

NEWS RELEASE

PDK/GALLUP POLL ON EDUCATION AFFIRMS NEED FOR RIGOR, PRESTIGE IN TEACHING

Levine cites findings' emphasis on selectivity in teacher preparation

PRINCETON, N.J. (August 23, 2012)—Findings from the 44th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, released yesterday, affirm the need to treat teacher preparation like preparation for other high-level professions, as do countries that lead in education internationally.

According to the poll, 67 percent of Americans—based on a nationwide sample—believe that greater rigor in entrance requirements for teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities would mean that those institutions would graduate more effective teachers.

In fact, poll respondents believed that teachers should be of at least the same caliber as future engineers, physicians, attorneys, and business leaders. Among respondents, 75 percent thought that teacher preparation programs should be at least as tough to get into as pre-med programs; 83 percent thought entrance requirements for teacher education should be as rigorous as for pre-law; 84 percent said that future teachers should be at least as qualified as future engineers; and fully 93 percent believed teacher preparation should be as selective, or more selective, than business school.

These findings, said Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, echo the kind of selectivity found in teacher preparation programs in nations that routinely top international education rankings.

“McKinsey and Company found that 100 percent of new teachers in Finland, Singapore and South Korea come from the top third of their college classes.” Levine noted. “In the U.S., that figure is 23 percent. In other words, fewer than one in four teacher candidates in this country has the kind of credentials that good candidates for careers in law or medicine or engineering have to have.”

So what will it take to make teaching more appealing to better candidates? “The teaching profession needs to be able to offer more competitive salaries, better working conditions, and reasonable and regular evaluation tied fairly to performance-based incentives and opportunities for advancement,” said Levine. “We need to reemphasize the importance and impact of the profession. And we need to close the weak programs with low admission standards that perpetuate a lack of rigor and lead to a lack of respect for teaching.”

In addition, incentives to enter the field, including scholarships for teacher preparation and affiliation with high-profile organizations, can be important. Programs such as the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowships offer \$30,000 stipends to help recruit accomplished career changers and outstanding recent college graduates in STEM fields to teaching. These excellent candidates prepare for math and science teaching positions in their state's urban and rural schools. At present, 17 universities in three states—Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio—are participating, with another three states already in discussion with the Foundation to create similar programs.

Founded in 1945, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation identifies and develops leaders and institutions to address the critical challenges facing society through education. The Foundation has supported and encouraged more than 21,000 future leaders at critical points early in their careers in education, the arts, business, government, and many other fields. Fellows include 13 Nobel Prize winners, 11 Pulitzer Prize winners, 35 MacArthur Fellowship “Genius Award” recipients, two Fields Medalists, and thousands of other noted leaders.

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