



A Union of Professionals

AFT News Release

For Immediate Release
May 5, 2007

Contact:
Janet Bass
202/879-4554
jbass@aft.org

AFT Reiterates Urgent Call for Teacher Preparation Changes Recommendations Made in 2000 Remain Valid but Generally Untouched

LOS ANGELES – Little has changed over the last seven years since the American Federation of Teachers issued an urgent call to revamp the way higher education screens and prepares teacher candidates, AFT President Edward J. McElroy said, and the next seven years are crucial because of 2014 No Child Left Behind Act deadlines.

Among the AFT’s 10 recommendations in 2000 were to make teacher education a five-year program, institute a rigorous exit/licensure test, and require high standards for alternative certification.

“Colleges and universities need to make major changes to the way they train teachers. The best answer to high-quality teaching is high-quality preparation,” McElroy said, noting the need for first-rate training, rigorous standards for entry into teaching, and a strong induction program for new teachers.

The AFT president noted the looming 2014 NCLB deadline for all K-12 students to meet state standards. If the next crop of teachers receive better preparation, he said, states will have a better chance of achieving that goal. But no matter how good the preparation, he said, there still will be problems if assessments are not aligned to state standards—a pervasive problem across the country now.

In 2000, an AFT task force of higher education and K-12 leaders called for a national commitment to reshape teacher preparation because of serious deficiencies. These included difficulty in recruiting the ablest students to the profession; inadequate standards for entering and exiting teacher education programs; lack of standards for clinical programs; and difficulty, within a four-year program, in finding enough time and the proper balance of liberal arts courses, pedagogical studies and a major in an academic discipline. The AFT made 10 recommendations:

- Require core liberal arts courses. Most universities require core courses, but they vary based on state certification and licensure requirements.
- Raise entrance grade-point average (GPA) for teacher education programs. They should require a 2.75 GPA at the end of the sophomore year and phase it up to a 3.0 GPA.
- Institute a national entry test. It should be developed by the teaching profession and administered by the end of the sophomore year to select teacher education candidates. The test should require students to demonstrate college-level proficiency in math, science, English language arts and history/geography/social studies.

-More-

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • T: 202/879-4458 • F: 202/879-4456 • www.aft.org

AFT Teachers • AFT PSRP • AFT Higher Education • AFT Public Employees • AFT Healthcare



- Require an academic major in addition to pedagogical studies.
- Develop a core curriculum in pedagogy. The teaching profession should agree on, and recommend that colleges adopt, a rigorous core curriculum in pedagogy based on the best research on how students learn and on effective teaching methods.
- Strengthen induction programs for new teachers. All beginning teachers should participate in an induction program. Mentors, who have been carefully selected and trained, should be given time to support and evaluate new entrants to teaching.
- Strengthen the clinical experience. It should build on successful models, including using exemplary teachers to mentor student teachers. Also, pre-service teachers should be placed in diverse teaching and learning settings and should assume non-instructional duties to understand the full range of teacher responsibilities.
- Institute rigorous exit/licensure tests on subject matter and pedagogy. They should be taken by all prospective teachers prior to licensure. Currently, the rigor of tests is inconsistent.
- Take a five-year view. Teacher preparation should be organized, at a minimum, as a five-year process.
- Require high standards for alternative programs. Students in these programs should be required to take pedagogical coursework and to pass state teacher-testing exams.

###

The AFT represents 1.3 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and healthcare workers; and federal, state and local government employees.