

Teachers Matter: Getting Honest about Quality

Academic standards—which aim to get all students achieving at high levels—make it clear that student achievement is the bottom line for those interested in education improvement. Raising our expectations for students means that we have also increased expectations for teachers. And, as so much research shows, one of the leading indicators of student achievement is the quality of the teacher. Teacher quality is then key to improving students' academic achievement and parents are passionate about this issue.

Where are the quality teachers—and where aren't they?

Communities and institutions involved in improving teacher quality face major obstacles because of a looming teacher shortage in subject areas and particular places in the country. Data from the U.S. Department of Education show that between 1998 and 2008 our nation's schools will need 2 million to 2.5 million new teachers.

Our nation's growing population is not the only reason for this high demand. New teachers are leaving the profession in droves, reports *Quality Counts 2000*, an annual report on education in the 50 states published by *Education Week*. Data analysis conducted by *Education Week* showed that more than 20 percent of newly minted teachers leave the profession after four years, creating an almost constant demand for new hires. In addition, the average teacher is now 44 years old and will likely retire within the next 10 years.

Some argue that there is not necessarily a shortage of teachers; there is instead a mismatch of who is available to teach in the schools and subject areas where they are most needed. Nationally, schools face shortages of teachers of math, science, special education and bilingual education.

And, according to data analyzed by the Education Trust, high-poverty schools are more likely to

have fewer talented teachers. In a recently released report, "Honor in the Boxcar: Equalizing Teacher Quality" (June 2000), Education Trust notes, "No matter how you measure teacher qualifications—licensed vs. unlicensed, in- vs. out-of-field, performance on teacher licensure exams, or even effectiveness in producing learning gains—low-income and minority youngsters come up on the short end."

The Fordham Foundation and its president, Chester E. Finn Jr., propose addressing the problems of teacher supply and quality by simplifying the entry and hiring process. The foundation's manifesto on teacher quality, "The Teachers We Need and How to Get More of Them," contends that "there is no 'one best system' for preparing and licensing quality teachers." Additional requirements for prospective teachers will only limit the potential supply of teachers, it says. The manifesto advocates giving school-level administrators the power to make personnel decisions and hold schools accountable through state-run accountability systems in which states measure student achievement and provide rewards or interventions based on performance.

Improving teacher quality is a complex proposition, mainly because of the number of systems that affect a teacher's ability to teach. Fred Frelow, Director of National Affairs for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, explains that the problems are difficult to attack because there are so many people and factors involved. "Improving teacher quality requires several different institutions to change—state houses, school boards, teacher unions, schools, districts, universities and others," he says.

How can we support and sustain quality teachers?

At all of the points in the continuum of the teaching profession—from how teachers are trained, to how they are hired, supported, compensated and evaluated—there are opportunities to improve the overall quality of the profession. Generally, good teachers have access to many of the supports that lead to overall teacher quality. They have had a good education in the content area in which they are teaching—and good training in *how* to teach. They likely have had opportunities to learn from others, sharpen skills and learn more about the subjects they teach.

Educating Teachers

Teachers report that they do not feel prepared for today's teaching challenges. In a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, less than half of the current U.S. teachers said they felt "very well prepared" to meet the challenges in the education of more diverse students, high standards and rapidly changing technology ("Teacher Survey on Professional Development and Training," 1998).

There are models for effective teacher preparation that do help teachers meet these challenges. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accredits university or college teacher-education programs through a peer-review process every five years. Accreditation is based on national standards that require programs to be intellectually rigorous and relevant to the needs of today's classrooms. The process, though, is voluntary, and only a state has the power to require it of teacher-preparation programs.

Exemplary benchmarks for advanced teacher education, developed by the National Board for



Enthusiasm is the watchword. Pictured here are some of the energetic PPS leaders representing eighteen chapters at Conference 2000 May 5-7 in Houston.

Professional Teaching Standards, also show what districts and schools should strive for in recruiting, hiring and developing well-prepared, high-quality teachers. At the end of the two-part, 120-hour assessment process, teachers demonstrate accomplished teaching. With National Board certification, teachers:

- are committed to students and their learning,
- know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students,
- are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning,
- think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and
- are members of learning communities.

Licensing and Certifying Teachers

States determine their own requirements for granting teaching licenses. Many states require prospective educators to pass a basic-skills test or tests in their academic disciplines, but many of these tests don't ensure that teachers are necessarily "qualified."

A study conducted by the Education Trust shows that licensing exams test mostly high school—not college graduate—level knowledge. In addition, the study, "Not Good Enough: A Content Analysis of Teacher Licensing Examinations" (May 1999), shows that too few states

test the subject area knowledge of prospective teachers.

As Frelow points out, just raising the requirements for teacher tests won't necessarily make teachers better. Higher standards on teacher tests go hand in hand with improving teacher-education programs, he says.

Supporting New Teachers

The first few years of teaching are critical, as indicated by the number of new teachers who leave the profession. Providing extra support during the first few years of teaching, or "induction" period, in the form of mentoring, supervision or additional training, is an important way to encourage them to stay. An analysis by *Education Week* of data from the U.S. Department of Education shows that teachers were nearly twice as likely to leave after their first three years of teaching if they had not participated in a supportive program.

Supporting Veteran Teachers

The world is changing inside and outside of schools. New research shows us more about how students learn, and higher standards for students demand changes in teaching practices. Because much change happens over the lifetime of a teacher's career, schools and districts need to provide opportunities for teachers to keep pace with this change. "Professional

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True to form, Kati Haycock, Director of the Education Trust, conveys hard-hitting data about student achievement to PPS members at national conference in Houston. (See article page 3.)



PARENTS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NATIONAL OFFICE
1520 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202-1645

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Letter from the Executive Director

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Parents for Public Schools has a vested interest in supporting good teachers—the ones who believe all children can learn and who put rigorous learning first. Like any other profession, competence, skill and commitment among educators should be expected and highly valued. And like other professions, low performance should not be tolerated...ever. PPS appreciates the very difficult work that classroom teachers are called to do and we deplore the fact that the best ones have to be risk-takers in a system that too often protects, even rewards, incompetence in their ranks.

The present-day assault on public schools often falls at the feet of teachers. And while teachers cannot and should not be held accountable for all of public education's failings, this target has helped the public to recognize that there are many factors, beyond the personal commitment of teachers, that contribute to instructional quality: training at the university level, how teachers are certified, how school districts recruit, how teachers are assigned to schools once they are recruited, and how they are evaluated, professionally supported, compensated, and when necessary, redirected.

And so it is fitting that we focus on the critical issue of teacher quality's direct link to student achievement in this issue of *Parent Press*, which contains a big picture of teacher quality and reflections from our Eighth Annual Leadership Conference. Teacher quality was a major theme of our Conference in Houston, as we focused on several substantive education reform topics. In this issue of *Parent Press*, you will read how Kati Haycock, Director of the Education Trust, challenged us at the Conference to improve teacher quality as one of the ways of addressing the serious inequities in our public schools. In addition, Dr. William Sanders' research from the University of Tennessee supports what we as PPS parents see every day—how important good teaching is for all students' academic success.

Our regular readers and national conference participants will recognize this issue as part of PPS's push to educate parents about key issues we believe are central to improving the quality of schools for all children—like academic standards, adequate facilities, and inclusive forms of school governance. Our goal is to help parents understand and prepare for a more active role in challenging schools to do better, while encouraging other stakeholders to appreciate and expect parents to be informed and have a say about these issues that matter.

We expect our chapters to take the lead in helping districts address the need for organizational resources and strategies to support improved practice. We are also committed to and understand fully the importance of parental support to individual children; but whether children come to school with all the right pieces or not, public school teachers must be willing and have the tools they need to teach all children well.

We hope this issue of *Parent Press* will prompt educators and parents to view each other as natural allies in valuing and expecting good teaching practice. We challenge teachers and parents alike to step up to their responsibilities for challenging mediocrity wherever they find it and to work together to put qualified—not just certified—teachers in every classroom.

Capable public school teachers have always anchored Parents for Public Schools' desire to lift up public education as a dependable educational choice for America's families. In the ranks of public educators we have found committed, competent, well-trained professionals who care about children and work diligently to see them succeed. The presence of these professionals convinces us that if some teachers can perform in this manner, then why not all teachers? Like the health of the public schools themselves, strong teachers fuel our optimism about the promise of public education; incompetent ones fuel our persistence to challenge the status quo.



PPS is committed to helping parents understand what teachers need to get the job done. We are committed to getting teachers the tools they need to do the job. But most of all, we are committed to getting every public school child the qualified and dedicated teachers they deserve.

Kelly Allin Butler,
PPS Executive Director

PARENTS for PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NATIONAL OFFICE
1520 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202-1645
1-800-880-1222
www.parents4publicschools.com

Effective Teachers Make a Significant Difference Over Time

Teachers are the most important factor affecting student achievement, according to Dr. William Sanders, a statistician formerly at the University of Tennessee. Sanders' work is the core of Tennessee's 1992 major education reform legislation. For the past eight years Sanders conducted research aimed to quantify the impact teachers have on student achievement in the state. While researchers traditionally analyze a variety of factors to figure out what affects achievement—class size, per-pupil spending, ethnic makeup, and poverty being the most common—Sanders' research shows that teacher effectiveness is *10 to 20 times* as significant as any of these factors.

Sanders' analyses follow the progress of individual children, comparing each child to his own past performance, not to the test scores of other youngsters. He then connects each child's performance with performance trends in individual teachers' classrooms. By controlling for variations around each child's path (sickness, trouble at home, etc.), Sanders has been able to isolate and measure the impact teachers have on student performance.

Sanders hopes his research is used as a diagnostic tool to help teachers understand what they are doing in the classroom and how they can improve. In Tennessee, each teacher gets a report that shows how their students have progressed relative to other teachers' students in the district and the state. Schools and districts can then use this information to help tailor professional development programs for teachers. According to Sanders, some districts are using the teacher reports with positive, measurable results; in other districts, the reports are largely ignored.

While Sanders offers no "quick fixes" for schools and communities, he does suggest that appropriate measures of student achievement take the guesswork out of school reform. Sanders suggests that teachers should have at their disposal numerous and varied indicators of student achievement to help them identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Schools need to provide accurate data that clearly demonstrates where teachers are falling behind. That data can and should be used *constructively* to help teachers improve, not to embarrass or intimidate them.

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development" is the training and skill-building activities that teachers engage in while they are actively teaching.

The National Staff Development Council and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future both report that the typical school district currently allocates only about one percent of its budget on staff development, while other large organizations spend between seven and 10 percent. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics ("Toward Better Teaching," 1998) show that 23 percent of teachers reported they were given no support, time or credit for professional development.

When time and resources are provided, teachers report that professional development improves their teaching. Good staff development, according to NSDC and other researchers, is embedded in teachers' everyday work, and is ongoing, rigorous and directly related to what teachers do in their classrooms ("A National Plan for Improving Staff Development," 1999).

Providing Competitive Salaries and Good Working Conditions

Teachers' salaries are profoundly lower than comparable professions. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Quality Counts 2000* concluded that in 1998, teachers ages 22 to 28 earned an average of \$7,894 less than other college graduates of the same ages. The data show that the earning gap increases as their teaching career progresses: Teachers ages 44 to 50 earned \$23,655 less than their peers in other occupations.

Amy Wilkins of the Education Trust explains that this disparity only gets worse for teachers in urban and other districts with few resources and challenging conditions. Teachers are rewarded for working in places that have everything and "pitifully" compensated when they work in the most challenging conditions, she says.

Evaluating Teachers

Often teachers are evaluated by only a principal in a one-shot, high-stakes classroom observation. As with students, it is good practice to evaluate teachers using multiple methods that show skills and knowledge in multiple areas. Com-

prehensive evaluations can be effective in improving teacher quality when the results are used to reshape professional development and change recruiting and hiring practices.

What are some promising practices for addressing teacher quality challenges?

School-level Decision-making About Hiring

Cumbersome and antiquated hiring processes can hinder schools' and districts' abilities to get and keep good teachers. The Boston Plan for Excellence found that hiring policies in the Boston Public Schools thwarted individual schools' hiring decisions and recommended that a school-level team, led by the principal and including teacher and parent members, be able to make hiring decisions early in the season.

Supporting Teachers Working Without the Requisite Preparation

To compensate for shortages, states and districts often waive requirements and provide loopholes that allow schools to hire new teachers without licenses. Large numbers of emergency permits for teachers are a fact of life in Los Angeles, says Judy Johnson, Associate Director of the Los Angeles Education Partnership. In areas of the city with the highest rates of teacher turnover, an average of 40 percent of teachers are working with emergency permits. Johnson's group works to improve the qualifications of these teachers through a professional development school that builds their skills and knowledge and helps them create collegial networks.

Incentives for Teachers

To get more teachers to enter the profession, states and districts have recently begun providing incentives for new teachers, including scholarships and loan-forgiveness programs, cash bonuses, housing and moving assistance, free graduate-level courses and stipends for teachers who have earned advanced certification.

Bringing a Wider Focus to Recruitment of Teachers

Linda Darling-Hammond, Executive Director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and a professor at Stanford University, contends that districts

need to broaden the way they think about their supply of teachers. Instead of looking only at local supplies of teachers, she says, districts need to look regionally and nationally. Recruiting nationally requires changes in personnel practices, as in New Haven, CA, where the district has conducted its hiring process over the Internet and, as a result, has successfully attracted more qualified teachers than neighboring cities.

Entering the Profession Through Alternative Routes

Some districts waive traditional licensing requirements in favor of hiring new teachers who receive their training in non-traditional ways. Most alternative routes to teaching provide future teachers—most of whom come from other professions—intense, typically year-long preparation programs that combine courses on teaching theory and content with practical student-teaching experiences. *Quality Counts 2000* reports that alternative routes generally attract more math and science teachers and minority candidates, all of whom are in high demand.

Teach For America, a high profile alternative route, places liberal arts college graduates in poor urban and rural schools across the country for two years after a summer of training. While some in the field express concerns that this brief preparation time short-changes students, parents in these under-resourced districts would argue that they prefer the love for learning and subject matter these high energy young people bring to the classroom over a burnt-out and discouraged teacher or no teacher at all.

If the ultimate objective is whether kids learn in the classroom, efforts to increase the competence, or quality, of teachers are critical to education improvement. These efforts require the cooperation of several institutions that play roles in the continuum of preparing, hiring and supporting teachers. Parents can play an important function by understanding the role of each institution and asking questions about how these roles are changing to support improved teacher quality in public schools.



TURN-ing Unions Toward Reform

Transforming public education so that all children achieve at high levels is an enormous charge. Finding allies in this work is imperative. Just as PPS works to redefine the roles for parents, some educators are working to refocus their unions' priorities. An alliance between these groups demonstrates that parents and teachers working together can create a powerful force for school reform, including efforts to improve teacher quality.

In 1996, a group of leaders from various local unions affiliated with both of the major teachers' unions in the country, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), organized to challenge unions from within to develop a new perspective on their profession. This group, Teacher Union Reform Network, or TURN, aims to refocus teachers' unions to promote the kinds of reforms that will help teachers be more responsive to and responsible for improving learning for all students.

Since students do well only if teachers do well, TURN uses student performance as the fundamental way of evaluating teachers. TURN utilizes the Peer Assistance and Review Program to help weak teachers improve by giving them assistance from master teachers. TURN acknowledges that some weak teachers need to be counseled out of the profession for they know that poor teachers hurt students and other teachers, as well.

Parents often lament the practice of promoting strong teachers out of the classroom and into administrative positions. TURN's response has been to negotiate for restructured promotion practices that focus on keeping good teachers in the profession while providing raises and greater responsibilities. For instance, strong teachers who are promoted might divide their time between classroom teaching and mentoring other teachers, writing curriculum, leading instructional programs at their school, or teaching in schools of education. They also negotiate for higher compensation for teachers with teaching assignments in

the more challenging school situations to encourage the best teachers to take the more difficult assignments.

TURN believes that parents are critical partners in educating children and in the overall success of schools. Adam Urbanski, co-founder of TURN, says "to separate children from their family context is like trying to separate a classroom from the school."

How does TURN translate its belief in strong parent involvement into action? Each of the local unions in TURN is changing the typical parent/child/teacher relationship by negotiating for a parent and community involvement component in their local action plans. As an example, the TURN-affiliated AFT union in Rochester, New York was the first union to negotiate parent involvement on school based councils and now includes high school students as well. Three years ago this same local union overwhelmingly passed a contract requiring parent input in the formal evaluation of teachers. Other TURN locals have followed suit. Another action, unusual for most unions, finds TURN affiliates that bargain for parent centers that are run by and serve parents.

As PPS chapters know, reinventing relationships is the foundation to reform. Urbanski acknowledges that teachers tend to keep parents at a distance and parents can harbor bad memories from their own experiences. Yet TURN believes that for the sake of students, real conversations between parents and educators must happen to begin changing the relationships between these two groups. When mutual respect and trust develop, dysfunctional bureaucracies can be transformed into productive institutions that value input from all stakeholders—especially parents and teachers, the two largest stakeholder groups in education.

To learn more about TURN, contact us or visit TURN's web site (see list of resources on page 4).

We Still Have a Long Way to Go

Keynote Speaker at PPS Leadership Conference Suggests Steps for Remediating Inequities in Education

We are depriving quality education for those students who need it the most. That was the message presented by the keynote speaker at the Eighth Annual PPS Leadership Conference.

In her keynote address, Kati Haycock, Director of the Education Trust, a Washington-based non-profit advocacy group that focuses on raising achievement levels among minority and low-income groups, showed ample evidence of inequitable education for low-income and minority students. Haycock detailed seven key issues for addressing these educational inequities:

1. Teachers matter enormously.

Data from school districts in Tennessee, Boston, Dallas, and elsewhere show that teacher quality is the leading indicator in the achievement level of students. Haycock points out that even though the data is clear on the importance of teaching, low-income and minority students are often shortchanged by school systems. "We are taking kids who most need teachers who know their subject area and systematically assigning them to teachers who are least qualified to teach in those areas."

2. Get data together—and get it out.

In Haycock's and the Education Trust's experience, "the best way of breaking through the old attitudes that teachers don't make a difference is with data that show otherwise." She suggests that **honest, clear local data can help schools and communities understand the consequences of an inequitable distribution of good teachers.** "Working together," Haycock says, "parents and educators can use data to target strategies and resources toward addressing their most pressing needs."

3. We need clear goals for students.

Historically, teachers, schools, districts and states have not agreed upon what students should learn or what kind of work is good enough. The result of this, says Haycock, is a "long-standing practice of just plain expecting less from some students than others." In response, Haycock advocates for academic standards—which provide clear goals with high expectations for *all* students.

4. All kids need to be in a rigorous curriculum that is matched to standards.

Haycock advocates changing the practice of placing only some students in challenging classes. "The more rigorous courses students take, the better they perform." Using New York City as an example, Haycock points out that after all students in New York City were required to take high-level science courses, overall scores on the state science test improved dramatically.

5. Assessments and accountability must reinforce the standards.

Haycock suggests that traditional testing systems do not paint an accurate picture of student achievement because they test low-level skills and score students in comparison to one another. Instead, she says, "we need new assessment systems that are aligned with standards and provide clear, honest information on whether kids have mastered the skills they need."

6. Provide extra help for the students and teachers who need it.

Standards-based education has "dramatically changed the rules" for students and teachers, says Haycock. She explains that **teachers need much stronger content knowledge than before and advocates for intensive, ongoing professional development.** She also supports hiring practices that bring in teachers with strong knowledge in their subject areas. If all students are to meet high academic standards, she says, we must also provide students with the extra help they need in meeting those standards.

7. Think and act K-16.

The Education Trust has compiled data that show a high school diploma is not always a ticket to college success. The data show that fewer than half of the students who go on to college have taken the rigorous high school courses expected by colleges and employers. Haycock suggests addressing this disparity by "thinking K-16." "We must take a K-16 approach to standards, course requirements and student testing, with the goal of ensuring that *all* high school graduates are fully prepared for success beyond high school."

The PowerPoint presentation of Haycock's speech, "Achievement In America and What We Can Do To Improve It" is available on the PPS Web site www.parents4publicschools.com/confhl.htm. The presentation includes multiple sources of data supporting disparities in the distribution of quality teachers and achievement levels of students across income and ethnic backgrounds.

8th ANNUAL PPS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE...



Top: Seven PPS Chapters recognized for Best Practices in their local work, a project supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Bottom: "Growing Up in a PPS Household:" children of PPS activists speak the truth with humor and understanding.

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE

The place was Houston, Texas. The theme was *Quality Education: Mobilizing Parent Leadership For Change Now*. Another PPS conference successfully prepared chapter leaders for their work.

After polling chapters last fall for topics that would best serve their needs, this year's conference was packed with national philanthropic, educational and professional experts covering a range of relevant issues. Concurrent sessions explored subjects including working with a school board, vouchers, standards, school equity, teacher quality, grant writing, bilingual education, and lobbying. Discussions on these topics continued long after the sessions ended as passionate public school advocates shared stories and lessons learned from their own communities.

Keynote speakers for the event were **Frances Guzman** of **Intercultural Development Research Association** in San Antonio, Texas, and **Kati Haycock**, director of the **Education Trust**. Ms. Haycock's speech dramatically demonstrated the inequities of education for poor and minority students (see article above).

PPS always includes young people in the program to remind everyone why we work so hard. This year was no exception. Friday evening Houston area students sang and danced to commemorate the tradition of Cinco de Mayo. The Saturday lunch program featured our first-ever panel of "veteran PPS kids" with six young people who have grown up in PPS households. Honest and entertaining as only children and teens can be, they talked about the value of public schools in their own lives, their parents' activism and their understanding of parent involvement to improve public education.

The PPS National staff awarded seven **Best Practices Awards** to recognize outstanding accomplishments from the ranks. Honored for modeling best practices in the following areas were: *Appreciation for National Network and Elements of Chapter Infrastructure* – Columbia, MO; *Appreciation for Diversity* – San Francisco, CA; *Coalition and Community Leadership* – Pitt County, NC; *Durable Infrastructure* – Memphis, TN; *Building Confidence in Public Schools* – Cincinnati, OH; *Improving Public Schools* – Jackson, MS; *Executive Director's Bold Practice Award, Strategic Risk-Taking that Made a Difference* – Charleston, SC. (For more information about these best practices, visit the PPS web site.)

The Houston PPS chapter played a visible and demanding role throughout the planning process and during the conference itself. Based on their efforts, a planning manual will be developed to guide future host chapters in their roles and responsibilities. The Houston chapter enhanced their local visibility by hosting this national conference and they intend to follow up on the many contacts made to add to their local support.

To relax "Texas style," Houston PPS took the group to Kemah Island, a resort area on Galveston Bay. In true PPS tradition, conferees played hard enjoying the amusements, good food, music and dancing.

Special thanks to these funders who helped make the conference a success: the Ford Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, ExxonMobil Foundation and the ChaseBank of Texas.

Practical Advice for Parents:

The following toolkit will help PPS parents address concerns about individual teachers at the classroom level, as well as widen the scope of parent involvement to address the issue of teacher quality at the district level.

What Parents Can Do When They Are Concerned About the Quality of Their Child's Teacher

Talk with other parents. Talk with parents of children who are currently in that teacher's class. Talk also with parents of children who were in that teacher's class in past years. Find out if other parents share your concerns.

Collect evidence to substantiate your concerns. You need to be able to quantify the problems and offer solid evidence that your concerns don't reflect isolated incidents. Document, and ask other parents to document, inappropriate behavior. Examine grades, test scores or other assessment data to determine whether students in this teacher's classes are generally performing at lower levels than students in comparable classes.

Raise concerns in constructive ways with the help of other parents. Ask to meet with the teacher and principal or other building level administrator. Express your concerns in a calm, non-confrontational manner. Don't start by accusing the teacher or anyone else at the school. Don't get personal when expressing your concerns. Ask questions that focus on your child, not the teacher. Matter-of-factly share the information gathered prior to the meeting. If your contact with the teacher turns unpleasant, avoid future one-on-one interactions by always having the principal, another administrator or other parents present. Following the meeting, put in writing your version of the discussion and share it with all participants as documentation of what was said.

Questions Parents Can Ask About Teacher Quality

Below are questions that can help you participate in the dialogue on teacher quality in your community. Depending on where your district is and what your local issues are, one or more of the categories may be more appropriate for your chapter.

How Does the District Define a Quality Teacher?

What is the district using as *qualifications of effective teachers*?

How do these qualifications relate to state, regional or national criteria?

How are teachers evaluated? Does *evaluation* include parent input? Is evaluation information used to guide decisions about professional development, hiring, etc.?

Do All Students Have Access to Quality Teachers?

How are teachers assigned to different schools? (Are the most qualified teachers assigned to particular schools while the least qualified teachers are assigned to others?)

To what extent is there a *relationship between inadequate teacher qualifications and poor student performance*?

What steps are being taken to ensure that there's a quality teacher in every classroom? How is the district recruiting or retraining teachers where they are most needed?

How Does the District Recruit and Hire a Quality Teaching Force?

Where is the district looking when it recruits teachers? How does it recruit?

How does the district involve parents in the recruiting and hiring process?

Are starting salaries competitive?

What kind of mentoring or training programs does the district offer teachers who are new to the district or those who are in their first few years of service?

How Does the District Support Improvements in Teacher Practice?

Are teacher compensation and rewards linked to teaching knowledge, skill and performance?

Are teacher salaries competitive with other districts in the state?

Is there adequate funding for professional development?

Is professional development rigorous, standards-based, and directly linked to what teachers do in their classrooms?

Resources

- Each year, *Education Week*, one of the nation's largest education publications, publishes a report of education in the 50 states. This year's report, *Quality Counts 2000*, is available on the Web (www.edweek.org/sreports/qc00) and contains articles on all aspects of teacher quality as well as state-by-state data on numerous indicators of teacher quality.

- The **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards** has developed a model for advanced teaching education and certification. The National Board standards define the qualities of accomplished, high-quality teachers. The Board's Web site contains more information about these standards as well as state and local activities to support National Board certification among more teachers. *Phone: 248-351-4444; Web site: www.nbpts.org*

- The **National Commission on Teaching and America's Future** is a blue-ribbon group of 26 public officials, business and community leaders and educators who work with state and district partners to provide all students with access to competent, caring and qualified teachers. Available on the Commission's Web site are, among other resources, a state-by-state report card on indicators of teacher quality and a report making the connection between teacher quality and student achievement. *Phone: 212-678-8413; Web site: www.tc.columbia.edu/~teachcomm*

- The **National Staff Development Council** (NSDC), a national, nonprofit professional association devoted to staff development and school improvement, is an advocate for improvement in teacher quality and a source for information on effective professional development. NSDC's Web site contains a section especially for parents, including FAQs and *Tools for Schools*, a publication with concrete strategies to improve schools. *Ph: 513-523-6029; Web site: www.nsd.org*

- The **Boston Plan for Excellence** (BPE), a local education fund, manages whole-school change efforts in 61 of Boston's 132 public schools, each of which is implementing a decade-long professional development-centered initiative. Through this work, BPE has produced two reports on major issues that affect teacher quality: "Towards an Open Teacher Hiring Process" and "Professional Development Spending in the Boston Public Schools." Both are available on BPE's Web site. *Ph: 617-350-7600; Web site: www.bpe.org*

- The **Los Angeles Educational Partnership** (LAEP), a local education fund, manages several initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and professional development. Information about LAEP's initiatives, including a professional development school for teachers working with emergency licenses, is on its Web site. The criteria for LAEP's Excellence Awards offer a good framework for quality teaching standards. The criteria are adapted from standards developed by the California Department of Education and are available on the

Web at www.ctc.ca.gov/cstppublication/cstpreport.html.
Ph: 213-622-5237; Web site: www.laep.org

- The **Education Trust** has released several studies that look at indicators of inequities in education, including: "Honor in the Boxcar: Equalizing Teacher Quality" (with analyses of data showing inequitable distribution of teaching talent) and "Not Good Enough: A Content Analysis of Teacher Licensing Examinations" (showing that teacher licensure tests are mostly at the high school level). *Ph: 202-293-1217; Web site: www.edtrust.org*

- The **Teacher Union Reform Network** (TURN) is bringing unions into local efforts to improve teacher quality. With its strong emphasis on student achievement, TURN is a natural partner with PPS chapters in their teacher-quality efforts. Learn more about TURN on their Web site (www.turnexchange.net) or contact PPS staff if you wish to join conversations between PPS and TURN.

- The **National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education**, demands high standards for teacher preparation programs. To achieve accreditation under NCATE's standards, universities and colleges must offer intellectually rigorous programs that are relevant to the needs of today's classrooms. *Ph: 202-466-7496; Web site: www.ncate.org*

- In eight years of research in Tennessee public schools, **Dr. William Sanders** found a strong connection between teacher quality and student achievement. For more information on his research, contact the University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center. *Ph: 423-974-7336*

- **Teach for America** places more than 1,000 liberal arts college graduates each year as teachers in public schools in the most under-resourced areas of the nation. In this high-profile alternative route into teaching, TFA corps members make a two-year teaching commitment, after which many stay in teaching and stay involved in their communities. *Ph: 212-279-2080; Web site: www.teachforamerica.org*

- The **Fordham Foundation** has released a manifesto on teacher quality, "The Teachers We Need and How to Get More of Them" (www.edexcellence.net/library/teacher.html). The report promotes easing the requirements for teacher preparation to increase the supply of teachers. *Ph: 202-223-5452; Web site: www.edexcellence.net*

- The **National Center for Education Statistics** is a part of the U.S. Department of Education that collects data related to education. *Web site: www.nces.ed.gov*

- Parents can learn more about exemplary teacher quality practices across the country, in areas including recruitment, teacher preparation and support on the Web site of the **U.S. Department of Education's Model Professional Development Awards Program** (www.ed.gov/initiatives/teachers/exemplarypractices).



Left: Thank you to Houston PPS leadership, shown here celebrating the growing diversity of the PPS Network.

Right: Amina Shahid-El, PPS's Director of Chapter Services and Training and Leadership Conference Coordinator, sharing information with chapter leaders.