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Education Policy Research Unit

****NEWS RELEASE****

from the **Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU)**

and the **Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSSL)**
at **Arizona State University**

CONTACT:

Gerald W. Bracey
gbracey@erols.com
(703) 317-1716

Alex Molnar, Director
Education Policy Studies Laboratory
(480) 965-1886
epssl@asu.edu
<http://edpolicylab.org>

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COLLABORATE TO IMPROVE TEACHER QUALITY, REPORT URGES

TEMPE, Ariz.— Quality education rests largely on finding and keeping good teachers. A new study suggests that to improve teacher quality and address any teacher shortages, colleges of education should work collaboratively with school districts and community colleges in the recruitment, preparation, and retention of K-12 teachers.

“Recruiting, Preparing and Retaining High Quality Teachers: An Empirical Synthesis,” by Gerald W. Bracey of George Mason University and High/Scope Foundation, and Alex Molnar of Arizona State University, published by ASU’s Education Policy Studies Laboratory, suggests that improving retention rates for qualified teachers may be the best short-term solution for any teacher shortage.

Bracey and Molnar found that teachers leave the profession for a number of reasons, including inadequate salaries, reduced teacher autonomy, and pressures from high-stakes testing—factors that should be addressed if retention rates are to be improved.

The authors also found that defining the characteristics of high quality teachers continues to be controversial. They found that no single characteristic, such as content knowledge, verbal skills, or enthusiasm for learning, necessarily marks a person as likely to be a “successful” teacher.

According to the report, “The complexity of teaching and the long list of possible indicators of quality suggest that there should be no single model of teacher preparation.”

The report makes a number of recommendations:

Teacher Recruitment

- Salaries matter—Colleges of Education should be strong and consistent advocates for adequate teacher salaries.
- Colleges of Education at four-year institutions of higher education should seek to establish collaborative programs with community colleges to recruit new teachers. Community colleges are preparing an increasing proportion of teachers and they enroll a large number of minority students. Four-year institutions, on the other hand, have expertise and connections not found in the community college environment. Partnerships would prove mutually beneficial.
- Colleges of Education should establish programs to encourage high school students to consider careers as teachers.

Teacher Preparation

- Colleges of Education should seek to develop training programs that reflect complex models of teacher quality. Research clearly shows that teaching cannot be reduced to a few indicators of quality that transcend all situational variations.
- Colleges of Education should seek to develop programs that will ease the transition from the lecture hall to the classroom. Such programs might well include beginning teacher induction programs that match new teachers with experienced ones.

Teacher Retention

- Colleges of Education should, in collaboration with school districts, develop programs to improve the retention of existing teachers. Reducing turnover of existing teachers would greatly reduce the difficulties in finding new teachers. In the short term, this may be the single most effective strategy for reducing the need for new teachers.

The Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) conducts original research, provides independent analyses of research and policy documents, and facilitates educational innovation. EPRU facilitates the work of leading academic experts in a variety of disciplines to help inform the public debate about education policy issues.

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The EPSL is directed by ASU Professor Alex Molnar.

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