



**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