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H.R. 5218 – The Great Teachers for Great Schools Act

Background

- While there are many factors that affect student learning and underachievement, studiesⁱ show that 40-90 percent of the difference in test scores can be attributed to teacher quality.
- International benchmarking studiesⁱⁱ show that the world's most effective school systems develop educator talent by coaching classroom practice, moving teacher professional development to the classroom, developing stronger school leaders, and enabling teachers to learn from each other.
- Recent studiesⁱⁱⁱ have found that peer learning and mentoring, especially for beginner teachers, leads to a “spillover effect” in which educators become more effective when their colleagues' quality improves.
- A 2007 report by McKinsey & Co. demonstrates that effective school systems stay on top by improving instruction through continuous professional development and creating systems and targeted support to ensure effective instruction for all kids.

The Problem:

- Despite this evidence, critical practices are not consistently implemented in schools across the United States, where few educators experience the high-quality professional development that would enable them to be more effective.
- The average US educator spends only 14-16 hours a year in professional development. In 2003-2004, just over half of teachers were given time away from regular duties for professional development. Research^{iv} shows that an average of 49 professional development hours in a year boosted student achievement by approximately 21 percentile points while less than 14 hours showed no statistically significant effect on student learning.
- US teachers generally have 3-5 hours a week for lesson planning, mostly done independently of colleagues, compared to the 15-20 hours in other nations. In Singapore, Sweden, and the Netherlands, teachers have at least 100 hours of professional development each year. 85 percent of schools in academically high achieving nations have built time into the work day or work week for teacher collaboration and teacher development.
- While much attention has been paid to teacher recruitment and preparation, there is a significant unmet need for high-quality professional learning for teachers and principals.

What the Great Teachers to Great Schools Act does:

- Advances a new definition of professional development in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that is based on research and best practices.
- Enables educators to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement that includes analyzing data, determining student and adult learning plans, designing joint lessons that employ evidence-based strategies, providing coaching to support improvement of classroom instruction and application of new learning, and assessing the effectiveness of educator learning.
- Fosters collective responsibility, promotes job-embedded learning, provides classroom-based coaching, and seeks outside expertise when needed.

- Provides \$500 million of targeted resources for high-need LEAs to improve teacher, principal, and other instructional staff quality through the development of a comprehensive system of professional development.
- Helps districts to increase principals' knowledge and skills in establishing a shared vision of school success among all school stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community organizations; establishing the school as a professional learning community; and promoting the effective use of data by educators.
- Focuses resources on the schools with the greatest need of improvement by awarding grants to states via Title I formula and then competitively to high-need school districts, with priority given to districts with high shares of low-income students and high schools graduation rates of less than 65%.
- Evaluates the impact of professional development on teachers' instructional practice, retention and effectiveness, and on students' learning gains, graduation and college readiness rates, and attendance rates. The evaluation must also ensure that coaches, teachers, and schools are using data to inform instructional practices and that the professional development is integrated and aligned with the State's school improvement efforts.

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ⁱ Sanders, W., & Rivers, J. (1996, November) Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement. Knoxville, TN.: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.

ⁱⁱ Michael Barber and Monica Mourshed "How the World's Best Performing Schools Systems Come Out On Top."

McKinsey & Company. (2007)

ⁱⁱⁱ C. Kirabo Jackson and Elias Bruegmann "Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics. 1.4 (2009): 85-108.

^{iv} Linda Darling-Hammond, Ruth Chung Wei, Althea Andree, Nickole Richardson and Stelios Orphanos “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad.” The School Redesign Network at Stanford University. (2009)