

SUNY's Teacher Preparation Reforms: A Work in Progress

By Candace de Russy and Michael Poliakoff



Candace de Russy

This is the story of the State University of New York's "New Vision in Teacher Education," an urgently needed education reform with some great ideas. It has high potential to be a paradigm for the nation

and a model for trustees of other colleges and universities to follow. But its beginning will ultimately prove not nearly as important as its progress. How it proceeds at this critical juncture will hold some vital insights into the life cycle of education reform. Today's well-intentioned reforms at SUNY could be an engine for service to the taxpayers who fund the universities. But this won't happen without renewed and keenly focused effort.

The "New Vision in Teacher Education," as it is now called, grew from efforts beginning in 1998 to improve the preparation of new teachers and to deepen SUNY's commitment to improving public education in New York urban schools. SUNY deliberations included consultation with a number of advocates for complete redesign and restructuring of teacher preparation, including Diane Ravitch, Chester Finn, Rita Kramer, and Jerry Martin. The "Advisory Council on Teacher Education," formed by the Provost in May 2000, delivered its report to the Board in March 2001 with recommendations for a well-defined set of reform strategies and objectives:

- Strong subject area preparation
- Improved pedagogical training
- Partnership with school districts
- Increased recruitment of teachers
- Preparation of more teachers in high-need subjects
- Commitment to urban schools
- External review of teacher education programs
- Research on effectiveness of SUNY-trained teachers
- SUNY guarantee on the quality of its graduates

The challenges facing this comprehensive teacher quality strategy lie in the details for its implementation. In the sections that follow, we critique and analyze the plan.

Transparency

The Trustees—who have the fiduciary responsibility to represent the interests of the taxpayers of New York—know remarkably little about the quality of SUNY's sixteen teacher education programs. The public knows even less.

The list of missing information at SUNY is long. Trustees need data on the academic qualifications of students admitted to teacher training programs. Trustees need data on grade distribution in education courses. Trustees need a campus-by-campus report card based on academic achievement benchmarks upon which they can craft informed policy.

Since this information wasn't available through the System office, we did some of our own informational investigations, which revealed plenty of things that should be of concern to Trustees. At the SUNY New Paltz campus a few years ago, an institutional study showed that 71 percent of the grades awarded in elementary education classes were "As"—compared with an average of 33 percent in other courses throughout the campus. Furthermore, not every future teacher is above average—or even minimally qualified—at some SUNY campuses. Although the average teacher licensure test scores for SUNY on a Systemwide basis are generally good, some of SUNY's individual education programs show appalling results. In 1999-2000, eleven of twenty-three graduates who prepared to be high school mathematics teachers at SUNY-Oswego failed their NY State mathematics exam. The test for high school English teachers seems to have had disastrous results as well: only five of the thirteen graduates who took it managed to pass. And at SUNY's Old

Westbury campus, the average score for its education students on the most general (and easy) of the licensure tests, the Liberal Arts and Sciences exam, was twenty-three points below the state average. Information like this should not come piecemeal to public cognizance: it belongs in an annually published data book readily available to every taxpayer and studied by every Trustee.

Some of SUNY's teacher education programs may be such chronic under performers that they should be closed—a situation that Trustees on campuses throughout the nation should be prepared to face. Terminating a program is an unnerving thought for university administrators and politicians, but it is the fiduciary responsibility of the Board of Trustees to protect the interests of the public over the interest of institutions and their employees.

Who Owns and Who Watches Teacher Education?

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Teacher education is a field littered with fads and theories, few of which are based on strong scientific research, and some of which are demonstrably harmful.

Accountability is the watchword of the day, and reporting requirements for teacher preparation programs are built into both the 1998 reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. SUNY's "Action Plan" for implementing New Visions properly promises that "as a System and through the work of its faculty" it will conduct research on best practices. SUNY, moreover, intends to survey the school systems that employ its graduates and use this information to improve its programs. However, an effective review needs to observe the same strictures against conflict-of-

interest that we expect of business and government. SUNY's Advisory Council's report already expressed high confidence in the "consistently high quality" of SUNY's teacher education programs even before the reforms were to go into effect. It is unclear whether it is appropriate to use SUNY faculty to craft

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SUNY's Teacher Preparation Reforms

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best practices policies and audit the performance of the programs: the programs that have tolerated the weak or inconsistent licensure exam results that we have just seen are not likely to be the most effective watchdogs or the most effective engine for reform. To rely on accreditors—particularly the National Council on Teacher Accreditation (NCATE)—to ensure program quality is to lean upon the proverbial bruised reed, a very poor substitute for Trustee oversight.

An institution that is serious about research on teacher effectiveness needs unquestionable objective research transparently reported to Trustees and the public. Teacher education programs throughout the country have—for good reason—been the object of scrutiny; federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)-funded studies, moreover, have challenged the validity and design of the majority of research on the effectiveness of teacher education. Trustees can turn to many expert and reliable agencies, like Stanford University's CREDO (Center for Research on Education Outcomes), RAND, or SASinSchool, which is the research base for Dr. William Sanders, the designer of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.

Best Practice or Malpractice

Trustees need to be proactive in monitoring what lies behind a pledge to improve pedagogical practice. Teacher education is a field littered with fads and theories, few of which are based on strong scientific research, and some of which are demonstrably harmful. Although SUNY as a system is clearly committed to the evidence-based practices called for in the new No Child Left Behind Act signed by President Bush, that is no guarantee that the programs themselves will follow suit. Some education programs at SUNY and elsewhere still appear to be trapped in the ideology that as agents of social change, teachers should teach children to read by so-called "whole language" methods, whereby children are not taught the mechanics of interpreting the sounds of letters and syllables. Instead, the teacher primarily reads to the children and provides exposure to books that the teacher and school deem important. The trouble with such a method is that many children will not, in fact, learn to read on their own. Beginning reading is one of the few areas for which education has a large and convincing body of scientific research on what works, and based on that evidence, the National Reading Panel enjoins reading teachers to teach children phonemic awareness and phonetic skills for decoding printed words. This is not only the best practice, but it is the only

acceptable practice for teaching reading. An education school professor should have no more "academic freedom" to train teachers to use whole language methods than a medical professor has to train doctors to apply leeches for hypertension or prescribe ice-water hoses for a patient with depression.

More Teachers and Better Teachers, or More Revenue?

Like most states, New York badly needs a fast-track program to facilitate the entry of skilled professionals into public school careers. Efficient, streamlined alternative certification programs have appeared throughout the country, with notable success in New Jersey, Texas, and Massachusetts. Many of these programs feature an intense summer orientation lasting from two to four weeks, followed by a year of apprentice teaching with an available mentor. They bring some superbly skilled new teachers to the classroom; the teachers who come through alternative routes also tend to be more ethnically diverse and have a stronger and more enduring commitment to urban schools. But despite the success of such programs, they continue to encounter resistance from education schools, that fear that their enrollments will decline if aspiring teachers are not compelled by state regulations to take their courses.

Most states and school districts put significant pressure on teachers through regulations or financial incentives to earn a master's degree. The New York Board of Regents requires all New York teachers to gain a master's degree within three years of initial employment. There is solid research evidence that shows increased student performance associated with teachers who have master's degrees in academic content areas, but no student growth associated with teachers who gain master's degrees in education. It should be evident that education programs that want to be on the cutting edge—at SUNY and elsewhere—need to provide master's degree programs for teachers that are based exclusively on the academic disciplines the candidates teach.

What's in a Major?

What is in your institution's academic catalogue? Rhetoric aside, what are the stated requirements that students must fulfill to achieve a degree in a given program? The college catalog is at least as important a document for Trustees as the annual budget, for it is the actualization of the school's mission. And, as we found at SUNY, it can contain some real surprises.

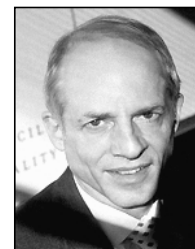
Future teachers need coherent and rigorous upper-level coursework, the kind of academic experience that develops intellectual maturity and depth. The last thing future teachers need is the opportunity to water down—and dumb down—a "concentration"

by drawing upper-level courses from plurality of majors, possibly choosing the easiest course from each. At SUNY's Cortland campus, for example, a future science teacher could presumably stay within the rules and construct a major with such upper-level courses: SCI 310 "Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control," and SCI 300 "Science and Its Social Context," for much of the required eighteen credit hours. None of those courses has prerequisites. Would the future teacher get the same intellectual benefit from them as she would from taking, for example, eighteen credit hours of advanced biology and/or chemistry? The answer is almost certainly, "no".

Conclusion

Changing the culture of education schools is not easy, and SUNY deserves credit for facing the task. It has embarked on a path that other institutions have not yet begun. However, a culture change will certainly not happen if we maintain the fiction that all teacher preparation programs need is some fine-tuning. The Urban Teacher Center, a centerpiece of the SUNY reforms, is a brilliant idea. Real reform—the sort that will build an Urban Teacher Center on solid principles of academic excellence—will need to set and enforce quality measures that do not allow loopholes for evasive reporting and low-challenge courses. We wish SUNY's bold beginning success that will invigorate New York's schools; it will need much further effort to get there. And the best hope for reform at any college or university—SUNY included—is vigilant Trustees who will visit classrooms, study syllabi, and require systematic reporting of academic quality measures. Trustees are empowered and uniquely equipped to do this. It is simply a matter of will. **EM**

Dr. Candace de Russy is a nationally recognized writer and lecturer on education and cultural issues. A former college professor, she was appointed to the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Air Force Academy by President George W. Bush in 2002. Dr. de Russy has been a Member of the Board of Trustees on the State University of New York since 1995. Candace is currently a member of the Trustees Council of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Scholars.



Dr. Michael Poliakoff

Dr. Michael Poliakoff, recently left his post as the president of the National Council on Teacher Quality to accept his new role at the National Endowment for the Humanities as Director of Education Programs.

Source—Educating Teachers: The Best Minds Speak Out, by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 1726 M Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-467-6787, or visit www.goacta.org.

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They continue
to encounter
resistance from
education schools

A Christmas Gift for Teachers

by Eric Buehrer



Twas the night before Christmas and the kids were all in bed. Mom, a teacher at the local elementary school, went downstairs to

finish wrapping gifts under the big pine tree the family got from Mr. Cheever's Christmas tree lot. Just as she finished putting the last red bow on the last red box, she heard the scrape, scrape, scraping of something in the chimney. No sooner had she turned around when down the chimney came Santa with a bound.

"Oh," he said with surprise. "I'm usually pretty good at not being seen." Then he laughed a big, round laugh and put down his bag.

"Let's see," he muttered to himself as he pulled out a list of what to place under the tree. "Oh, yes." He cleared his throat. "You've all been very good this year. Especially you...even with Tommy Wigglebottom in your class. You've been a wonderful teacher!"

"Thank you," she said as he pulled brightly colored presents from his bag.

Quick as a flash, he was done with his deed. He looked at his list for one last read. Then he made a "harumph" sound to himself and got a puzzled look on his face. "There is one more thing..."

"Yes?" said the teacher.

"Why haven't I heard any singing at school?" Santa asked with a sorrowful look.

"Singing? Why, we've been singing. Haven't you heard the children's rendition of *Frosty The Snowman* and *Jingle Bells*? I know it's a long way to the North Pole but I would think you have some way of tuning this sort of thing in."

"I mean Christmas carols," said Santa. "Where are the carols?"

"Oh, I loved to sing carols when I was a child in school. But, we can't sing those now," she said as she shook her head. "I teach in a public school." She was surprised that Santa didn't already know this since he knew about Tommy Wigglebottom.

"Of course you are in the public schools. But Christmas is Christmas no matter where you are. And if you're concerned about the law, well, have no fear. Don't you know about the Federal Appeals Court ruling in *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District*? It ruled that students may sing religious Christmas carols all they want!"

The teacher had never heard this before and was quite surprised. "What about the separation of church and state?"

"It doesn't apply," said Santa. "The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that singing Christmas carols does not violate the Constitution if the purpose is the 'advancement of the student's knowledge of society's cultural and religious heritage.' I just wish I could hear them singing *real* Christmas songs.

"And while I'm thinking about it, why haven't you told the children the real Christmas story?" he asked.

"You mean about the baby Jesus?" the teacher asked in disbelief.

"Is there another Christmas story that I'm not aware of?" Santa said with an impatient twitch of his mustache.

"But, we can't promote religion in the public school," she retorted.

"Who's promoting?" said Santa. "You're teaching about your culture. May I remind you of the *Florey* case in which the Court ruled that as long as education about the religious holiday is 'presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage,' it is permitted."

By now the teacher was quite confused. She had never heard this before. She always assumed that Christmas celebrations in school were off limits.

"We can't even call Christmas by its name. We have to call it 'Winter Break,'" she said with regret in her voice.

"A tragedy of modern times," Santa said with a sigh. "And it's not even consistent with other public practices. The Supreme Court acknowledged in *Lynch v. Donnelly* that 'Executive Orders and other official announcements of Presidents and of the Congress have proclaimed both Christmas and Thanksgiving National Holidays in religious terms.

And, by Acts of Congress, it has long been the practice that federal employees are released from duties on these National Holidays, while being paid from the same public revenues that provide the compensation of the Chaplain of the Senate and the House and military services. Thus, it is clear that Government has long recognized — indeed it has subsidized — holidays with religious significance.' "

"How is it that you know so much about United States law?" asked the astonished teacher.

"I've been around a long time," he replied. "And I'm saddened to see so many children think that Christmas is just about getting video games and CDs. For that matter, it's not just about giving to one another either. It's about a gift from God — His son, Jesus. When I give gifts it is only to remind people of The Gift from God to all of us. I guess I just want kids to turn off the TV and take off their headphones long enough to realize that there are deeper things in life — things that we carry with us from generation to generation. We have a culture with deep roots and I want to give children a little depth...then they can go back to the TV if they must." Santa scooped up his bag, then added, "I guess I've given you the best gift I possibly could. I've given you freedom."

"What do you mean?" the teacher asked.

"For years you've lived under the burden of self-imposed censorship about Christmas. Now you can be free from that! You can give to your students what you had as a child in school." He turned and started up the chimney. With a jolly chuckle, he said as he went, "Like the baby Jesus said when he grew up, 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.' " **EM**

Eric Buehrer is the President of Gateways to Better Education. A former inner city public school teacher, he has written numerous books on education.

The above article is a part of The Holiday Card Series designed to assist teachers in knowing their legal rights in teaching about religious holidays. They include court decisions, U.S. Department of Education Guidelines, and lesson plans. For more information call 1-800-929-1163.



Comparing U.S. Students with International Students—A More Optimistic Viewpoint!

A recent metric by which to gauge student success has been the “Third International Mathematics and Science Study” (TIMSS) conducted in 1995 and TIMSS-R, or TIMSS-Repeat—a follow-up conducted in 1999. In general, the media reports in 1995 tended to show that the children in the United States were behind children of other countries. However, if one carefully scrutinizes the data for eighth-grade mathematics and *disaggregates* the American data by states, then the top twenty countries and states ranked in order for the world are:

Taiwan, Iowa, South Korea, North Dakota, Minnesota, Russia, Switzerland, Maine, New Hampshire, Hungary, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Connecticut, France, Colorado, Israel, and Italy. **EM**

Source—“*Good News and Bad News about High-Stakes Assessments*” is a report by Dr. Donald C. Orlich, professor emeritus, Science Mathematics Engineering Education Center, Washington State University, Washington.

Hearings in Texas Lead to Changes in New Textbooks

Some new Texas textbooks no longer teach that the Quran stresses honesty and honor, that glaciers moved over the earth millions of years ago, or that Communists felt their system of government offered workers more security.

However, new textbooks will teach students that Hispanics helped defend the Alamo, fought for civil rights, and won many Congressional Medals of Honor.

The revisions were made by publishers after more than 200 people and organizations fought at public hearings to change the state’s next generation of social studies texts.

When speakers at the public hearings criticized what they perceived as flaws in various books—such as failing to portray the United States or Christianity in a positive light—many publishers listened.

Making changes that meet the approval of the public and individual school districts means potentially earning a piece of the \$344.7 million Texas will spend on social studies books this year.

Because Texas is the nation’s second-largest purchaser of textbooks, the changes could affect the education of students throughout the nation. Books approved in Texas are virtually assured some financial success and often are shipped to schools in other states. **EM**

Source—By Matt Frazier, Star-Telegram Staff Writer.

California Federation of Teachers: No Dissidents Because We All Agree

An item reported in the Education Intelligence Agency *Communique* about the resolution of the California Federation of Teachers against a war on Iraq prompted *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Debra Saunders to probe deeper. She learned that the CFT State Council, which is comprised of state officers and delegates from each of the union’s locals, approved the resolution unanimously. Saunders asked why, in an action that claimed to be championing dissent, not a single delegate voted against the resolution. The question was rhetorical, but Barry Fike, president of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, had the answer.

“While it may be quite hard for Saunders to believe,” Fike wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Chronicle*, “there is good reason why no delegate voted against this particular CFT resolution and, despite her implication, it had nothing to do with brainwashing or arm-bending or brutal acts of repression or manipulation. No one voted against the CFT anti-war resolution simply because everyone was in favor of it.”

Saunders says, “I don’t believe what Fike says is true, but even if it were, he left a very important detail out of his characterization of the vote. CFT State Council delegates are supposed to represent their locals when voting. So Fike wants us to believe that representatives of early childhood workers, K-12 teachers, community college instructors, University of California professors, adult education teachers, and education support personnel from communities as diverse as Berkeley, San Diego, Oxnard, Turlock, Lompoc, Bakersfield, Barstow, Compton, Gilroy, and Napa all unanimously agreed—

not just to oppose military action against Iraq—but that there is no credible evidence that Iraq presents a threat to the United States, that the Bush administration is seeking any pretext to overthrow the government of a sovereign nation, in violation of international law, that war with Iraq is an illegal goal, and that this administration is using the so-called War on Terrorism to distract the American people from the vital issues they confront.”

Saunders added, “There are only two possible interpretations of the CFT resolution: (1) CFT is, in fact, the far-left organization many of its critics claim it is, down to the last member; or (2) delegates to the CFT State Council don’t represent the beliefs of its members, teachers, or Californians. Given the choice, CFT would admit to the former because it could never admit to the latter.” **EM**

Source—Education Intelligence Agency, www.eiaonline.com.

Reversal of NEA Policy Restricting Workers’ Rights

House Republican Workforce Committee leaders applauded a new agreement last month that reverses the longstanding National Education Association (NEA) policy of forcing union members to fund political activities they oppose on religious grounds. The NEA and three of its Ohio affiliates agreed to allow dues-paying union members who have religious objections to political causes funded by the NEA to have their dues money donated to charity, rather than to political causes they object to.

“This is a hard-fought victory for teachers in Ohio and union members across the country,” said Education & the Workforce Committee Chairman John Boehner (R-OH). “Union members should not be forced to support political activities that contradict their moral beliefs. I am glad the NEA finally recognized the importance of this basic American principle.”

“Charlie Norwood’s efforts have been critical in shining light on the Robey case and the issue of forcing union members to support activities they oppose based on their religious beliefs,” said Boehner. “The hearings held by his Subcommittee played an important role in prompting the NEA to reverse this misguided policy.”

“This NEA policy has consistently threatened the rights of teachers around the country and led to intimidation and harassment,” said Workforce Protections Subcommittee Chairman Charlie Norwood. **EM**

Latest ALEC National Report Card on American Education



The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has released its latest “Report Card on American Education—A State-by-State Analysis.” The full report can be ordered by contacting ALEC at 202-466-3800. Cost to nonmembers is \$25.

Go Cheeseheads!

Highlights of this year’s report include:

Wisconsin, followed by Washington and Minnesota, had the top-performing elementary and secondary schools in the nation, as measured by several standardized tests. Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin were ranked first, second, and third, respectively, in last year’s *Report Card*. The District of Columbia, Mississippi, and Louisiana once again ranked at the bottom of the scale.

Over the past 20 years, expenditures per pupil in constant dollar terms have increased nationwide by 22.6 percent. West Virginia (+109.4 percent), followed closely by Kentucky (+92.0 percent), lead the nation in increased spending since 1979.

Unfortunately, of the ten states that increased per pupil expenditures the most over the past two decades, none ranked in the top ten in academic achievement.

In fact, there is no evident correlation between conventional measures of education inputs, such as per-pupil expenditures and/or teacher salaries, and educational outputs, such as average scores on standardized tests (see chart on the right).

Of all the educational inputs measured in the study, only higher pupil-to-teacher ratios, fewer students per school, and a lower percentage of a state’s total budget received from the federal government seem to have a positive impact on educational achievement.

Iowa and Montana Provide the Biggest Bang for the Buck!

A quick look at the chart on the right shows that, at least in constant dollars, Iowa and Montana produce an educated child for the least amount of tax dollars. At the same time, it shows *teachers* in Iowa, Montana, and Nebraska should be in line for a big raise when compared to other states in the top ten of academic achievement!

Of course, many state Educrats will cry “Unfair!” And they would have some justification because of the usual apples and oranges comparison problems—such as salaries should be adjusted for cost-of-living indexes in the states, and some states teach more to tests than others, etc. But the annual ALEC report is still, as Arte Johnson used to say, “verrry interesting.” **EM**

<u>Academic Achievement¹</u>		<u>Per Pupil Expenditures</u>		<u>Avg. Annual Teacher Salary²</u>	
Rank/State		Rank/Amt.		Rank/Amt.	
1 . . .	Wisconsin	11 . . .	7,886	16 . . .	44,105
2 . . .	Washington	20 . . .	6,528	19 . . .	43,024
3 . . .	Minnesota	14 . . .	7,435	24 . . .	41,044
4 . . .	Iowa	31 . . .	6,008	40 . . .	36,980
5 . . .	Montana	28 . . .	6,131	47 . . .	33,827
6 . . .	Kansas	23 . . .	6,386	26 . . .	40,670
7 . . .	New Hampshire	25 . . .	6,202	14 . . .	46,161
8 . . .	Massachusetts	5 . . .	8,750	1 . . .	59,906
9 . . .	Oregon	6 . . .	8,605	21 . . .	42,776
10 . . .	Nebraska	32 . . .	6,000	39 . . .	37,359
11 . . .	Alaska	4 . . .	8,834	9 . . .	48,676
12 . . .	Vermont	17 . . .	6,981	35 . . .	37,880
13 . . .	Connecticut	2 . . .	9,792	3 . . .	53,753
14 . . .	Maine	12 . . .	7,619	31 . . .	38,762
15 . . .	Wyoming	18 . . .	6,911	43 . . .	35,341
16 . . .	North Dakota	49 . . .	4,512	51 . . .	30,114
16 . . .	Ohio	21 . . .	6,479	20 . . .	42,939
18 . . .	Colorado	46 . . .	5,282	27 . . .	40,270
18 . . .	South Dakota	45 . . .	5,369	50 . . .	30,256
20 . . .	Indiana	19 . . .	6,674	17 . . .	43,062
21 . . .	Illinois	27 . . .	6,149	10 . . .	48,390
22 . . .	Maryland	16 . . .	7,174	15 . . .	45,809
23 . . .	Arizona	50 . . .	4,505	12 . . .	46,771
24 . . .	Missouri	37 . . .	5,846	38 . . .	37,469
25 . . .	New Jersey	3 . . .	9,775	2 . . .	55,513
26 . . .	Utah	51 . . .	4,036	29 . . .	39,280
27 . . .	Virginia	26 . . .	6,149	30 . . .	38,909
28 . . .	Idaho	43 . . .	5,411	41 . . .	36,823
29 . . .	Michigan	13 . . .	7,451	8 . . .	48,695
30 . . .	New York	1 . . .	9,797	5 . . .	51,384
31 . . .	Nevada	41 . . .	5,568	23 . . .	41,543
32 . . .	North Carolina	38 . . .	5,724	25 . . .	40,843
33 . . .	Delaware	9 . . .	8,022	13 . . .	46,662
34 . . .	Rhode Island	10 . . .	7,990	4 . . .	52,367
35 . . .	California	33 . . .	5,967	11 . . .	47,817
36 . . .	Oklahoma	40 . . .	5,634	49 . . .	33,039
37 . . .	Texas	30 . . .	6,092	28 . . .	39,806
38 . . .	Hawaii	24 . . .	6,257	22 . . .	41,830
39 . . .	West Virginia	7 . . .	8,488	42 . . .	36,250
40 . . .	Kentucky	22 . . .	6,425	33 . . .	38,239
41 . . .	Pennsylvania	15 . . .	7,243	6 . . .	49,550
42 . . .	Florida	35 . . .	5,872	34 . . .	37,900
43 . . .	Alabama	47 . . .	4,946	32 . . .	38,324
44 . . .	Arkansas	42 . . .	5,540	44 . . .	35,022
45 . . .	Georgia	34 . . .	5,953	18 . . .	43,048
46 . . .	South Carolina	29 . . .	6,113	36 . . .	37,864
47 . . .	Tennessee	44 . . .	5,387	37 . . .	37,790
48 . . .	New Mexico	36 . . .	5,861	46 . . .	34,529
49 . . .	Louisiana	39 . . .	5,701	45 . . .	34,759
50 . . .	Mississippi	48 . . .	4,605	48 . . .	33,147
50 . . .	District of Columbia	8 . . .	8,277	7 . . .	49,153

¹ Based on composite scores of Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American Academic Testing (ACT), and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) through 2000.

² Sources—National Education Association Estimate of School Statistics, 2001; U.S. Department of Education Statistics, *Digest of Educational Statistics*.

Nobody Should Be Forced to Pay for Someone Else's Politics!

Testimony of Matthew J. Brouillette, President of The Commonwealth Foundation, before the Pennsylvania House Labor Relations Committee on the "Voluntary Payroll Deduction for Political Contributions Act"



Matthew Brouillette

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Labor Relations Committee, for the invitation to testify this morning on an important First Amendment issue.

I am Matthew Brouillette, President of The Commonwealth Foundation, a Harrisburg-based public policy research and educational institute. I come before you today because nobody should be forced to pay for someone else's politics. Let me repeat that: Nobody should be forced to pay for someone else's politics.

This sounds like common sense, but labor unions in Pennsylvania are legally permitted to take money from union members' paychecks to pay for union politics against their will. This violation of a basic First Amendment right must stop.

It is true that unions must get member approval for direct contributions to political action committees; however, my remarks today are specific to the monies used by unions for political purposes that come out of a member's regular dues and fees.

This violation of workers' rights takes place whenever one cent of a member's dues or fee money is used for any purpose other than legitimate, chargeable union functions, such as collective bargaining, maintenance of the contract, and grievances. This amount is significant. Union books are nearly impossible to open up, but one analysis found that no more than 20 percent of union dues are being used for legitimate union functions. That means that possibly 80 percent of a union member's dues is used for political activities—activities such as voter identification programs, voter lists and get-out-the vote efforts, assisting in strategic planning for political parties, bankrolling campaigns, and organizing to elect or defeat candidates at nearly every level of public office.

Robert Chanin, the National Education Association's General Counsel, best summarized this situation when he said, "So you tell me how I can possibly separate NEA's collective bargaining from politics—you just can't...It's all politics."

Now, I want to make it clear that The Commonwealth Foundation does not object to labor union involvement in politics. And

we are not disputing legitimate lobbying activities. But straight-forward politicking should be paid through voluntary contributions.

The problem, however, with the political machinery created by unions is that they are funded by automatic and sizable annual deductions from employees' paychecks. Union officials claim that regular dues and fees go toward collective bargaining and related purposes, but this is simply untrue.

Here's just one example that will help you better understand why protecting workers' paychecks is so important.

In November 1992, the citizens of the State of Washington overwhelmingly approved Initiative 134 by almost a 3 to 1 margin. This measure—which was the nation's first "pay-check protection" law—required unions to get members' prior permission before spending their dues on political activities.

Within one year after it was enacted, 87 percent of the members of the state's largest labor union—the Washington Education Association—chose to stop contributing money to the union's PAC. Today, 91 percent of the WEA's members refuse to voluntarily donate even \$25 per year to the union's political action committee. It is clear that WEA members—when given the choice—do not support the political activities of their union.

This is why the labor unions will vehemently oppose voluntary payroll deductions and fight the measure before this committee today: They know they cannot earn their members' financial support, and it is easier to rely on coercion rather than persuasion.

Thomas Jefferson said that "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical."

So, I ask you, how long will Pennsylvania continue to force union members to financially support political activities with which they disagree?

Curbing the blatant violation of First Amendment rights would simply require that unions be required to obtain prior written consent of workers for activities that are not part of normal union representation.

Annual written consent will dramatically improve workers' relationships with union officials because unions will have to use the power of persuasion—instead of coercion—to convince workers to support its political agenda.

I'm certain that you will have a handful of union officials telling you that this would be cumbersome and expensive for the union, but their comfort is not worth sacrificing the Constitutional rights of the workers who pay their salaries.

You will also be told that limiting dues to core union functions such as collective bargaining, maintenance of the contract, and grievances will silence workers' voice in the political process. But voluntary support merely respects each employee's individual right to decide to be politically active or not. It does not prohibit a union's ability to solicit contributions and donations voluntarily by convincing workers that the union's political activities are in their best interests.

Union officials often argue that legislation is unfair if it is not applied to corporations and other membership organizations that spend money in politics. But HB 2099 does apply equally to corporations. Yet labor unions will continue enjoy a unique "taxing" power that is not available to corporations. Their current power enables them to end the livelihood of any worker that refuses to or cannot pay union dues and fees. Corporations can neither force individuals to invest in them nor prevent them from selling their stock when those individuals disagree with corporate political spending. The termination power of a union makes this concern an "apples and oranges" comparison.

Of course, union officials will trot out all kinds of arguments to defend the current use of dues and fees for political purposes. However, regardless of how persuasive their arguments may seem, we must respect the First Amendment principle that "nobody should be forced to pay for someone else's politics."

While voluntary payroll deduction does not address all facets of the special powers, privileges, and immunities granted to labor unions under the law, it does make a positive impact in enabling workers to control the expenditure of some of their dues.

Any move toward greater employee freedom and increased union accountability is worthy of widespread support. **EM**

Matthew J. Brouillette is president of The Commonwealth Foundation, a nonpartisan, non-profit public policy research and educational institute based in Harrisburg, PA. For more information, visit www.CommonwealthFoundation.org.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
"So you tell me how I can possibly separate NEA's collective bargaining from politics—you just can't... It's all politics."
—Robert Chanin, NEA General Counsel.

Incentives for Teacher Performance in Public Schools: An Idea Whose Time Has Come

By Robert Crowner



Robert Crowner

For decades, America's education establishment—especially its very powerful teacher unions—has opposed the idea of “merit pay,” or other types of incentives for excellent teaching, as a novel idea smacking of a crass commercialism that has no place in the hallowed sanctum of the classroom.

However, there's no reason why human nature should respond any differently in this realm as in any other. There's nothing base in the fact that economic incentives motivate excellence in virtually every area of human endeavor. Is not the lack of incentives for performance one of the key reasons for the failure of socialist systems around the world? It could also be the key to recognizing a source of failure in our education system.

Teachers are professionals. Yet they, unlike virtually every sort of professional working in private enterprise, have no element of a performance incentive in their pay structure. Incentives work. Does not a salesperson have more reason to increase sales if he is paid at least partially by commission? Does it not make common sense that if excellence in teaching were rewarded monetarily, that teachers would be more likely to try harder?

I was educated as an industrial engineer and worked for twenty-three years in engineering and manufacturing management. I can testify to the motivational power of incentives—and not always of a monetary kind. Many other kinds of rewards and recognition for achievement and performance have proven to be perhaps even more effective for some individuals. After all, why do teachers put smiling faces, stickers, stars, and personal notes on school papers? Because they touch something in the human soul that makes people smile and try harder.

For the past twenty-five years I have taught undergraduate and graduate courses in business policy and business ethics for Eastern Michigan University's Department of Management. Here, also, I have observed the power of incentives. Students are motivated when challenged to achieve by someone whose knowledge and experience they respect.

In the private sector, incentives have a long and well-thought-out structure that could easily be adapted to our public schools if the prejudice against them could be overcome. Is the job of a teacher so different from any other as to defy the kinds of evaluation that takes place every day in the private sector?

One thing is certain: In the engineering sector, if a company had a deterioration in performance comparable in scale to that which has taken place during the past three decades in student performance on tests, there would be no debate over the matter because the company would no longer exist. Long, long before the elapsing of three decades, the conclusion would have been reached that something is fundamentally wrong with the system, the problem investigated, and an appropriate course of action embarked upon.

Normally, when we try to judge performance, we seek to measure customer satisfaction. If we use that measure in education, we will ask the parent and future employer if they are satisfied. One measure of this would be the amount and cost of providing remedial education to high school graduates who are entering the workplace or attending college.

A 2000 study by Dr. Jay P. Greene for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy entitled “The Cost of Remedial Education: How Much Michigan Pays When Students Fail to Learn Basic Skills” puts the costs, obtained by averaging five calculations, at around \$600 million annually. Extrapolated to the entire nation, and the amount came to \$16.6 billion nationally.

What this means is that too many of our children aren't graduating from school with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the world—a failure we are paying for in far more ways than monetary. The seriousness of the problem cannot be exaggerated: It is time to try something new.

Unfortunately, rather than being able to attack the problem head on, Americans so far have only been able to nip away at the chinks in the establishment's considerable armor. One of those chinks has widened into a bona fide hole: charter schools. And it is there where teacher incentives are

beginning to have an impact. I recently spoke with three charter school management companies operating in Michigan about incentives for teacher performance. Two had an incentive plan in use at all of their schools, and one was experimenting with a plan.

Of course, to reward performance, you must have a system in place that measures performance precisely. Beacon Education Management, Inc., a private company that runs fifteen charter schools in Michigan, is experimenting with a group incentive plan based upon schoolwide improvement above grade level in national standardized test scores and parent satisfaction as determined by answers to a ten-question survey.

National Heritage Academies, another private-sector company that runs charter schools, conducts individual teacher assessments that employ evaluations by the school principal, performance goals in ten different aspects of teaching, student achievement test scores, and parent satisfaction ratings of the teacher. Parent satisfaction is determined by questionnaires mailed twice each year to the parent. Based on these assessments, a Heritage Academies teacher can receive an annual merit-pay raise of up to 8 percent.

Michigan is not the only state interested in performance incentives for teachers. The National Center for Policy Analysis, a nonprofit public policy research institute, has reported that performance incentives are built into many public school academy contracts in Arizona, which has over 420 operating charter schools. A survey of public school academies in Arizona conducted by the Goldwater Institute found that 16 percent give teachers a bonus if students achieve at a certain level or gain a certain percent in test scores. In addition, in 58 percent of the public school academies, teacher contract renewal, which, in most cases, takes place every year, is based on student performance. Another 10 percent base contract renewals on student attendance/recruitment and parent satisfaction.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
“If you are performing well in your job, you have little to fear from an evaluation, and perhaps much to gain in future pay.”

*Continued on page 8,
See... “Incentives for Teacher Performance”*

New Year's Resolution

Promise yourself that you will do a little bit better today than you did yesterday! Acknowledging that step will assist you in becoming a better person.

Promise yourself to include others in your success. Rarely does anyone accomplish things on his own.

Promise yourself to never quit or give up regardless of the challenges you face in life! Acknowledge that perseverance is what sets you apart and contributes to your accomplishments.

Promise yourself to draw from time-tested values and virtues and not go just where your hormones and immediate gratification take you.

Promise yourself to acknowledge that the higher you set your goals, the more



mistakes you will make. Mistakes are one of your greatest teachers.

Promise yourself to maintain a positive attitude. Recognize that there are more people who will say you can't reach your goals than there are those who will support you in attaining your goals.

Promise yourself to live life with a purpose and a clear mission. Acknowledge that trivia and meaningless activities will hinder this focus and keep you from your purpose.

Promise yourself to be a respectful person. Recognize that if you always lead with empathy as you relate to others, that you will gain self and other's respect.

—By Gene Bedley, founder and CEO of National Character Education Center, www.ethicsusa.com.

Incentives for Teacher Performance

Continued from page 7

Laura M. Litvan reported in the *Investor's Business Daily* that in Douglas County, Colorado, teachers are offered four types of incentive bonuses: \$1,000 for outstanding teachers; a group bonus for teachers in schools that set a goal and meet it that year; a bonus of \$250 to \$500 for teachers who complete extra training; and up to a \$200 bonus for teachers who accept extra duties. Since the merit pay program began in 1993, average SAT scores in the county have improved drastically.

The major school employee unions often claim that teaching is unlike other professions and can't be evaluated as precisely. As a professor, I have been evaluated by my department head using factors previously defined by the departmental faculty. I have also had peer reviews based upon the same factors. I found these evaluations as reasonable, fair, and penetrating—getting to the essence of my performance as a teacher—as those I experienced in my business career prior to teaching. If you are performing well in your job, you have little to fear from an evaluation, and perhaps much to gain in future pay.

Is merit pay an idea whose time has come in education? Let us hope so, and urge our school boards and unions to recognize the motivating role incentives can have for teachers. The evidence becoming available from charter schools indicates that where incentives are introduced into the school environment, teachers put forth more effort, they are happier with their jobs, and their students learn more.

Who can argue with results like that? **EM**

Robert Crouner is the Director of the Center for Entrepreneurial Stewardship for the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a Professor of Management, Emeritus at Eastern Michigan University.

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