

# THE EDUCATION SCHOOLS PROJECT

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Teacher Education Is Out of Step with Realities of Classrooms, According to Research Study from Former Head of Teachers College**

### ***Majority of U.S. Teachers Prepared in Lower Quality Programs; Report Issues Recommendations to Reform What It Calls the "Wild West" of Teacher Education***

WASHINGTON – September 18, 2006 – Despite growing evidence of the importance of quality teaching, the vast majority of the nation's teachers are prepared in programs that have low admission and graduation standards and cling to an outdated vision of teacher education, concludes a new four-year study authored by Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and former president of Teachers College, Columbia University.

The report, *Educating School Teachers*, released today by the Education Schools Project, identifies several model programs but finds that most education schools are engaged in a "pursuit of irrelevance," with curriculums in disarray and faculty disconnected from classrooms and colleagues. These schools have "not kept pace with changing demographics, technology, global competition, and pressures to raise student achievement," the study says.

A majority of teacher education alumni (61 percent) reported that schools of education did not prepare graduates well to cope with the realities of today's classrooms, according to a national survey conducted for the study. School principals also gave teacher education programs low grades, with fewer than one-third of those surveyed reporting that schools of education prepare teachers very well or moderately well to address the needs of students with disabilities (30 percent), a diverse cultural background (28 percent) or limited English proficiency (16 percent).

Further, fewer than half of principals reported that education school alumni are very well or moderately well prepared to use technology in instruction (46 percent); use student performance assessment techniques (42 percent); or implement curriculum and performance standards (41 percent).

"Teacher education is the Dodge City of the education world," says Levine, noted author and scholar of higher education. "Like the fabled Wild West town, it is unruly and chaotic. There is no standard approach to where and how teachers should be prepared, and the ongoing debate over whether teaching is a profession or a craft has too often blurred the mission of education schools that are uncertain whether to become professional schools or continue to be grounded in the more academic world of arts and sciences."

### **Low Admissions Standards, Lack of Quality Control**

The report says that because universities tend to rely on schools of education as "cash cows," the quality of teacher education is compromised by setting low admissions standards to help boost enrollments and revenues. Although the SAT and GRE scores of aspiring secondary school teachers are comparable to the national average, the scores of future elementary school teachers fall near the bottom of all test takers, with GRE scores 100 points below the national average.

Equally troubling, state quality control mechanisms focus too much on process, not substance, and vary dramatically. For example, the amount of field work required ranges from 30 hours in one state to 300 hours in another, and the number of required reading credits ranges from 2 to 12, the report says.

Accreditation does not assure program quality, either. Of 100 graduate schools of education ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* in 2005, three of the top 10 are accredited versus eight of the lowest 10. In addition, Levine's report found no significant difference in student math or reading achievement, regardless of whether their teachers were prepared at nationally accredited institutions. The study was prepared by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), which controlled for teacher longevity.

### **Most Teachers Trained in the Weaker Programs**

Education schools based at master's degree-granting institutions have lower admissions requirements, less impressive faculty, and higher student-to-faculty ratios than those based at research universities. Yet these schools currently produce a majority of the nation's teachers. A study conducted for the report by NWEA indicates that students of teachers prepared at Masters I institutions had significantly lower growth in math and somewhat lower growth in reading than the students of those prepared at research institutions.

**The report includes a comprehensive action plan** to improve teacher education in America. Recommendations include:

- **Transforming education schools into professional schools focused on classroom practice.**
- **Closing failing programs, expanding quality programs,** and creating the equivalent of a Rhodes Scholarship to attract the best and brightest to teaching.
- **Making student achievement the primary measure of the success of teacher education programs** to gauge student progress from the start of school through graduation and to judge the quality of education schools by the performance of their graduates in promoting student achievement in their classrooms.
- **Making five-year teacher education programs the norm** and designing them to ensure that students have an enriched major in an academic subject area rather than a watered-down version of the traditional undergraduate concentration.
- **Shifting the training of a significant percentage of new teachers from master's degree granting-institutions to research universities.**
- **Strengthening quality control** by redesigning accreditation and by encouraging states to establish common, outcomes based requirements for certification and licensure.

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*The Education Schools Project promotes well-informed and non-partisan policy debate on how best to prepare the teachers, administrators, and researchers who serve the nation's school children. The Project's reports are drawn from the most extensive study ever conducted into the strengths, weaknesses, and overall performance of the more than 1,200 schools and departments of education at colleges and universities across the country. The study of university-based teacher education programs is the second report in a four-part series to be released by the Education Schools Project. The first report, Educating School Leaders, was released in 2005. Copies of the reports are available at the Education School Project's Web site, [www.edschools.org](http://www.edschools.org).*

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