



**Support for Growing Excellent Achievement Training Academies
for Teachers and Principals Act, S. ____**

June 22, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
379A Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Growing Excellent Achievement Training Academies for Teacher and Principals Act recently introduced by Senator Bennet, Senator Alexander, Senator Mikulski, Senator Landrieu, and Senator Kirk. We believe this innovative approach to training the next generation of teachers and principals is absolutely vital to meet the needs of today's accountability-driven schools and classrooms, where the ultimate measure of success is tied to student achievement.

If enacted, the proposed legislation will improve the field of teacher and principal training in three distinct ways. First, the newly created academies will be rigorously selective in who they admit to their programs – just as West Point admits only the best of the best, so too will these new academies admit and train our most promising teacher and leader candidates. Second, candidates at these academies will receive significant, hands-on clinical training as part of their training, so that these new teachers and principals will be prepared on their very first day at work. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, candidates will only graduate from these academies once they have demonstrated a track record of success in improving student achievement in the classroom. Training academies that fall short of meeting their goals in this regard would not be reauthorized, and would not continue their programs.

In return for accepting this higher degree of accountability, teacher and principal training academies will be freed from having to satisfy antiquated, input-based requirements. For example, these academies will not be required to hire faculty to conduct research on issues unrelated to student achievement. Similarly, as the use of online learning and electronic readers continues to grow, it makes little sense to impose requirements related to physical infrastructure upon these programs. This flexibility will allow these academies to innovate and transform the practice of teacher and principal training, and at the local level.

There are other exciting, transformative ideas included in the GREAT Teachers and Principals Act as well. Among other things, teacher training programs and programs will serve high-needs areas (including rural areas) and high-needs subjects, and existing high-quality programs will be prioritized for funding. Participating states will also have the opportunity to partner with intermediary nonprofit organizations to identify, support and grow the next generation of programs. And academies will continually track the employment of their graduates as they progress throughout all stages of their careers.

Finally, and importantly, the GREAT Teachers and Principals Act is a *voluntary* program. Only those states that want to innovate and break with the status quo methods of preparing teachers and principals would apply for funds. Further, states will have a wide degree of flexibility in choosing what programs to authorize and support, and in establishing the authorizers that will approve and oversee academies to ensure they are held accountable for results.

Whether as part of reauthorization the Elementary and Secondary Act or as an independent legislation, we offer our unqualified support for the GREAT Teachers and Principals Act. We need to train the next generation of great teachers and leaders, and this bill will do that.

Sincerely,

50CAN: The 50-State Campaign for Achievement Now
Academy for Urban School Leadership
Achievement First
Aspire Public Schools
Black Alliance for Educational Options
Boston Plan for Excellence
Boston Teacher Residency
Jean-Claude Brizard, Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools
Business Roundtable
Brook Byers, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers
Capital Teaching Residency
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Charter School Growth Fund
Civic Builders
ConnCAN: Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now
DC Prep Public Charter School
Democrats for Education Reform
DonorsChoose.org
Charlene Drew Jarvis, Senior Advisor, Jarvis Co.
E.L. Haynes Public Charter School
Education Equality Project
The Education Trust
EnCorps
FirstLine Schools
Lance Fors, Chairman, New Teacher Center
Peter C. Gorman, former Superintendent, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
Green Dot Public Schools
Kenji Hakuta, Lee J. Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University
Jane Hannaway, Director, Education Policy Center, The Urban Institute
IDEA Public Schools
Jason Kamras, Chief, Office of Human Capital, District of Columbia Public Schools
Joel Klein, former Chancellor, New York City public schools; senior advisor, News Corporation
Knowledge Is Power Program
Mastery Public Schools
MATCH Charter Public High School
MinnCAN: The Minnesota Campaign for Achievement Now
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Center for Urban Education at the University of the District of Columbia
New Leaders for New Schools
New Schools for New Orleans

New Teacher Center
The New Teacher Project
NewSchools Venture Fund
Tom Payzant, Professor of Practice Harvard Graduate School of Education and former Superintendent of Boston Public Schools
Relay School of Education (formerly Teacher U)
RI-CAN: The Rhode Island Campaign for Achievement Now
Rocketship Education
Kim Smith, Bellwether Education
Stand for Children
Students for Education Reform
Success Charter Network
Teach For America
Uncommon Schools
United Negro College Fund
The Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago
Urban Teacher Center

Cc: U.S. Secretary of Education, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Labor, Education & Pension Members, and U.S. House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee Members