



Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute

The Teachers Institute Approach and Education Policy

2011



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Statements from the Obama Administration

In New Haven and other communities, the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute works to improve teacher effectiveness in ways the Obama Administration has been advocating.

At the launch of his “Educate to Innovate” STEM campaign, President Obama said, “Passionate educators with deep content expertise can make all the difference.”¹ As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan explained:

“We don’t have enough teachers who really know the content extraordinarily well, particularly in poor and disadvantaged communities. The more we can provide high-quality professional development, so that teachers have deep content knowledge, there are huge benefits.... Whether it’s partnerships with universities and higher ed institutions, to create those meaningful professional development opportunities and really create those content-rich environments that students desperately need, that is absolutely critically important.”²

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the President’s budget requests for the fiscal years 2010-2012, and the President’s *Blueprint* for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Obama Administration has placed explicit emphasis on research-based strategies that increase effective teaching.³ In August 2010, Secretary Duncan urged teachers to “participate in professional development that builds on their current skills and improves their practice to make them more effective.”⁴

Recommendations of the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology reflect the emphasis President Obama and Secretary Duncan have placed on the necessity of high-quality teacher professional development for improving STEM education. In September 2010, the Council identified the need for all schools to have “a direct conduit to STEM expertise.” The Council’s Report to the President on K-12 STEM education singled out Teachers Institutes as exemplary partnerships among schools and STEM professionals that provide tangible resources for use in the classroom:

“A variety of programs attempt to bridge the gaps between public schools and the STEM professional community, but not all such programs provide teachers and schools with resources that are useful in their classrooms. Nonetheless, several programs demonstrate the potential for such connections to benefit K-12 schools. For example, Teachers Institutes, which began in 1978 in New Haven and have since expanded to cities across the country, pair universities and school districts, allowing teachers to identify the topics on which they would like to collaborate. University professors then guide these teachers through inquiry-based learning in a STEM subject area.... It is important that we find ways to harness these sources of

partnership and expertise in a committed, sustained way relevant to K-12 teachers and students.”⁵

Earlier Calls for a Federal Program of Teachers Institutes

In *School and College: Partnerships in Education*, a Special Report the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released at a Yale conference, Gene I. Maeroff wrote in 1983: “It is a sad commentary on American education that a book about partnerships can say very little about teacher preparation, which is, or should be, the most important connection between the nation’s colleges and schools. The whole relationship between schools and colleges pivots on this essential function. Yet, historically, the preparation of teachers has been dominated by higher education. The schools have little to say about it and are rarely consulted. The result is endless finger-pointing about the quality of teaching in the schools.”⁶ Maeroff described the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute as one of the rare examples of cooperative school-college partnerships designed to provide “continuing education” to teachers, and in a foreword to the Report, Ernest L. Boyer wrote, “Every college and university should establish a partnership with one or more school districts to provide educational and cultural enrichment as determined by principals and teachers at the schools.”⁷ Testifying before U.S. Senate and House Committees in 1989, Boyer recommended the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute as a model for institutes to be established across the country.⁸

In 1995 Sheldon Hackney, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, said: “The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute is the first and foremost of its kind, serving as a model of how a university and a city school system can work together to improve the teaching in urban schools. The NEH is proud to have been part of this effort since the beginning.” In 1982 the National Endowment had awarded the Teachers Institute a grant for the dissemination of its model nationally, and revised NEH guidelines to encourage other communities to develop similar programs.

In 1997 in *Creative America*, its Report to the President, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities recommended partnerships to “provide professional development for teachers; improve instruction in the arts and the humanities by encouraging colleges, universities and cultural organizations to cooperate with local school systems; and provide incentives to college and university faculty to develop collaborations with school teachers, educational administrators, and artists.” The Committee cited the Institute as an “exemplary” partnership of this type:

“Teachers in the arts and the humanities need the time and resources to participate in professional development to enrich their own knowledge and to gain practical ideas for their classrooms. At the community level, innovative partnerships have formed among some universities, cultural institutions, and school districts. Yale University and the public schools of New Haven, Connecticut have worked in partnership since 1978 to strengthen teaching in the city’s schools. The Yale-New Haven Teachers

Institute brings college faculty and school teachers together on an equal footing to develop new course material in the humanities and the sciences, and to discuss issues chosen by the teachers themselves.”⁹

In 2001 in a feature article for a special issue of *On Common Ground*, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige commented: “I applaud the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute for supplying models for what universities should do. Its projects are not just inspiring, they are creating an environment in which partnerships will be the norm, not the exception. Every great university should be linked to its surrounding schools by a thriving and many-tiered partnership. Observers should not ask why a few universities have partnerships, but why the rest do not.”¹⁰

New Recommendations for High-Quality Professional Development

In 2011 the Institute analyzed the recommendations of a new research and policy brief issued by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. The Center, a partnership of the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Educational Testing Service (ETS), and Vanderbilt University that was established in 2005 under cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance to states and school districts as they work to meet the teacher quality provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, recommends that school officials look for five research-based features of quality professional development to find programs that are “delivered in a way that yields direct impact on teacher practice.”¹¹

In a document prepared for discussion with superintendents and other school officials at the Yale National Initiative’s October 2011 Annual Conference, the Institute outlined the precise ways that Teachers Institutes implement the Center’s guidelines for investing in high-quality professional development. These arguments provide a strong rationale for school districts to invest in the Teachers Institute approach some of their considerable Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title II funds for professional development.

The alignment between the Institute approach and the National Comprehensive Center’s guidelines for high-quality professional development is especially pertinent given the concern Secretary Duncan expressed about Title II of ESEA, the Department’s single largest expenditure on teacher effectiveness. In April 2011 the Secretary said that the \$3 billion the Federal government spends each year to improve teacher quality is, as he put it, “probably the least effective money we spend.” After observing, “These are tough economic times. It can’t just be about more money; it’s got to be about existing dollars,” the Secretary asked: “What can we put in place to try and ensure quality on that three billion dollars spent?”¹²

Notes

- ¹ White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “President Obama Expands ‘Educate to Innovate’ Campaign for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education,” news release, January 6, 2010, whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-expands-educate-innovate-campaign-excellence-science-technology-eng.
- ² Arne Duncan, “Open for Questions: Educate to Innovate” (public statement, Washington, D.C., November 23, 2009).
- ³ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Washington, D.C.: March 2010), ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf.
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, *Built for Teachers: How the Blueprint for Reform Empowers Educators* (Washington, D.C., August 2010), 15, ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/teachers/publication.pdf.
- ⁵ President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, *Prepare and Inspire: K-12 Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) for America’s Future, Report to the President* (Washington, D.C., September 2010), 101-02, whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast-stem-ed-final.pdf.
- ⁶ Gene I. Maeroff, *School and College: Partnerships in Education* (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1983), 27.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-38; Ernest L. Boyer, foreword to *School and College*, viii.
- ⁸ Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, *The Labor Shortage – Poverty and Educational Aspects: Hearings on Examining Alternatives Available in Coping with a Projected Labor Shortage in the Future while Facing a Poverty Surplus and Educational Gaps in the Work Force*, 101st Cong., 1st sess., 1989, 264.
- ⁹ President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, *Creative America*, Report to the President (Washington, D.C., February 1997), 11-13, eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED413276.pdf.
- ¹⁰ Rod Paige, “Does America Know How to Teach?,” *On Common Ground*, no. 9 (Fall 2001): 1, 4, 32, teachers.yale.edu/pdfs/ocg/ocg9.pdf.
- ¹¹ Sarah Archibald et al., *High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers: Effectively Allocating Resources* (Washington, D.C.: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, February 2011), tqsource.org/publications/HighQualityProfessionalDevelopment.pdf.
- ¹² Arne Duncan, “Statement on TEACH Campaign” (public statement, Newark, New Jersey, April 20, 2011).