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*National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools is a collaborative effort of Education Commission of the States, ETS, and Learning Point Associates.*

**6. With states and districts struggling to implement NCLB, and dealing with severe budget constraints just to maintain existing services, how realistic is it to embark on new programs to get teachers into hard-to-staff schools?**

The question should be, “Can states and districts afford NOT to put programs in place to guarantee a highly qualified teacher in every classroom?” NCLB has focused unprecedented national attention on the importance of ensuring adequate academic progress by all students. The law explicitly recognizes that a key requirement for achieving this goal is for all teachers to be adequately qualified. Title I of NCLB (Section 1112) requires each state to ensure that “low-income students and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers.” Schools are to have highly qualified teachers in place by the 2005-06 school year.

According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) projection, 46 % of high schools, and 36 % of middle schools, and 18 % of elementary schools in high-poverty districts will have a difficult time meeting the NCLB provisions for “highly qualified teachers.” This compares to 15% of high schools, 13% of middle schools and 4 % of elementary schools in low-poverty districts.

[GAO (2003), *No Child Left Behind Act: More Information Would Help States Determine Which Teachers are Highly Qualified.*]

**7. What will the National Partnership do?**

The National Partnership will assist state and local policymakers and education leaders in the development of new policies and practices to improve teaching in at-risk schools. In addition, it will analyze the impact of current state, local and institutional policies and practices on the quality of teaching in at-risk schools. The National Partnership will provide reliable, research-based information about the problems of at-risk schools and the policies and practices proposed or implemented across the country to improve the quality of teaching in these schools. It also will serve as a best-practice resource on at-risk schools for teacher educators, school administrators and teachers. Finally, the National Partnership will design and assist with the implementation of district and community-based strategies to improve teaching in at-risk schools.

**8. Is the National Partnership going to work on a policymaker level or with schools and districts?**

The partners anticipate working on both the state and district levels, with policymakers and representatives of other stakeholder groups such as business and community leaders, teachers, administrators and parents. The main focus of the work will be on policy changes needed at the state and district levels to create the conditions that enable teachers to be more effective. The National Partnership also will widely disseminate information so all stakeholders (including the media) better understand and support efforts to improve the supply and quality of teachers in at-risk schools in their state or district.

**9. What does each member of the National Partnership bring to the effort?**

Collectively, these three organizations bring to the work of the National Partnership the following important capacities:

- The trust and respect of national, state and local policymakers, and education leaders throughout the country.
- The ability to convene policymakers and education leaders at all levels to examine and forge solutions to key education challenges.
- Skill in providing technical assistance to state and local policymakers, and school and district educators in their efforts to develop effective policies and improve curriculum and instruction.
- Reliable information about state and local policy initiatives, national education trends, promising policy strategies and education research.
- A wide range of tools for state and local policymakers, school leaders and teachers, as well as the capacity to develop additional resources.

- Strong research capacity to gather and evaluate data on federal, state and district policies; education-related conditions and trends across the country; and programs that have been implemented at the state or local level. This capacity includes experience in conducting cost-effectiveness studies.

ECS launched its Quality Teachers for At-Risk Schools initiative in early 2003. The goal of the effort, which was initiated by Virginia Governor Mark Warner, chair of the National Partnership, is to deepen state leaders' understanding of policy issues that are crucial to improving the supply, distribution and quality of teachers in hard-to-staff urban and rural schools. Prior to this, ECS spent four years on a Wallace Foundation-funded project that involved hard-to-staff schools in 17 states.

ETS, building on the work of Richard Ingersoll, is analyzing the 1999-2000 *Schools and Staffing Survey* to understand the characteristics and reasons of teachers who leave hard-to-staff schools, as distinguished from those who leave easy-to-staff schools. Similar studies also are focusing specifically on teacher turnover in Native American communities and teacher quality in rural schools. The results of these and other ETS projects will be published by the ETS Policy Information Center and further disseminated by the National Partnership in 2005.

Learning Point Associates, with funding from the Joyce Foundation, is conducting a study to better understand what is necessary to recruit and retain talented teachers in high-need schools. Few research efforts on this topic actively take into account the voice of the subject being studied: the teacher. Focus groups are being convened in both hard-to-staff schools and easy-to-staff schools in rural, urban and suburban areas in Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin for the purpose of asking teachers what it will take to get high-quality teachers into the schools that need them most.

#### **10. Which organization is assuming management of the National Partnership?**

This partnership is equal in nature, and the work will be divided based on each partner's capabilities and strengths.

#### **11. Who is funding the National Partnership?**

Funding for the initial planning of the National Partnership was graciously provided by the Joyce Foundation. The National Partnership is actively pursuing additional funding and is currently engaged in various stages of the grant-writing process with several interested foundations. All three partners have ongoing efforts focused on teaching in at-risk schools and are leveraging their resources.

#### **12. Will other partners be added?**

It is unlikely any additional partners will be added in the immediate future. The current partners, however, will collaborate with other organizations also working on issues pertaining to staffing at-risk schools.

#### **13. How will we know if the National Partnership is successful? What are the measurable goals?**

A primary measure of success will be the enactment of state policies focused on improving the conditions that attract and retain teachers in at-risk schools. These policies may range from providing incentives for districts to improve hiring and placement practices, strengthening mentoring and induction programs for teachers who are assigned to at-risk schools, strengthening leadership in at-risk schools and placing a greater focus on building teachers' capacity to succeed with students in at-risk schools. Another measure of success will be a greater public and policymaker awareness of and attention to the issue through, for example, more media stories and discussions at school board and state board meetings.

**14. What is the lifespan of the National Partnership? What if it doesn't get enough funding? Can the three agencies sustain it on their own?**

All three partners have been working on this issue for several years and are committed to continuing to do so. Additional funding for the National Partnership will allow us to expand the breadth and depth of our work.

**15. How can I get a copy of the inaugural report?**

Print copies are available from any of the three organizations or by contacting the National Partnership at the address, phone number or e-mail listed below. The report also is available on all three partners' Web sites ([www.ecs.org/NPTARS](http://www.ecs.org/NPTARS), [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) and [www.ncrel.org/quality](http://www.ncrel.org/quality)). A National Partnership Web site is under development.

**16. How do I contact the National Partnership?**

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