

Shared Responsibility:

A U.S. Department of Education White Paper on
Labor-Management Collaboration



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This U.S. Department of Education white paper lays out a case for expanding the role of teachers and unions working with administrators and school boards as true partners in improving public education. In this model, all stakeholders ultimately choose to sit on the same side of the education reform table, working toward the same goal of improving outcomes for students, rather than meeting across the table as adversaries working from opposing positions. The Department’s hypothesis is that a shared approach could result in more powerful, focused and enduring policies and strategies than we have today—enabling our schools to become more effective and our students better educated.

However, at present the evidence base linking collaborative leadership with student outcomes is thin, and experiments in collaborative policymaking are few. In order to attract broader support and justify continued investment in a collaborative theory of change, it is crucial that education stakeholders cultivate, if not demand, more collaborative labor-management partnerships at the state and local level, and nurture and replicate those that actually exist. And because there is such a small body of knowledge and experience to support the development of a broader movement, it is also important to support and conduct rigorous research that defines and evaluates the connection between evolving forms of collaborative decision-making, the policies and practices they lead to, and the student outcomes they produce.

INTRODUCTION

The challenge before our education system is compelling. In a world of increasing possibility, diversity and competition, the U.S. education system is under immense pressure to be a more innovative, agile and effective vehicle for meeting the educational needs of America’s students. As recently as a half-century ago, American students who dropped out of high school could still anticipate landing jobs that paid a living wage. In 2012, that is no longer the case. Even students with a high school diploma but no college often struggle to support themselves and their families. Today, the bar for providing a world-class education is higher—all students must be prepared to succeed in the knowledge-based, global job market of the 21st century. They must not only master subjects like reading, writing, math, sciences, and social studies, but must also solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, learn continuously and actively, participate in civic life, and collaborate with others.

In light of the growing demands placed on education in America, the adults running our nation’s schools—superintendents, principals, and teachers—must also change the way they work. Much has been made of the new capacities that teachers must bring to the job, from teaching diverse learners to adapting to new technologies to using data to improve instructional practice. Yet the challenge of providing a world-class education is far more fundamental. To meet that challenge, a cultural shift is required. If students are to have the tools they need to succeed, administrators, principals, and teachers alike will have to become far more effective at working together in a collaborative and flexible manner. They must be united by shared goals to maximize student engagement and student learning and people, organizations, knowledge, and resources must all be organized in support of those overarching aims.

While real differences must be acknowledged and agreement among all education stakeholders is neither a practical, nor a desirable, end goal in itself, the U.S. Department of Education believes that in the long run, the most promising path to transforming American education is student-centered labor-

management collaboration. Teachers, principals, and administrators must all have powerful voices in shaping and informing change and improving their own practices. The most dramatic improvements will be made when those responsible for implementing reforms not only endorse them, but also work together to formulate, implement, and continuously improve them. In short, the Department proposes that tough-minded collaboration—that is collaboration built around the success of students and not the needs of adults—will lead to more effective practices and a more sustainable path to elevating education than the ups and downs of adversarial relationships that have long characterized labor-management relations.

To advance this collaborative theory of change the Department has been using both its convening and grant making powers. The Department has partnered to convene labor-management collaboration related conferences and integrated support for labor-management collaboration into its grant programs like Race to the Top (RTT), the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), School Improvement Grants (SIG), and Investing in Innovation (i3). Moreover, in February 2012, the Department announced the launch of the RESPECT Project. RESPECT stands for Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching. The project’s purpose is to directly engage with teachers across America in a national conversation about transforming the teaching profession by dramatically changing the way teachers are recruited, credentialed, supported, compensated, promoted, and retained in the profession. The near-term aim of the RESPECT Project is to elevate teachers’ voices in shaping federal, state, and local policy, with a long-term goal of making teaching one of America’s most respected professions.

In its endeavor to support and scale this shift in labor-management relations, the Department has been tracking and analyzing cutting-edge collaboration across the country—places where teachers and administrators are working side-by-side toward school improvement, rather than at cross purposes. This white paper is intended to encourage other districts to rethink their assumptions about the productivity and purported necessity of adversarial relationships—and highlight some trends worth studying. The Department further hopes to offer support to state and local policymakers who are working to foster the conditions that promote effective and courageous collaboration for America’s youth.

In addition to reviewing the progress and trends of labor-management collaboration to date, this white paper summarizes the evidence that such collaboration is producing results and analyzes some of the stumbling blocks to increased collaboration. It finds that successful labor-management is expanding—but not as rapidly as it could or should; despite signs of progress, both management and labor must dramatically shift their thinking if we are to see widespread and successful collaboration. The paper concludes that the research base for assessing labor-management collaboration is still too sparse and, ultimately, the Department calls on all stakeholders, from the researchers whose studies enhance public understanding of collaboration in school improvement to the foundations whose support provides critical fuel for educational change, to invest needed resources in this crucial area of reform.

FINDINGS

What Does Successful Collaboration Look Like?

Successful collaboration has two fundamental, common features. It entails **changes to policies, systems and practices designed to improve student outcomes. And it is developed jointly by educators, union leaders, administrators, school board members, and other stakeholders.** As was laid out in “A New Compact for Student Success” at the *Conference on Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration* in 2011, successful collaboration is student-centered. Effective reforms establish meaningful and measurable improvements in student learning as their chief goal, organize teachers’ working conditions and other structures around that goal, and concentrate the resources of all involved on continuous student and school improvement. In place of protracted political battles or contentious negotiations, successful collaboration creates “a renewed focus on the conditions of student, teacher, and school success.”¹

While relatively few union-management teams have enacted comprehensive compacts of the sort promoted at the 2011 conference, districts and states are acting on and adopting many of the individual principles of successful collaboration outlined at the convening. To be sure, there is plenty of room for improvement, particularly at the state level, where unions, stakeholder organizations, elected officials and other state leaders all can do more to encourage collaborative local progress.

Conditions for Student Success¹

- Shared responsibility for, and clear focus on, student success
 - A culture of high academic expectations
 - Rigorous curriculum that meets or exceeds state standards and international benchmarks
 - A belief in education as a valued profession
 - A culture of respect for education professionals
 - An effective leader in every school
 - An effective teacher in every classroom
 - Professional development aimed at continuous improvement
 - A collaborative culture of innovation
 - Resources appropriate to local school needs
 - Empowered local leadership with respect to those resources
 - A safe, secure, and supportive professional environment
 - Students taking responsibility for their own learning
 - Parents engaged in their child's education
- Accessible, timely, and relevant information on school and student performance

1. U.S. Department of Education. *Conference on Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration*, February 2011. <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration/conference/compact>

Collaborative Progress in Action

Collective bargaining between teacher’s unions and district administrators and school boards too often takes the form of enduring strife. And it’s true that, historically, collective bargaining has been largely adversarial.

¹ U.S. Department of Education. *Conference on Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration*, February 2011. <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration/conference/compact>.

Today, however, an increasing number of districts are engaging in more collaborative or “interest-based” forms of bargaining. In interest-based bargaining (IBB), a clear problem is defined, along with each party’s interests, followed by an analysis of the alternatives and the criteria for choosing among them—and ultimately a final decision. This approach stands in relief against adversarial bargaining, where each side presents demands, followed by counter-demands, and ultimately compromises or walks away from the table. Often, the result is different, too: traditional collective bargaining tends to lead to a detailed, rigid contract that lays out each side’s rules and rights, while IBB tends to lead to more flexible contracts and mechanisms for continuous problem-solving, like the contract and guidelines for collaboration adopted in Natrona County, Wyoming and the Springfield Collaboration for Change (SCC), formed by district leaders in Springfield, Massachusetts. A 2007 Education Sector report found that most of the teacher union presidents they spoke with had at least experimented with this approach.² While on the rise, examples of student-centered collaborative bargaining are often overshadowed by more contentious debates that pit teacher’s unions and their members against administrators and policymakers.

In contrast to adversarial bargaining, successful union-management collaboration creates an environment in which student success is the primary goal. The actions and resources of partner organizations are structured to that end—including the way those students’ teachers, principals and administrators are recruited, assigned, managed, and developed. The best of such efforts set clear goals for all stakeholders, anchored in improving student achievement. But they also provide individuals and schools with flexibility to achieve those goals and to be tailored according to local skills and needs. They are, in Education Secretary Arne Duncan’s formulation, “tight on ends, loose on means.”

Often, successful collaboration is codified in new forms of collective bargaining agreements. These include longer-term or “living” contracts that are negotiated on an ongoing basis rather than every several years. Examples include collective bargaining agreements like the joint union-management Living Contract Committee that meets monthly in Rochester, New York, the ongoing “Constitution” document in place in suburban Glenview, Illinois, or the nine-year contract that established the ProComp performance-pay system in Denver, Colorado.

Another example of the innovative formulations that result from collaboration are “thin contracts,” which reduce hundreds of pages of clauses and conditions found in typical union contracts to slimmer documents that focus on shared priorities and leave room for local flexibility. Examples include the 16-page contract at the Amber Charter School and the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, and the 30-page contract adopted originally in Green Dot’s Public Charter Schools in Los Angeles.

Some advocates for collaboration have even suggested that renegotiating or remaking contracts is of limited use, and urged that traditional contracts be replaced in the future by cooperative “compacts.” These compacts, in theory, would provide all stakeholders with an agreed-upon vision for educational outcomes, teaching practices, and decision-making processes, with most teaching and learning decisions made at the school level.³

² Johnson, Susan M. et al. *Leading the Local: Teachers Union Presidents Speak on Change, Challenges*. Education Sector, June 2007. http://www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/UnionLeaders.pdf

³ Kerchner, Charles Taylor, Koppich, Julia E. and Weeres, Joseph G. *United Mind Workers: Unions and Teaching in the Knowledge Society*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

In practice, the most effective collaborations reach far beyond teacher contracts, altering the day-to-day working relationship of educators and administrators. In many cases, it has been useful to establish ongoing structures—both at the school level and the district or regional level—that explicitly value and foster ongoing discussion and collaboration between different stakeholders. The Consortium for Educational Change organization in Illinois and the Transformational Dialogue for Public Education process in Ohio both formalize such collaboration (and are described in greater detail below).

Not surprisingly, successful collaboration must be underpinned by regular, open communication and trust. Often, this manifests as what some have called “dense collaboration”—not just a friendly relationship between a union leader and a superintendent, but many points of intersection and collaboration between educators, administrators, board members, and even parents and students. “When we consider the number of union members appointed to district or school-level committees or teams, along with trainers, in many cases it represents more than 20 percent of the union membership,” Saul Rubinstein reports in his research on union-management collaboration. “This results in the union being organized internally as a very dense network, which provides the district with the ability to quickly and effectively implement new programs or ideas.”⁴

These collaborative relationships are often strengthened by opportunities for shared learning that support continuous improvement. Sometimes this takes the form of attending conferences or creating leadership programs. Other times it means setting aside time and energy for regular planning retreats, as is done annually in the ABC Unified School District outside of Los Angeles. Teachers at those retreats receive valuable leadership opportunities, and management learns how to better identify and support teacher quality—all while focusing for a sustained period of time on the group’s collective goals and specific strategies and tactics for reaching those goals, together. Such opportunities allow everyone involved not only to develop specific skills, but also, as Rubinstein found, to “experience each other not as adversaries, but as colleagues with overlapping interests who can work together to improve teaching and learning.”⁵

Local, State, and National Organizations: Partners in Fostering Collaboration

It’s vitally important to accelerate local progress and expand the number of districts where student performance is a shared responsibility. But educators and school leaders must also examine how state and national organizations can collaborate, and how they can foster collaboration at the local level. Relying on the spontaneous courage and commitment of strong district and local union leaders—occasionally helped along by an active governor or mayor—has resulted in scattershot reform. Typically, these efforts at collaboration emerge only after the relationship has reached rock bottom, such as after a strike or threatened strike brings these leaders together to navigate a better way. As Harvard University researcher Susan Moore Johnson has observed, examples of collaboration seem to occur randomly, independent of state, region, and policy climate, and the variation among collaborative partners is wide and idiosyncratic. The implication is that scaling these unique and localized efforts is an

⁴ Rubenstein, Saul and McCarthy, John. *Collaborating on School Reform: Creating Union-Management Partnerships to Improve Public School Systems*. School of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers University, October 2010.

<http://smlr.rutgers.edu/collaborating-school-reform>

⁵ Ibid.

overlooked priority—and state and national organizations *must* make a more concerted effort to make the great examples pervasive by actively cultivating and spreading collaboration at the local level.⁶

The U.S. Department of Education: Supporting and Scaling Collaboration

Inspired by this important work across the country, the U.S. Department of Education is also changing the way it works. From making grants to convening thought leaders and practitioners to disseminating knowledge to designing policy to tracking and highlighting best practices in the field, the Department is looking for ways to support and encourage effective collaboration and seeking to scale up successes.

Already, the Department is changing the way it allocates funding and implements programs. A number of the Department’s most significant grant programs place a priority on increasing the effectiveness of teachers and leaders—and on encouraging states and districts to work together with teachers and their unions to improve schools and raise student achievement. In the Department’s Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), School Improvement Grants (SIG), Investing in Innovation (i3), and Race to the Top (RTT) grants, there is a focus on increasing teacher and principal effectiveness and on transforming the profession through labor-management collaboration.

The Department has also committed significant time and energy to convening teachers, union leaders, district administrators, school board members, and others to discuss collaboration and learn from one another. The Department’s groundbreaking *Conference on Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration*, held in February 2011, was co-sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), and funded by a generous grant from the Ford Foundation. The event brought together 150 district teams—made up of superintendents, union leaders, and school board presidents—to share promising practices, strengthen existing relationships, and foster greater collaboration at the local and national levels.

The May 2012 conference, titled *Collaborating to Transform the Teaching Profession*, was focused on highlighting innovative approaches—at both the state and district level—to improving student achievement by dramatically increasing the stature of the teaching profession and the number of highly effective teachers in our nation’s schools. The 2011 co-sponsors were joined in 2012 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and in addition to convening district teams, the conference included state teams consisting of chief state school officers, state union leaders, and state school boards association and administrators association leaders. The 2012 conference was funded by significant grants from the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the GE Foundation. Valuable case studies and lessons learned were shared at these events.⁷

⁶ Johnson, Susan M. *Learning Session with the U.S. Department of Education*. 22 July 2011.

⁷ Eckert, Jonathan (Ed.). *Local labor management relationships as a vehicle to advance reform: Findings from the U.S. Department of Education’s labor management conference*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2011. <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration/district-case-studies>; U.S. Department of Education, *Labor-Management Collaboration Conference Toolkit*, 2011. <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration/conference-toolkit>

The Department has also sought to learn from the practices and systems of high-performing nations. In March 2011, the U.S. Department of Education, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and Education International (an organization of teacher's unions from across the world) hosted the first *International Summit on the Teaching Profession*—an event so successful it is now held annually. The 2012 event was again hosted by the U.S.; in 2013 the event will be hosted by the Netherlands. Each Summit brings together ministers of education and their national union leaders from the highest performing and most rapidly improving countries in the world to share knowledge, policies, and practices about the teaching profession. The Department and its co-hosts planned this event with the NEA, the AFT, and CCSSO, who rounded out the U.S. delegation to the Summit. As the 2011 and 2012 summits demonstrated, the international appetite for sharing best practices in union-management collaboration is immense. Papers prepared by the OECD and the Asia Society shine light on the promising international practices discussed there.⁸

In addition to using its convening power to promote student-centered collaboration, the Department is applying the lessons learned to formulate a groundbreaking new proposal for transforming the teaching profession. In February, 2012, the Department announced the launch of the RESPECT Project, which stands for *Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching*. *Recognizing Educational Success* means that RESPECT keeps the focus on improving student outcomes. *Professional Excellence* means that RESPECT will promote continuously improving practice—and will recognize, reward and, most importantly, learn from great teachers and school leaders. And *Collaborative Teaching* means that RESPECT will promote shared responsibility for student outcomes in schools where principals and teachers work and learn together in communities of practice, hold each other accountable, and lift each other to new levels of skills and competence. The purpose of the RESPECT Project is to directly engage with teachers across America in a national conversation about transforming the teaching profession by dramatically changing the way teachers are recruited, credentialed, supported, compensated, promoted, and retained in the profession.

Currently a national RESPECT Project conversation is well underway. The Department's Teaching Ambassador Fellows—teachers who help shape the Department's policies—have held hundreds of roundtable meetings with teachers across the country to elicit input from thousands of teachers. Through these conversations, the Department is receiving and implementing feedback on a comprehensive vision for transforming the teaching profession, which includes reforms such as supporting state and local efforts to attract top-tier talent into education and better prepare them for success; encouraging the creation of professional career continuums with competitive compensation; strengthening the development and evaluation of teachers and leaders; creating school conditions and cultures conducive to high performance; and helping schools to get the best educators to the students and communities who need them most. This iterative process ensures that the Department is developing robust policy, directly informed by the experiences and ideas of teachers nationwide.

The RESPECT Project's outreach and policy development processes also complement a new \$5 billion grant program in the President's Fiscal Year 2013 budget proposal that would support states and districts that commit to pursuing these bold reforms at every stage of the teaching profession. The near-term aim of the RESPECT Project is to elevate teachers' voices in shaping federal, state, and local policy.

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, *International Summit on the Teaching Profession*, March 2012.
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/internationaled/teaching-summit-2012.html>

The long-term goal is to make teaching not only one of America’s most important professions, but also one of its most respected professions.

In addition, the Department believes the issue of labor-management collaboration is so important that it is not only reflecting on and modifying its own practices, it is formally tracking promising state and district efforts at collaboration. The Department has used the bully pulpit to highlight successful efforts, including district contracts and agreements and state policies and legislation that formalize labor-management relationships anchored in improving student outcomes. And it has done its best to garner information about labor-management collaboration from news coverage, published case studies, educational conferences, and other field work—despite the relative dearth of formal or comprehensive analyses of labor-management collaboration.

What follows in this document distills our sense of the progress to date and the challenges ahead, based in part on reports from the field and in part on the Department’s own efforts at tracking collaboration over the last several years. This analysis is organized around the “10 Principles for Effective Labor-Management Collaboration” that were jointly put forward by the co-sponsors of the 2011 conference on labor-management collaboration and which represent the key areas of challenge and opportunity in implementing collaborative, student-centered reforms (see sidebar).

10 Principles for Effective Labor-Management Collaboration¹

1. Strategic Direction Setting
2. Clear and Shared Responsibility for Academic Outcomes of All Students
3. Supporting the Growth and Improvement of Teachers and Leaders
4. School Design, Schedules, Teacher Workload, and Time
5. Teacher Evaluation
6. Administrator Evaluation
7. School Board Evaluation
8. Transfer, Assignment, and Reduction in Force
9. Compensation and Benefits
10. Dynamic Decision Making and Problem Solving

1. U.S. Department of Education, *Conference on Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration*, February 2011, <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration/conference/principles-action>

Recent Trends: Promising Progress—and Significant Opportunity for Improvement

Collaboration at the District Level

At the local level, many district superintendents, school board members, and union leaders have experimented with new forms of collaboration in recent decades. The *Conference on Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration* in 2011 highlighted twelve stories, ranging from large urban districts like Baltimore City, Maryland and Hillsborough County, Florida (see sidebar), to small districts like Plattsburgh, New York and Helena, Montana, as well as the Green Dot Public Schools charter school network in Los Angeles, California.

Some districts and school networks had nurtured a collaborative relationship between teachers and administrators for years. Others had been driven to try new tactics by fiscal turmoil, federal incentives, state policy changes, or new leadership. While impressive and instructive, for the most part these ground-level efforts have been sporadic and isolated. There have been painfully few attempts by state and national policymakers to build upon this collaborative progress by creating the conditions for deeper and broader collaboration.

The area of collaborative local policy that has received the greatest amount of attention has been teacher evaluation. A number of districts have worked together with teachers and their unions to redefine policies and practices in this arena. “More than any prior education reform, new teacher evaluation systems will profoundly affect the day-to-day job responsibilities and career prospects of classroom teachers,” notes a recent Aspen Institute report on teacher evaluation systems. “Teacher unions and other associations representing teachers’ voices have a huge role to play in translating these policies into practice.”⁹

While some of these efforts have been sparked or encouraged by federal programs like the Teacher Incentive Fund or Race to the Top, or by changes to state laws, often districts, teachers, and union leaders themselves have stepped forward to propose new systems for assessing teachers’ effectiveness. These collaborative efforts often emerge first in districts where union-management collaboration was already a strong force and have their genesis in teachers’ concerns about existing teacher evaluation systems. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has described current teacher evaluation systems as “broken” and many teachers would agree—evaluations are too infrequent, too subjective, or

TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Spotlight on: Hillsborough County, FL

The teacher evaluation system in Florida’s Hillsborough County was developed jointly by district and union leaders with significant input from teachers themselves, who have long been active participants in developing teacher policies and systems there. In fact, most district administrators are hired after years as Hillsborough classroom teachers and union leaders, and hundreds of teachers participate in committees that decide everything from textbook selection to professional development agendas to teacher evaluation decisions.

The new evaluation system assigns teachers effectiveness scores based on student learning gains, principals’ judgment, and ratings by a master teacher holding the position of peer evaluator. Hillsborough is also one of the only districts working to develop additional assessments to measure student growth, including more than 500 exams for 429 courses in so-called “hard-to-measure” content areas not tested by the state’s assessment, including foreign language, art, music and physical education.¹

Evaluation results are used to inform professional development and career ladders tied to performance. These redesigned career ladders enable teachers to make more money and take on more responsibility, including full-time mentoring positions, peer evaluator positions that share responsibility with principals to observe and evaluate other teachers, and “teacher leader” positions that work part-time with administrators. Over time, evaluation results will also be used to inform compensation decisions, with the most consistently effective teachers—those achieving multiple years of student learning growth—eligible for higher salaries.

1. Buckley, Katie and Marion, Scott. *A Survey of Approaches Used to Evaluate Educators in Non-Tested Grades and Subjects*. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, June 2, 2011. <http://www.nciea.org/publications/Summary%20of%20Approaches%20for%20non-tested%20gradesKBSM2011.pdf>

⁹ Curtis, Rachel and Wiener, Ross. *Means to an End: A Guide to Developing Teacher Evaluation Systems that Support Growth and Development*. The Aspen Institute, January 2012. http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/Means_To_An_End.pdf

too shallow to provide teachers with meaningful development opportunities. In a 2008 survey of more than 1,000 teachers across the country conducted by Education Sector and the FDR Group, “only 26 percent of teachers reported that their own most recent formal evaluation was ‘useful and effective.’ A plurality—41 percent—say it was ‘just a formality,’ while another 32 percent say at best it was ‘well-intentioned but not particularly helpful’ to their teaching practice.”¹⁰

By contrast, many districts have recently engaged teachers and their unions in developing teacher evaluation systems that take a comprehensive, ongoing approach to teachers’ development. Because most such local evaluation systems are still in the planning or pilot stages, it is too soon to shine a spotlight on the most promising approaches. However, in evaluation systems redesigned with teacher input, most new evaluations occur more frequently than before, and do more to provide teachers with ongoing feedback to improve their instruction and guide their work. These new evaluations also tend to consider both student achievement growth and teachers’ own professional practice—what Public Impact has called the “what” (results employees have achieved) balanced with the “how” (demonstrated skills and practices the organization believes contribute to achieving those results consistently over time).¹¹ Through these mechanisms and others, new teacher evaluation systems seek to generate more nuanced and actionable feedback than the simplistic “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” ratings that have characterized teacher evaluation for decades.

Moreover, many districts have sought to engage teachers not only in the development of evaluation policies and structures, but also in the practice of evaluation. One way that districts are doing this is to engage teachers directly in the process of setting their own goals and objectives—a practice common in other sectors that has been shown to yield more useful evaluation results.¹² Peer assistance and

PEER ASSISTANCE AND REVIEW: ONE APPROACH TO TEACHER DEVELOPMENT *Spotlight on: Toledo, OH*

The pioneering peer assistance and review (PAR) program in Toledo, Ohio was originally introduced back in 1981 by longtime Toledo Federation of Teachers president Dal Lawrence. Consulting teachers are trained to mentor new teachers and to conduct frequent observations and evaluations. They are given leave from their classrooms to serve as mentors and peer observers. They then make teacher rating and status recommendations to a union-management Board of Review, and provide professional development to those teachers who need additional support.

The human resources director for Toledo Public Schools has seen the program provide more rigorous evaluations than those conducted by principals in the past. Francine Lawrence, a more recent union president—the spouse of the union leader who negotiated the original peer review program, and who now serves a national role at the AFT—credits PAR with starting a broader conversation about teaching quality, as well as broader collaboration around issues like teacher involvement in textbook adoption and a more recent performance-pay system, the Toledo Review and Alternative Compensation System (TRACS).^{1,2}

1. Toch, Thomas and Rothman, Robert. *Rush to Judgment: Teach Evaluation in Public Education*. Education Sector, January 2008.

http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/RushToJudgment_ES_Jan08.pdf

2. Sommerfeld, Meg. *Partnering for Compensation Reform*. Center for American Progress, June 2011.

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/06/pdf/union_district.pdf

¹⁰ Duffet, Ann, et al. *Waiting to Be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform*. Education Sector, 2008. http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/WaitingToBeWonOver_0.pdf

¹¹ Kowal, Julie and Hassel, Emily A. *Measuring Teacher and Leader Performance: Cross-Sector Lessons for Excellent Evaluations*. Public Impact, 2010. http://www.publicimpact.com/images/performance_measurement-public-impact.pdf

¹² Ibid- endnote 22: G. Roberts & T. Reed, “Performance Appraisal Participation, Goal Setting and Feedback.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 30 (Fall 1996), 29–60; A. Kluger & A. DeNisi, “The Effects of Feedback Interventions on Performance:

review (PAR) programs are one such promising approach, training experienced teachers to assess their peers' performance and provide them with coaching and mentoring (see sidebar on Toledo, OH). Although some of the newer, more thorough approaches to teacher evaluation can be costly and time-consuming, PAR can help mitigate these challenges, according to a recent study of two longstanding peer review programs in California.¹³

Further, as such evaluation systems mature, we expect more and more of them to link to professional development tailored to teachers' needs. "Teacher evaluation must always be, first and foremost, about the continuous improvement of teaching in every classroom," says Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. "These systems need to focus on the growth of teachers during the school year and throughout their careers."¹⁴

There are a few district examples of such customized professional development. Teachers in Jefferson County, Colorado, for example, are slated to receive targeted professional development based on the strengths and needs that emerge from their evaluations, funded in part by a Teacher Incentive Fund grant. As these evaluation systems become more reliable and comprehensive, we expect they will also be tied to more sophisticated career pathways—though again, examples are sparse (see sidebar on Baltimore City, MD).

A handful of organizations and non-profits have recognized the need to prepare educators to teach to the new college- and career-ready standards recently adopted in many states. The GE Foundation has made an \$18 million commitment to collaborate with states, districts, unions, and teachers on developing and sharing Common Core-aligned instructional resources, training and tools, with especially intensive focus in seven "Developing Futures" districts the foundation has been supporting, including Cincinnati, Ohio, and

CAREER PATHWAYS Spotlight on: Baltimore City, MD

Baltimore, Maryland has developed a collaborative district-union relationship only recently, following a 1997 agreement to cede partial district control to the state and the 2007 arrival of Superintendent Andres Alonso. In 2010 teacher contract negotiations, negotiators agreed on a number of core principles, including a focus on the professionalism of teaching and the avoidance of pilot programs in favor of bringing progress to all schools and teachers at once. Schools also have the ability to modify aspects of the agreement locally if 80 percent of the staff approves.

This set the stage for an ambitious change to the salary structure, which no longer relies merely upon advanced degrees but instead establishes four career pathways that teachers can pursue—Standard, Professional, Model and Lead Teacher. Teachers accumulate "achievement units" linked to their evaluation ratings and other evidence of leadership and learning. Although the negotiations around this piece of the contract were difficult, the ultimate solution—considering evaluation results alongside education and seniority, rather than as a replacement for them—has satisfied both management and the teachers union, and is a rare local example of acknowledging, encouraging, and rewarding teachers for different interests and skills over time.¹

1. Eckert, Jonathan (Ed.). *Local labor management relationships as a vehicle to advance reform: Findings from the U.S. Department of Education's labor management conference*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2011.

A Historical Review, a Meta-Analysis, and a Preliminary Feedback Intervention Theory," *Psychological Bulletin*, 119, 2 (1996), 254–284.

¹³ Humphrey, Daniel C. et al. *Peer Review: Getting Serious About Teacher Support and Evaluation*, SRI International and J.

Koppich & Associates. http://policyweb.sri.com/cep/publications/PAR_PeerReviewReport_2011.pdf

¹⁴ Weingarten, Randi. "Statement by Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, on the NCTQ Report on Teacher Evaluation," Press release, October 26, 2011, available at <http://www.aft.org/newspubs/press/2011/102611.cfm>

New York City.¹⁵ The Aspen Institute and the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin are also working to help a network of 15 large urban districts implement the standards. In addition, both national unions are supporting the implementation of the Common Core standards and are working with their local affiliates on the rollout of the standards and assessments.

In theory, successful performance management systems hold all stakeholders accountable for their roles in achieving improved student outcomes. But in practice, we see many districts engaged in teacher and principal evaluation, and very few instances in which districts are evaluating the results and work of administrators, superintendents, or school boards.

As districts make strides toward measuring the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other staff, some districts are also connecting these results to compensation. Many districts have been working with local unions for years to develop performance-based compensation programs, fueled in part by TIF grants. While some of these systems have been built from scratch with participation by teachers and administrators alike, such as the ProComp system in Denver, Colorado, others are implementing existing models like the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). TAP includes leadership and mentoring roles for effective teachers, additional compensation for those that take on mentoring responsibilities, and performance bonuses based on professional growth, student achievement, and school progress.

In many of these cases, though, compensation changes are not changing the underlying framework for how we attract and retain teachers. They are often small, voluntary incentives layered on top of existing salary structures—or allocated directly to teachers who take on additional responsibilities like working with challenging students, at a high-need school, or for an extended day.

Unions and school management will likely continue to innovate with changing the salary structures and associated career pathways available to teachers. According to the Center on American Progress, basing teacher pay on expertise and effectiveness can not only retain strong teachers and align their incentives with that of the wider school system; it can also enhance school leadership. They find that, “If those redirected dollars also pay for teachers to engage in school leadership roles that focus on improving instruction, then policymakers can build significant capacity to improve other HR practices such as teacher evaluation and professional development.”¹⁶

Over time, we expect that more and more evaluation systems will inform personnel decisions such as how teachers are recruited, supported, assigned—and, when necessary, let go. Further, it is hard to see how maintaining the current system—which fails to link effectiveness in the classroom with compensation—can burnish the reputation of teaching as a highly-skilled profession. Great teachers should be recognized and rewarded, just as ineffective teachers should receive help to improve their instruction—and if they fail to improve, despite support, be dismissed.

Finally, one important recent trend to note is that many local innovations have been prompted by the need to make dramatic changes in the operation of low-performing schools. For the most part, union-

¹⁵ GE Foundation. “Common Core State Standards Receives Largest Corporate Investment to Date With GE Foundation \$18 Million Commitment,” Press release, February 1, 2012, available at <http://www.genewscenter.com/Press-Releases/Common-Core-State-Standards-Receives-Largest-Corporate-Investment-to-Date-With-GE-Foundation-18-Million-Commitment-3632.aspx>

¹⁶ Jerald, Craig. *Aligned by Design: How Teacher Compensation Reform Can Support and Reinforce Other Educational Reforms*. Center for American Progress, July 2009. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/teacher_alignment.pdf

management collaboration on school turnaround is challenging. According to a survey by the Council of Great City Schools, 70 percent of districts implementing federal School Improvement Grants (SIG), which target low-performing schools, report that working with their unions has been a challenge. Nearly all report that related human capital issues—removing ineffective teachers and recruiting teachers to these struggling schools—were the most challenging aspects of the SIG turnaround model, used by approximately 20 percent of SIG schools.¹⁷

Yet in numerous districts, collaborative school turnaround work is taking hold. The NEA’s Priority Schools campaign is helping to support teacher quality efforts and union-management collaboration in several dozen turnaround schools nationwide. In Evansville, Indiana, union leaders and district officials have together developed an “Equity Schools” model that includes formal compacts between school staff and parents that promise improved student performance. Evansville has also created an “Equity Academy” that prepares principals and teachers with training in decision-making, communication and use of data in order to equip them to take on these new roles.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the AFT affiliates in both Providence and New Haven have worked together to create new working conditions and teacher policies in turnaround schools. In Providence, this has taken the form of jointly managed nonprofit called United Providence (UP!) that will manage its turnaround schools.¹⁹ And in New Haven, a collaborative School Change Initiative launched in 2009—in a district that had not had a collaborative relationship with its local union beforehand—includes a turnaround agreement that sorts schools into “tiers” of performance. The novel agreement specifies that the lowest-performing schools “need to be free to choose their own staffs, develop new cultures of successful performance and learning, redesign work rules, [and] modify the length of the instructional day and year, scheduling, instruction programs and pedagogy.” It also stipulates that “teachers should expect year-to-year, or even intra-year, flexibility in aspects of their duties and program not covered by the agreement.”²⁰

¹⁷ Lachlan-Haché, Jonathon; Naik, Manish; and Casserly, Michael. *The School Improvement Grant Rollout in America’s Great City Schools*. Council of the Great City Schools, February 2012.

<http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/SIG%20Report.pdf>

¹⁸ *Partnerships in Education: How Labor-Management Collaboration Is Transforming Public Schools*. American Rights at Work Education Fund, May 2011.

http://www.americanrightsatwork.org/dmdocuments/ARAWReports/partnershipsineducation_final.pdf

¹⁹ Silva, Elena and Headden, Susan. *Unlikely Allies: Unions and Districts in the Battle for School Reform*. Education Sector, 2011.

http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/Unlikely_Allies_RELEASE.pdf

²⁰ “New Haven Teacher Contract,” 2010. http://www.edweek.org/media/newhaven_teachers_contract.pdf

Ultimately, real progress will require more formal ongoing mechanisms for collaboration, beyond the mechanics of teacher contracts and the day-to-day work of instructors in schools. Districts and unions need to put in place systems, structures, and processes for teachers and leaders to collaborate regularly and substantively in policy-setting and decision-making. Several districts are leading the way. In Hillsborough County, Florida, district and union leaders set collaborative goals for student achievement that are aligned with teacher evaluation and development. In Baltimore City, the most recent contract includes shared decision-making structures related to career development and resource allocation.²¹ And many districts and unions have established instructional councils, professional development committees, and collaborative planning retreats.

While these examples of local union-management collaboration are encouraging, they are still too few and far between. Moving forward, it is imperative that policy not only reflect the needs of teachers, but also that collaborative policies are manageable and sustainable on an ongoing basis. That means new roles and responsibilities within district offices, on local school boards, and within union locals—as well as new decision-making bodies that span these stakeholder groups and allow them to tap into their collective expertise and common focus on student success.

Collaboration at the State Level

States play an important role in all education policymaking, both as the source of the vast majority of public education funding and as the constitutional linchpin for public schooling. When it comes to teaching policy, states also have an enormous influence over the teaching profession, with state laws often dictating the scope of collective bargaining and factors like teacher

DEVELOPING COMPREHENSIVE, COLLABORATIVE STATE POLICIES Spotlight on: State of Illinois

In Illinois, a solid foundation of collaboration has been in place for years, emerging not from the top but from the bottom: in the 1990s, progressive district and union leaders in various cities and suburbs created the Consortium for Educational Change, which developed and implemented collaborative approaches to reform, including a Dialogue Group that came together in 2006 to develop a shared vision for reform for Illinois public schools and accompanying legislation called the Burnham Plan.

As the state prepared to apply for Race to the Top funds in 2009, these same stakeholders came together to write legislation, including the Performance Evaluation Reform Act, which issued evaluation guidelines and established a staged rollout that allowed design and implementation to happen in a coordinated fashion with collaborative input, as well as Senate Bill 7, which incorporates performance into personnel decisions, including teaching assignments and layoffs. Senate Bill 7 was heavily influenced by draft legislation drafted by the state’s two union affiliates, the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers, along with the Chicago Teachers Union, dubbed “Accountability for All,” provided substance to the ongoing discussions between union leaders and legislators, and ultimately led to significant district support. “By going on offense instead of just trying to deflect the reformers’ proposal, the unions shut down any possible criticism that they were saying what they were against without saying what they were for,” explained Elliot Regenstein of Education Counsel in a case study on the process.

“When the negotiations started in earnest, they weren’t abstract discussions about broad principles—they were concrete negotiations about specific legislative language proposed by one of the sides.”¹

1. Regenstein, Elliot. *Illinois: The New Leader in Education Reform?* Education Counsel, July 2011. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/07/pdf/illinois_education.pdf

²¹ Eckert, Jonathan (Ed.). *Local Labor-Management Relationships as a Vehicle to Advance Reform: Findings from the U.S. Department of Education’s Labor-Management Conference*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2011. http://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/labor-management-collaboration-district-case-studies_0.pdf

evaluation frequency and eligibility for tenure. As such, they are well positioned to take up greater responsibility for supporting and scaling labor-management collaboration.

Unfortunately, most states rarely take a comprehensive view of how the governor’s office, state superintendent, education agency staff, board of education members, legislators, and teacher’s associations and unions can work together to improve student achievement and strengthen the teaching profession. “In the absence of state level reinforcement and leadership ... islands of successful (even spectacular) innovations in selected districts will emerge but fail to spread across the state and have difficulty surviving changes in political leadership in local unions, school districts, and/or state government,” caution researchers Bluestone and Kochan, who have examined union-management collaboration in both the public and private sectors.²²

There are a number of steps states could take to foster effective, smart and comprehensive collaboration. First, they could steer away from serial policy change—enacting one individual piece of legislation after another, with little coherence or connection between them (see sidebar on State of Illinois). To support these comprehensive policies for continuous academic improvement, states would be better-served by creating and strengthening relationships between stakeholder groups over time, bringing them together outside of specific legislative timetables and negotiations to work on issues in common (see sidebar on State of Ohio).

State policymakers should also continue to move away from simplistic compliance management. Instead, they should concentrate on creating administrative systems that strengthen performance management and provide technical assistance to districts and schools.

CREATING STRUCTURES FOR ONGOING COLLABORATION

Spotlight on: State of Ohio

Over the last decade, a wide range of stakeholders across the state of Ohio—including state and local leaders—came together through a process called Transformational Dialogue for Public Education (TDPE).¹ This process and group emerged out of work begun by the National Education Association in 2003 to examine its core purpose and values, resulting in a new mission statement in 2006: “to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education.”²

The Ohio TDPE group began in 2007, bringing together several dozen leaders—including representatives of the office of the Governor, the department of education, and the teacher’s unions—for two full days every other month to articulate the core purpose and values of a state’s public education system and then using this core ideology as a foundation to guide activity at the strategy level within and across their organizations.

This process allowed the key stakeholders to continue working together despite multiple changes in state leadership. Legislators, the state board, and the Ohio Education Association still managed to work together to adopt a teacher evaluation system framework in November 2011 and begin to pilot it in the 2011-2012 school year.

1. *Transformational Dialogue for Public Education*. Knowledge Works.

<http://resources.knowledgeworks.org/files/ICC/concept.pdf>

2. *Transformational Dialogue for Public Education: Sustained Transformation for Our Public Education System*. Knowledge Works.

[http://knowledgeworks.org/sites/default/files/knowledgebase/Transformational Dialogue for Public Education.pdf](http://knowledgeworks.org/sites/default/files/knowledgebase/Transformational%20Dialogue%20for%20Public%20Education.pdf)

²² Bluestone, Barry and Kochan, Thomas A. *Toward a New Grand Bargain: Collaborative Approaches to Labor-Management Reform in Massachusetts*. Boston Foundation, October 2011.

Finally, states can dedicate resources to building districts' programmatic capacity to cultivate more collaborative approaches and activities, directly (see sidebar on State of Massachusetts), or through regional educational service agencies or other technical assistance organizations. In fact, state teacher's union organizations often have the highest capacity in the state to impact education practice—through vehicles ranging from the development of model contracts to the delivery of deep professional development. In collaboration with state education agencies, unions in some states have the wherewithal to deploy teams to scale effective practices and innovations rapidly and with high quality—though this sort of collaboration is all too rare.

Although there has been less collaborative progress at the state level than at the district level, numerous states have taken steps to reform teacher evaluation. Many states are either in the process of providing districts with evaluation guidelines, or in some cases are actually developing model evaluation systems that districts can adopt or adapt to meet their needs, such as in Massachusetts.

The National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) reports that in the last two years, the number of states requiring annual evaluations for all teachers has increased from 15 to 24, and the number of states requiring such evaluations to include measures of student learning increased from 15 to 23.²³ This increased statewide attention and activity, coupled with research efforts like the Measures of Effective Teaching project supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will allow more states to develop smart, collaborative solutions at scale.

However, much like districts, states have made uneven progress in tying emerging evaluation policies and systems to concrete feedback for teachers. Just 12 states explicitly required that the results of

CREATING CAPACITY FOR LOCAL COLLABORATION

Spotlight on: State of Massachusetts

The public schools in Massachusetts have long been regarded as among the country's highest-performing, thanks in part to a comprehensive reform effort that began in 1993. It focused on high standards, rigorous assessments, and strong accountability for outcomes. With a strong tradition of local control, the state tends to set high educational expectations centrally, and then actively builds local district capacity to meet those expectations. For example, for years the state's Department of School and District Improvement has been convening district officials from across the state to address common issues in turning around their failing schools. "We know there are lots of things that each district needs to address, and doing it alone is inefficient, and probably won't get the best results," Lise Zeig, one of the department's administrators, told a Brown University symposium of educators in 2008.¹

Rather than issuing top-down guidance, the state worked collaboratively with a 41-member task force of teachers, administrators, and other experts from across the state. The department then developed a model system for districts to adopt, along with recommended contract language, implementation guides, and a network of pre-screened vendors to build districts' human resources capacity.

The first districts to pilot the new evaluation system will be those that contain the state's lowest-performing schools—who have already been convening regularly for the last several years to share lessons and resources on school turnarounds.

1. Unger, Chris et al. *How Can State Education Agencies Support District Improvement? A Conversation Amongst Educational Leaders, Researchers, and Policy Actors*. The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2008. <http://www.lab.brown.edu/pubs/csraq/Symposium.pdf>

²³ *From State of the States: Trends and Early Lessons on Teacher Evaluation and Effectiveness Policies*. NCTQ, October 2011. http://www.nctq.org/p/publications/docs/nctq_stateOfTheStates.pdf; see also *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*. NCTQ, 2011. http://www.nctq.org/stpy11/reports/stpy11_national_report.pdf

teacher evaluations be used to shape professional development offerings—and some of those only in cases where teachers receive poor evaluations.²⁴

By contrast, the new Teacher Evaluation and Development (TED) system developed by the New York State United Teachers union (and also supported by federal TIF and i3 grants, as well as by an AFT Innovation Grant) includes an emphasis on teachers and evaluators working together to create individual Professional Learning Plans based on evaluation results. Those plans give more effective teachers wider latitude in developing their professional development goals.²⁵

State progress is similarly weak in supporting the expansion of evaluation systems to include administrators, superintendents and school boards. The Department urges more states, like districts, to consider this broad-based accountability, mirroring progress made on evaluations for teachers and principals in their evaluation plans.

To date, few states have grappled with or collaborated around the issue of establishing career ladders or pathways for teachers, where advancement is tied to effectiveness rather than seniority. Given their control over teachers colleges, certification/licensing, and requirements for granting tenure, states could also be more active players in putting in place an infrastructure to better support the preparation, growth, and development of their teaching corps.

Some states are successfully using compensation as a lever to move good teachers into high-need areas, such as increased pay for teachers in hard-to-staff schools and subjects in Florida and Virginia, and loan repayment for teachers willing to work in rural areas in Montana. But given their budgetary challenges, many more states have dealt with the flip side of hiring and compensation: layoffs. Unlike districts, few states take teacher effectiveness into account in these policy or practical decisions, with many continuing to anchor both compensation structures and layoff decisions on seniority rather than on demonstrated student impact. This may be changing, albeit slowly: NCTQ has found that eight states require student performance to be factored into tenure decisions (including Illinois, profiled above, where teaching positions will now be filled based on a range of factors—with seniority only used as a “tie-breaker” and performance as a permissible basis for dismissal, rather than mere longevity). Thirteen states now specify that ineffectiveness in the classroom can lead to teacher dismissal.²⁶

Finally, there are few, if any, state-level examples of new structures and practices that enable administrators and teachers to work together to set goals and make decisions. State leaders should be encouraged to develop the habit of working together, so that when high-stakes decisions need to be made or the surrounding policy environment changes, solid relationships have already been formed. Such practices have proved invaluable in the states profiled above—and it is the Department’s hope that the number and strength of such statewide collaborations increase in the years ahead.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Teacher Evaluation and Development Handbook*. New York State United Teachers, November 2011.

http://www.nysut.org/files/TED_Handbook.pdf

²⁶ *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*. NCTQ, 2011. http://www.nctq.org/stpy11/reports/stpy11_national_report.pdf

Trends among National Organizations

What can be done to continue fostering district and state collaborative activity? The good news is that many of the national organizations that can fuel collaborative reform are already moving toward a shared vision for placing student achievement at the center of their efforts and are orienting teacher policy and practice around that overarching goal. These organizations need to move quickly, and with a sense of urgency, from vision statements to practical initiatives that implement this vision.

It is encouraging and groundbreaking that both national teacher's unions are working to enhance local and state affiliates' capacity to innovate and collaborate. The Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN) —which includes both AFT and NEA affiliates—is bringing together regional groups of union-management teams to learn from each other and from experts, as a mechanism for further deepening and scaling up their collaborative efforts thus far.²⁷

The American Federation of Teachers' AFT Innovation Fund has been supporting promising local efforts directly, while also collaborating directly with the American Association of School Administrators to develop a strategy for improving teacher evaluation, professional development, and support. In 2010 remarks, AFT President Randi Weingarten called for a shift in the nature of labor-management relationships towards greater collaboration and trust: "We must transform our mutual responsibility into mutual commitment. Our relationship should be a constant conversation that begins before and continues long after we meet at the bargaining table. So much of what is bargained is an attempt to codify behavior that, in a trusting relationship, would never need to be codified. If we adhere to this vestige of the factory model, there will be no sustainable, positive change in public education."²⁸

Meanwhile, the National Education Association has developed a Priority Schools Campaign to support struggling schools in their turnaround efforts. It has also convened promising districts through its NEA Foundation Institute for Innovation in Teaching and Learning. The foundation's initiatives are designed to "engage local union and district leaders in a capacity-building process that will lead to significant, measurable changes in collective bargaining agreements and in teaching and learning, including new approaches to the management of human capital and new ways of measuring student learning."

The NEA also recently commissioned a groundbreaking report on Effective Teachers and Teaching that examined how the union could promote effective teaching practices. The final report uses versions of the word "collaborate" nearly 40 times in its 28 pages. "Educators can become far more effective by working together and sharing responsibilities," noted Commission chairwoman Maddie Fennell in a speech releasing the Commission's report. "We call for systemic changes in the educational structures by engaging teachers in the decision-making processes that impact student learning. Moving from a top-down hierarchical model to a circular structure of shared responsibility will also help to engage students as active participants in their own learning."²⁹

²⁷ TURN Network. "CEC Awarded \$2 Million to Increase Teacher Leadership in School Improvement," Press release, January 17, 2012, available at <http://www.turnexchange.net/blog/cec-awarded-2-million-to-increase.html>

²⁸ Weingarten, Randi. "A New Path Forward: Four Approaches to Quality Teaching and Better Schools," Remarks by President of the American Federation of Teachers, to the National Press Club, January 12, 2010, available at http://aft.3cdn.net/227d12e668432ca48e_twm6b90k1.pdf

²⁹ Fennell, Maddie. "Release of the Commission Report on Effective Teachers and Teaching," Remarks before National Education Association, December 8, 2011, available at http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/MaddieFennell_Comments_PressConference.pdf

In a follow-up to the report, NEA president Dennis Van Roekel said that the national union is prepared to reorganize its work and resources, channeling teachers' voices into policy and helping its members actively collaborate with administrators and legislators. "If we want to create an education system for the students of the 21st century, we must transform that system, including the teaching profession. Since teachers know best about what we do, teachers should take responsibility for leading the transformation....Just as NEA trained and supported our local affiliates in the fight for collective bargaining during the 1960s and '70s, so we will now support them in efforts to transform our profession."³⁰

At the same time, a number of organizations for educator leaders are looking to tap the wisdom and insight of accomplished teachers in improving education policy and practice, and shaping the future of the teaching profession. The National State Teachers of the Year are crafting a new strategic plan built upon the presumption that differentiating roles and responsibilities for career advancement will result in recruiting and retaining more talented teachers and increase effective teaching.³¹

Teach Plus helps insert teachers' voice into education policy while also building leadership capacity by offering fellowships to accomplished teachers to spend a portion of their time on developing concrete policies and practices, with a network of more than 3,500 teachers across six major cities. They are joined by: Educators for Excellence and the VIVA Project, which connect teachers with local and state policymakers through events and advocacy; the Hope Street Group, which uses its Policy 2.0 Web platform to harness input from teacher and leaders on critical issues like teacher evaluation; and the Center for Teaching Quality, whose New Millennium Initiative also engages early career teachers in policy development.

At the U.S. Department of Education, a new cadre of outstanding classroom teachers shares their expertise as Teaching Ambassador Fellows each year. Some contribute to policy and program development as full-time employees at our headquarters in Washington, D.C., while others support outreach and teacher engagement efforts in regional offices.

³⁰ Van Roekel, Dennis. "Leading the Profession: NEA's Three-Point Plan for Reform," Remarks before National Education Association, December 8, 2011, available at http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PR_LeadingtheProfession.pdf

³¹ PR Newswire. "National State Teachers of the Year Applaud NEA Commission Report," Press release, December 9, 2011, available at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/national-state-teachers-of-the-year-applaud-nea-commission-report-135346928.html>

CONCLUSION

As we look to the future of our education system—and the evolving nature of the teaching profession—the U.S. Department of Education believes it is critical to learn from and build upon these early experiments in collaborative progress. By sharing responsibility and learning from one another, and by keeping our focus on whether or not a reform is anchored in student outcomes, educators, unions, management, and state and federal leaders alike can accelerate the pace of change and transform public schools to meet student and community needs.

This will require a great deal of heavy lifting and a sharp departure from traditional *modus operandi* of policymakers, administrators and school boards. To expand successful collaboration, state, district, and federal leaders will need to spend far more time and attention involving teachers and union leaders in policy and management decisions. Transforming that relationship will be arduous and require courage. But it is the strong belief of the Department that it will yield more productive relationships that will, in turn, lead to more significant and sustainable change for students over time.

For national, state and local unions, this implies a significant shift as well; it means changes in the way they consider their mission, as well as in the way they do their work. That shift has already begun at the national level—and it, too, has nudged union leaders outside of their traditional comfort zones. A Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN) study found that unions shifting from an industrial to a professional model struggled to reconceive staff roles and expertise, restructure their budgets to support new staffing structures, and reorient their expertise around enhancing teacher quality rather than just optimizing working conditions.³²

As the National Education Association has made clear, “Putting teaching and learning first will require some new ways of doing business.” That shift, the NEA believes, will require union leaders to “become experts in education policy. They need to keep members informed about what they are thinking, what administrators are thinking, what the latest policy issues are and what legislative proposals might affect them. At the same time, union leaders need to listen to members. All of these changes will require unions to develop new expertise and take on new capacities.”³³

Likewise, teachers and principals need to be prepared to work differently; teachers will need to engage in work that has traditionally been seen as administrative and bring their instructional expertise to bear on the creation of policies and systems, and to support their unions as they evolve to support a new generation of teachers and schools. Principals will need to embrace, support and encourage teachers as they take on these new roles.

Teachers seem to be ready for this shift—and in many respects, welcome it. “Public school teachers expect unions to continue playing their traditional role: to bargain for benefits, safeguard jobs, and protect teachers from political machinations in their districts. But teachers also are open to their local union playing a role in improving teacher quality,” Education Sector found in a recent report. Their study found that “large numbers [of teachers] would support union efforts to mentor and train teachers, to negotiate new ways to evaluate teachers, and even to engage in high-stakes reform efforts such as

³²Hershberg, Theodore and Robertson-Kraft, Claire (Eds.). “Professional Unionism” chapter (Jupp/Koppich). *A Grand Bargain for Education Reform: New Rewards and Supports for New Accountability*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009.

³³ *Human Capital: Unions and School Districts Collaborating To Close Achievement Gaps*. NEA Foundation, January 2010. <http://www.neafoundation.org/downloads/HumanCapital.pdf>

guiding ineffective teachers out of the profession.”³⁴ That more ambitious mission for local unions would also add to teachers’ daily to-do list. Educators, too, would be expected to stay informed about professional issues and to participate actively in lending their voice and expertise to critical decisions about their work and profession.

At the same time, there is a crucial need for support from outside experts, including those who can conduct rigorous research that can define and explain the connection between these evolving forms of collaborative decision-making, the policies and practices they lead to, and the student achievement results they produce.

The Department’s working hypothesis is that collaboration is a more effective and efficient way to develop great teachers and strong instructional systems, and that it is a more sustainable approach over time than the ups and downs of adversarial relationships. But that hypothesis must be stress-tested and studied. At present, the research most closely related to this topic focuses on the connection between unionization and outcomes, with clear findings that collective bargaining tends to increase teachers’ pay but mixed results regarding whether that increased spending leads to stronger teacher candidates, greater student engagement, or improved overall student achievement. There is regrettably no research available on the extent to which those results or their costs are influenced by the manner in which the contract or related policies are created, collaboratively or otherwise.

The success of these collaborative efforts will demand financial and technical support to help educational institutions transition from an adversarial mentality to a collaborative approach. Supporters like the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the GE Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, and others have all sought to foster new types of relationships and agreements between unions, districts, and states. To date they have provided critical funding for technical expertise, local capacity, stakeholder engagement, and program evaluation.

Finally, these efforts will also require support and attention from parents, families and community members. As taxpayers and voters, they are the ultimate consumers who must help to create the demand that *all* voices—including those of students and parents—be a part of the development of education policy and that *all* efforts that measurably improve student achievement and build a more 21st century learning environment are embraced and celebrated.

³⁴ Duffett, Ann et al. *Waiting to Be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform*. Education Sector, May 2008. http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/WaitingToBeWonOver_0.pdf