



**Philadelphia Education Fund**  
*Champions for Quality Public Education*

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**Statement Re:  
Teaching Effectiveness Campaign  
Press Conference**

**March 31, 2009**

Good afternoon,

I want to thank you for coming out today so that we can give you information about this extremely important issue, what we can do to ensure effective teaching for all children.

My name is Brian Armstead, Director of Civic Engagement for the Philadelphia Education Fund and convener of the Education First Compact. The Compact is a diverse group of organizations committed to improving public education in Philadelphia. For this campaign, we are working with the parent and student organizing groups of the Philadelphia Cross City Campaign for School Reform and have produced a platform entitled ***Effective Teaching for All Children: What It Will Take***.

We are here today because “All children in Philadelphia have the right to consistently effective teaching in every content area and at every grade level, Pre-K through 12.”

But we are holding this press conference and kicking off this Teaching Effectiveness campaign on March 31<sup>st</sup> because tomorrow, too many students will have to face the cruelest joke of all, teaching and learning that is not as effective as those students truly need and deserve. What is needed, across the city, is teaching and learning that will lead to student graduation and postsecondary success. Too often, though, inexperienced teachers are concentrated in high-poverty and needy schools where they stay only briefly. Subsequently, poor and minority children have the least chance of being taught by a stable and talented combination of effective new and veteran teachers. This “gap” contributes greatly to the achievement gap.

But schools and communities, across the city, face challenges in creating an effective teaching workforce. In this school district, there is no clear definition or commonly held standard for high-quality teaching. And evaluations are simply a matter of checking off “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”. This leaves little room for effective evaluations nor the ability to adequately tailor professional development to address teacher’s strengths and weakness and meet their needs.

Additionally, too many administrative and contractual challenges exist that limit the ability to develop top-quality leadership, place them where they are most needed, give staff the supports to excel, and provide the schools with the ability to recruit and select staff so they can create and implement a transformative vision. Other changes need to be made to ensure that we have a deep

reservoir of applicants so that we have the best talent available and also that we find ways to fully staff the schools in a timely manner.

But the good news is that the opportunity to change all this exists, right now, as never before. The new Superintendent, Dr. Arlene Ackerman and her leadership team have expressed a sincere commitment to eliminating the achievement gap and have explicitly recognized that “victory is in the classroom, facilitated by a strong instructional leader.” The draft versions of the strategic plan, and many of the District’s initial efforts thus far, have begun to move us closer to the vision that we are expressing in this platform. The new leadership of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) has consistently stated their desire to have a world-class teaching workforce with the supports and resources needed to unleash their talent. And the School District and the PFT are in the midst of negotiating their new contract.

Finally, we have a Mayor, Governor and President that have all prioritized education as evidenced by the Mayor’s efforts to cut the dropout rate in half and double the college graduation rate, the Governor’s leadership in creating a new state funding formula and increasing the availability of funds, and new federal stimulus funds that are being directed towards education reform.

Most importantly, however, we have a community that is poised and ready to partner with our leaders as they focus on improving teaching quality and equity and to hold them accountable as they prioritize their plans, design their budgets, and begin the hard work of implementing their plans.

As you listen to the following three speakers, keep in mind that this Teaching Effectiveness platform is built upon two imperatives:

**Every child deserves an effective teacher, and  
Every school needs a stable workforce of effective teachers.**

For the School District—along with the unions and the District’s allies—to translate these imperatives into reality we have developed a number of necessary reforms that are grouped around six “planks”:

- 1. Distribute experienced and effective teachers equitably across District schools.**
- 2. Create performance standards for teachers and principals that are aligned with student success, and implement them consistently district-wide.**
- 3. Create an effective professional development strategy that is guided by teacher input and creates a “culture of collaboration” in schools.**
- 4. Give school leaders the tools & resources to hire and create teams of effective teachers.**
- 5. Create a “deep bench” of applicants for teaching positions.**
- 6. Open school with NO teacher vacancies.**

As important as our ideas, however, is the reason that we have joined together to create this platform and campaign. For too long, the School District of Philadelphia, the teachers union, and our elected officials have not been able to focus on and coordinate their efforts on improving this most critical issue: the quality, equity, and effectiveness of our teaching workforce.

While we have been encouraged by the new initiatives that the School District has already begun—often with the cooperation of the teachers' union—we understand that this is a long process that will require a lot of energy and commitment and the ability to stay focused through the maze of competing interests.

But what fills us with hope and confidence that we can, indeed create a system that passes muster on all six of our planks is that other school districts, unions, and communities around the country have already begun the work. They have already shown us that this work is doable and that if we make just a few key choices and implement them thoroughly and completely we can and will make tremendous progress and make the educational system that all of our children deserve.

So, today, we invite residents, groups, and organizations across the city to join with us in highlighting the need for Effective Teaching for all of our children, supporting and applauding our leaders when they move us in the proper direction and holding them accountable for all of their decisions and actions because truly, our children deserve and need to be our number one priority.