from the schools who have won the Blue Ribbon? Other schools can learn from what we are doing successfully.*

### ***What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Support Teacher Autonomy***

- *Principals [need] to be more aware of teacher talents and allow teachers to move into positions where they are passionate.*
- *Top administrators need to make sure that principals and teachers are where they want to be... (where their hearts are).*
- *Honor teachers’ choice of what ability group they feel comfortable working with.*

### ***What’s Working: Mentoring***

- *Some districts, rather than schools provide mentors. Alaska offers a state-level mentoring program.*
- *Mentor teachers—also known as teacher support specialists—develop relationships with new teachers that evolve over several years.*
- *Mentor positions are paid positions.*
- *Mentoring is a way of “growing” teacher leaders.*

### ***What’s Working: Evaluation and Teacher Quality and Compensation***

- *District-level work on a new evaluation system that encourages professional development and improvement.*
- *School personnel are finding ways (or trying) to use student work to inform teacher evaluation.*
- *School personnel are opening a discussion about merit-based pay.*

- *Movement toward data-driven, growth-oriented evaluation systems has started to alarm mediocre, weak, or underperforming teachers.*
- *There is a role for both growth and achievement in SLOs and compensation.*
- *In Indiana, pay raises are used to incentivize teacher leadership and professional development (\$4,000 - \$8,000 additional salary). Teachers receive five formal evaluations, one by senior lead teachers.*

#### ***What's Working: School Culture and Structure***

- *Leadership teams interview new teachers.*
- *School personnel working as a cohesive team on common, shared vision.*
- *Time is available for teachers to collaborate on goals and share ideas with administrators' support.*
- *Teachers work in teams with the goal of developing students in all areas.*
- *Grade level teams collaborate to discussion curriculum and plan lessons.*

#### ***What's Working: Professional Development, Especially Embedded Professional Development***

- *Consultants come into the school and work with teachers throughout the school day.*
- *Consultants come into the school throughout the year to work with teachers.*
- *A staff developer does demonstration lessons with students on site three or four times a year.*
- *Embedded professional development during the school day.*
- *Supported, ongoing, differentiated professional development.*
- *Every other Wednesday is a half-day of staff planning time.*

#### ***USDE Steps: Teacher Preparation***

- *Work with colleges about what is really going on in schools. Offer teacher training that is relevant to real life.*
- *Get future teachers into their classrooms earlier.*
- *Use teacher-trained cooperating teachers as student teachers.*
- *Promote the profession by supporting higher education programs that are turning out highly effective teachers.*

#### ***USDE Steps: Teacher Professionalism***

- *Restructure the typical path of a teacher.*
- *Restructure teacher compensation.*
- *Develop a continuum of support for teachers (mentors, teacher leaders, instructional coaches).*
- *Rethink the student growth model—it's flawed math!*
- *If the DOE won't abandon incentivization of education then make it school-based, NOT teacher-based. Have school staff work together for the common good!*
- *Tiered compensation: base salary plus 1) personal [i.e., classroom] achievement, 2) grade-level achievement, 3) school achievement, 4) cohort K-12 schools' achievement.*

- *Consider that teachers can't control student learning. If a student is hungry or abused, how are you going to link a teacher's score to his or her performance?*
- *Mentoring needs to be a priority, with commensurate compensation.*

#### ***USDE Steps: Research***

- *Fund promising programs and release data to all states.*

#### ***USDE Steps: Rethink High School Graduation***

- *High schools should provide liberal arts education—not just college prep. Talk about career path: higher education is not always college.*
- *Face the fact that not all students are going to go to college, because some students focus on careers. Distinguish between college-ready and career-ready.*

#### ***USDE Steps: Public Relations***

- *Publicize our accomplishments! Ask media to stop comparing the top 15 – 20% of students from other countries to test scores in the US which measure ALL students!*
- *Provide opportunities to build the profession up in the public eye.*
- *Communicate the RESPECT tenets.*
- *Do more to create a national culture of respect for teachers.*