

**September 21, 2022**

## **Joint Statement on Sustainable Systems for Quality Teaching**

The US education system—with its promise to educate all—has been a model for the world, but it faces unprecedented challenges. The teacher shortage has recently received national attention, but the issue has been building for years. It affects some regions more than others; districts that serve rural areas and/or low-income pupils; and specific subject matter. Some states have responded by lowering the qualifications for individuals to be employed as teachers. While this may be a short-term solution for localized teacher shortages, it will not solve the longer-term issues and will result in lower-quality education for students.

The solution to the teacher shortage crisis is not to fill classrooms with under qualified individuals. Instead, we must create a sustainable system that prepares, retains, and supports teachers through accessible, high-quality teacher preparation, competitive compensation, ample resources, and ongoing professional learning and mentoring opportunities. These commitments demonstrate that educators are professionals and are critical to our social infrastructure and progress as a nation. Their positive impact on their students helps to ensure that we have a vibrant society and skilled workforce in the future.

To create a sustainable system, we need to make teacher preparation rigorous and accessible through programs such as student loan forgiveness, compensating student teaching internships, and maintaining qualification standards. New educators deserve to enter the classroom prepared to teach so that they can be successful in their career and for their students.

We must retain teachers beyond their early career experience in order for them to be most effective. Students of teachers who have been in the classroom for longer periods of time have been shown to have better learning outcomes. In the last thirty years, the median years of experience has declined from fifteen years to less than three. Additionally, more inexperienced teachers are often clustered in schools that have higher percentages of students from underrepresented or underserved communities, as well as those in low-income, rural, or urban areas—an example of the uneven distribution of teacher shortages. So the problem is not merely one of supply. We must give support that teachers need to stay at these schools so their students benefit from having experienced teachers.

We already know solutions to retaining teachers once they enter the classroom based on schools and districts that do not have teacher shortages. Teachers need to be supported through mentoring, induction programs, and high-quality professional learning programs, all of which have been shown to increase retention. Teachers need to be compensated at a living and competitive wage, matching their education and professionalism. In a recent report from the National Educational Association, teachers' salaries averaged 19.2 percent lower when compared to other college-educated workers with similar characteristics.

Finally, educators need to be respected as professionals. They are facing the challenge of trying to help their students recover from substantial disruptions to the learning process during the past two years. Recently, teachers have been caught in the middle of ongoing political and cultural debates in our country. We need to treat and support teachers as the professionals they are through their development and the culture and environment in which they work—not in some schools, but in all schools. Not for some students in those schools, but for all students.

*The statement above was released by the following professional organizations for teachers.*

ACTFL

American Association of Physics Teachers

Association for Career and Technical Education

Association for Multicultural Science Education

International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA)

National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT)

National Council for the Social Studies

National Council of Teachers of English

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

National Middle Level Science Teachers Association

National Science Teaching Association

Society for College Science Teaching