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Addressing the Teacher Shortage

Every elementary and secondary school in the United States is facing a threat that could undermine the quality education of all children. The U. S. Department of Education projects that the nation's schools will need 3 million new teachers by 2008. *The New York Times* recently noted (7 January 2000) that the shortage of qualified teachers has led to a competition for teachers that creates problems for all schools and drives up the costs of education across the country. Public and private schools work together to educate the country's children. The challenge of the growing teacher shortage threatens the whole education community. The welfare of all our children calls for federal policies to attract new teachers into the profession in a way that benefits all students.

Addressing the problem

The shortage of teachers hurts all of our schools. It increases the job stress of teachers and administrators alike. It leads to increased turnover of staff, undermines curriculum quality, and hinders efforts at staff development. Having to hunt for teachers to fill their classrooms drives up the administrative costs to schools and reduces the funds available for the classroom. Most of all, the shortage of qualified teachers hurts our children by forcing too many students into too few classrooms, reducing the amount of time that teachers can spend helping individual students.

The shortage of teachers hurts children regardless of the type of school they attend, public or private. It spans the breadth of education in the United States and threatens to deprive the children of all races and social classes, in rural, urban, and suburban communities, of the quality education they will need to meet the challenges of the future.

In view of this pending crisis, the Council for American Private Education believes that addressing the growing shortage of quality teachers must become one of our nation's highest public policy priorities. We call on all members of Congress and the Administration to come together in a bipartisan effort to craft policies that promote more vigorously the recruitment, retention, and development of quality teachers for all our children regardless of the type of school they attend.

Teacher benefits are child benefits

Federal education policy has long recognized that children are the ultimate beneficiaries of the help given to teachers. Teachers move back and forth between public and private schools during the course of their careers, bringing their knowledge and experience to all students. As a result of the national commitment to improving the education of all children, various provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act that are designed to promote improvement in teacher quality already include teachers from all types of schools. Innovative solutions such as the Teacher Next Door program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development help teachers from urban public and private schools alike to purchase affordable housing in the communities where they serve. This program recognizes that extending the participation and influence of teachers in the community benefits the whole community regardless of the type of school in which the teacher serves. Future federal programs to encourage and CAPE Issue Paper:

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promote teaching as a profession should likewise be constructed to benefit the teacher as an educator and not to benefit the school as an institution, in order to avoid inappropriate institutional regulation. Only this approach can guarantee the equitable participation of all teachers in a way that meets the distinctive needs of teachers in all circumstances, ensuring that the benefits of quality teachers will extend to all students.

Policies to help recruit and retain quality teachers

Members of all political parties understand that promoting a quality education is one of the best contributions that they can make to the future of our nation. The Council for American Private Education strongly recommends that members of Congress and the Administration work together to develop innovative new policies and expand some existing programs to promote the recruitment, retention, and development of quality teachers. Our recommendations include the following:

- ★ Expand current student loan forgiveness programs (i.e., the Stafford and Perkins programs for teachers in low-income public or private schools) to allow for loan forgiveness for all teachers. Teachers in schools serving high-need communities should be forgiven loans at an accelerated pace.
- ★ Establish special teacher scholarships to encourage teachers to become qualified in those subject areas where the need for expert teachers is especially critical.
- ★ Provide special tax incentives (e.g. tuition tax credits or special tax credits for teachers) for those entering the teaching profession.
- ★ Increase the number of visas available to teachers recruited from abroad.
- ★ Broaden the current Teacher Next Door program to include additional communities and create other housing incentives for teachers.

Promoting equitable participation for all teachers

In addition to ensuring the equitable participation of all teachers in the initiatives discussed above, the Council for American Private Education also recommends the following modifications to programs which currently only benefit some teachers, so that all teachers can benefit from them:

- ★ The Troops-To-Teachers program and other future initiatives designed to train and place mid-career professionals in schools should allow for placement of candidates in private as well as public schools.
- ★ The teacher scholarship program under Title II (Section 204) of the Higher Education Act should be expanded to include the equitable participation of teachers serving in private schools.
- ★ Universities receiving federal funds should be required to allow and to recognize practice teaching in private as well as public schools.
- ★ Congress should streamline the conflicting standards and regulations governing the participation of private and religious school teachers in federally-funded professional development programs to produce one clear set of standards that ensures the equitable participation of all teachers.
- ★ Federal competitive grant programs that provide continuing education funds should be open to eligible applicants from public and private colleges, universities, and professional organizations, as well as public school LEAs and SEAs.

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Conclusion

The Council for American Private Education strongly recommends that the Congress and the Administration work together to propose and enact federal legislation that addresses the critical shortage of quality teachers for all our nation's schools and that respects the autonomy and independence of private schools. Only inclusive and nondiscriminatory solutions that provide for the equitable participation of all teachers, whether they teach in public or private schools, will prove to be a sound investment in our nation's future and will improve the education of all our children.