

What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future (1996). National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

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Citation

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996). *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future. Report of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.* Woodbridge, VA: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Description

What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, a 1996 report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), calls attention to teacher quality as the key to improving American education. The Commission contends that the capability of the teacher has the strongest effect on student learning and that "recruiting, preparing, and retaining" quality teachers is the most important way to improve education. Moreover, NCTAF believes that education reformers must provide the support and conditions essential for teachers to teach effectively. The report maps out a plan for providing every child with high quality teaching by attracting, developing, and supporting excellent teachers.

In this report the Commission, under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt (chair) and Linda Darling-Hammond (executive director), calls for all students to have high quality teachers by 2006. It notes that students must have teachers who have both mastered the content of the subject they teach and developed the teaching skills necessary to interest students in learning. The report describes several leading factors that hamper student learning: limited access to quality teachers, poor teacher recruitment strategies, standards for teachers that are not enforced, and inadequate teacher preparation.

In order to remedy this situation, the report calls for standards for students and teachers, improved teacher preparation, and better teacher recruitment efforts. It also advocates for a career continuum for teachers built around assessments, and a model compensation that rewards knowledge and skills. Finally the report suggests that schools need to be organized in a way that promotes success for students and teachers. This entails flattening hierarchies, investing more in teacher salaries, and selecting principals that understand teaching and can lead high performing schools.

To facilitate the Commission's work, a network of states dedicated to improving teacher quality was formed in 1996. At last count, 23 states were participating in the network.

For More Information

What Matters Most and other information from NCTAF can be found online at the Commission's website, which can be accessed at www.nctaf.org.