

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER TRAINING*

From: Crystal Gallegos, Chavez/Huerta K–12 Preparatory Academy Secondary Principal

The purpose of this memorandum is to make recommendations on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to support improving teacher effectiveness. As a country we have high expectations for students to be college- and career-ready. In order to ensure student expectations are met, our teachers need to be effective. To be effective, teachers and school leaders need to be supported and evaluated by a system that has meaning.

Overview

As an administrator of a public charter school that serves a majority of low-income Latino and English language learners, I strongly believe states need to implement meaningful teacher evaluation systems that efficiently and meaningfully rate teacher effectiveness.

Chavez/Huerta K–12 Preparatory Academy is a public charter school in Pueblo, Colorado. Our mission is to produce a well-rounded student through a rigorous college preparatory K–12 environment culminating in a high school diploma and tuition-free college credits with the expectation of successful completion of an associate or vocational degree while still in high school. Every student, all 1,016 of them, knows receiving a college degree in high school can be achieved. With a population that is 95% Latino, 64% free and reduced lunch students, and 11% English language learners (ELLs), our students can begin taking college classes the second semester of their freshman year.



The graduating class of 2015 may have been small in size but were mighty in their accomplishments. The graduating senior class numbered 48 and of them 18 graduated with an associate's degree from Pueblo Community College before their high school graduation. Fifty-four percent of the class had earned college credit and 21% earned more than 70 college credit hours. Since 2004, Dolores Huerta Preparatory High School students have earned 85 associate's degrees before graduating high school.

Our main goal is student success and in order to achieve our goal we must have effective educators in the classroom. It has been a three-year process of introducing our staff to the new Colorado teacher effectiveness evaluation system. It is important staff know what they are being evaluated on, what it accounts for, and the impact it will have on their career as an educator. It would not have been possible to accomplish this without the support

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of federal ESEA Title II funds. These funds supported the training our teachers needed to be more effective in the classroom.

The Challenge

As a country we face many challenges with our K–12 educational systems. Some of these challenges are the lack of effective teacher evaluation systems, effective professional development training for teachers and school leaders, and effective training of how to best instruct ELLs in the classroom.

Every year over one million students drop out of high school and many of the students who do graduate are not college- and career-ready. This means that most students lack the skills to further their education or secure gainful employment in the workforce. Only 38% of high school seniors can read at grade level, and 26% are proficient in math.¹

Overall, schools across the nation are challenged to understand teacher effectiveness and strategies for helping every teacher achieve it. Research shows that we must create districts and school systems that align the practices of teacher hiring, mentoring, professional development, expanded career opportunities for teachers, professional development, and performance evaluation in a continuum of professional practice that is based upon the principles and behaviors of teaching effectiveness.²

Currently 11 states and the District of Columbia mandate a statewide teacher evaluation system, 10 states provide a statewide evaluation model from which districts can opt out, and 27 states provide criteria or guidelines districts can adopt. The overarching goal with teacher effectiveness is to support teacher and school leader effectiveness to improve upon student learning in the classroom throughout the United States. By embracing the system, schools are doing right by all of its students.

Looking Ahead

To stay ahead of the curve and maintain success, schools need to ensure teachers are equipped with the tools to ensure that all students—including those with unique needs such as ELLs—are able to meet the college- and career-ready standards. As the population of ELLs continues to grow, teachers need to be prepared to utilize effective teaching strategies to ensure student achievement. It is precisely in these times of change that opportunities arise for implementing purposeful teacher effectiveness initiatives that have promise for improving outcomes among the nation's least-served students.³

Title III provides critical support for ELL teachers, but that is not getting us close enough to closing the achievement gap for ELLs. Title III does not provide enough funds to bring in training or support for a full school year or the necessary tools students may need within the classroom. That is why Congress should use Title II funds as an incentive for providing teachers with effective strategies to use in their daily instruction and student success is increased.

Representative John Kline introduced the Student Success Act, which allows for the use of Title II funds to develop and implement teacher evaluation systems that measure the effectiveness of teachers and support the training of educators to implement those systems. Senators Lamar Alexander and Patty Murray introduced the Every Child Achieves Act, which is directed at preparing, training and recruiting high-quality teachers, principals, and other school leaders through Title II. Title II funds can be utilized for the funding of the improvement of teaching and learning. Under these guidelines, schools would be able to specialize training for subgroups, such as ELLs, and in return, benefit all students in the classroom. Many schools to date only use their Title III funds for English language acquisition, not teacher professional development. By incentivizing Title II funds to specifically support teachers of ELLs, more funding is available to meet the growing needs of the ELL populations in schools.

Recommendations

Teachers and school leaders need more support in order to be effective. It is important for our teachers to be prepared to teach the next generation and be equipped with the most effective teaching strategies to have all students, including ELLs as a subgroup, making the grade.

- **Require funds under Title II of ESEA are used to educate teachers and school leaders on their state or district evaluation processes, components, and goals, such as professional growth plans, target goals, student growth, and effectiveness.** Through state or district evaluation processes, clear, planned-out goals and resources are needed to lead teachers and school leaders to increased performance and overall positive student achievement. For example, 10 school sites reviewed the data they collected to differentiate teacher quality, which allowed them to reward excellence, remove poor performers, use talent more effectively, provide targeted professional development, and elevate the teaching profession. Such evaluation systems are fundamental to ensuring great teachers for every child because great schools, and great teachers, change everything.⁴
- **Incentivize Title II of ESEA funding to support teacher professional development in English language acquisition.** Teachers across the United States have a growing population of ELL students in their classrooms due to the growth of the overall ELL population. Between 1998–1999 and 2008–2009 the enrollment of ELLs in prekindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools grew by more than 51% while the growth of total student enrollment increased by just over 7%. Teaching English requires helping students acquire specific skills. Mainstream teachers, as well as ELL specialists, have an obligation to help ELLs learn academic content. By providing meaningful and accessible instruction, they also make a key contribution to ELLs' English language development.⁵ Ultimately,

supporting our teachers in the classroom supports students in their futures.

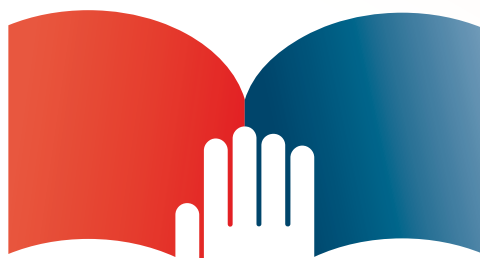
Conclusion

I strongly urge you to give these ESEA recommendations your highest consideration to make a dramatic impact on student success and teacher effectiveness. I would be happy to provide you with more information regarding my own experience in working with teachers through our state model evaluation system and the struggle we fight in finding highly qualified English language acquisition teachers to ensure the success of our ELL population. Teacher effectiveness, overall, can be achieved through education, implementation, and professional development of our educators.

I welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to ensure that a reauthorized ESEA accomplishes our shared goals. Please contact me at cjgallegos@chpa-k12.org or call (719) 334-3493, if you would like further information or to set up a meeting to continue the conversation.

Endnotes

- 1 Barbara Hollingsworth, "Less than 40% of H.S. Seniors Academically Prepared for College," *CNSNews.com*, May 14, 2014, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/barbara-hollingsworth/less-40-hs-seniors-academically-prepared-college>.
- 2 Robert A. Barry, PhD., *Teaching Effectiveness and Why it Matters* (Marylhurst, OR: Marylhurst University and The Chalkboard Project, 2010).
- 3 Jennifer F. Samson and Brian A. Collins, *Preparing All Teachers to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2012).
- 4 Daniela Doyle and Jiye Grace Han, *Measuring Teacher Effectiveness: A Look "Under the Hood" of Teacher Evaluation in 10 Sites* (New Haven, CT: ConnCAN, 2012) <http://www.conncan.org/learn/research/teachers/measuring-teacher-effectiveness>.
- 5 Diane August, PhD., Jeimee Estrada, and Andrea Boyle, *Supporting English Language Learners A Pocket Guide for State and District Leaders* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2012).



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