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Secretary Arne Duncan on Teacher Appreciation Week

By Arne Duncan on May 7th, 2013 | Comments(10)



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Great teaching can change a child's life. That kind of teaching is a remarkable combination of things: art, science, inspiration, talent, gift, and - always - incredibly hard work. It requires relationship building, subject expertise and a deep understanding of the craft. Our celebrated athletes and performers have nothing on our best teachers.

But, in honoring teachers, I think Teacher Appreciation Week needs an update. Don't get me wrong — teachers have earned every bagel breakfast, celebratory bulletin board, gift card and thank-you note. Given the importance of their work and the challenges they face, teachers absolutely deserve every form of appreciation their communities can muster.

But we need to do something a bit more substantive and lasting than the bagel breakfast, too.

Complex as teaching has been over the years, it's more so now — in part because of reforms my administration has promoted. The reasons for these changes are clear. Despite many pockets of excellence, we're not where we need to be as a nation. The president has challenged us to regain our place as world leader in college completion, but today we rank 14th. A child growing up in poverty has less than a 1-in-10 chance of earning a college diploma.

To change the odds, we have joined with states and communities to work for major reforms in which teachers are vital actors. The biggest are new college- and career-ready standards that 46 states and the District of Columbia have chosen to adopt. These higher standards require a dramatic rethinking of teachers' daily practice: working toward standards tied to literature and problem-solving; using data to inform and adapt instruction. It's hard work — but done well, our children will have a better shot at a solid, middle-class life.

The teachers I talk to don't question the need for broad change. They are enthusiastic about instruction that emphasizes depth rather than coverage, worthy literature to read and realworld problems to solve. They passionately want to be part of helping more students get prepared for college and career. But many have told me that the pace of change is causing real anxiety.

I've heard repeatedly that, given the newness of the college- and career-ready standards, teachers really want to see what they're aiming for. They want models of excellence that they can study. And it all feels like the change is happening at once. It's impossible not to be touched by the strength of their feelings - their desire to get it right, and for many, the worry that they won't.

There's no question in my mind that raising the bar for our students is necessary and that America's educators are up to it. But I want to call on the other adults in the system to redouble their efforts to support our teachers through this change.

I'll start with my own team at the Department of Education. We are listening carefully to teachers and other experts as we walk through this transition, and working hard to figure out how to make it as smooth as it can possibly be for teachers and for their students. And I pledge to redouble our own efforts to work with states, districts and schools to help connect educators who can offer a vision of outstanding teaching under these new standards.













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Who We Are







But I also want to call on policy makers, district leaders and principals to find ways to help ease these transitions to higher standards. What does that mean?

- Find opportunities for teachers to lead this work. There is far too much talent and expertise in our teaching force that is hidden in isolated classrooms and not reaching as far as it can to bring the system forward. Teachers and leaders must work together to create opportunities for teacher leadership, including shared responsibility, and that means developing school-level structures for teachers to activate their talents. This may mean reducing teaching loads to create "hybrid" roles for teachers in which they both teach and lead.
- Find, make visible and celebrate examples of making this transition well.
 Teachers often tell me they're looking for examples of how to do this right. Let's spotlight teachers and schools that are leading the way.
- Use your bully pulpit and share that spotlight with a teacher. Whether you
 are a principal, superintendent, elected leader, parent or play some other role, you have a
 voice. Learn about this transition, and use your voice to help make this transition a good
 experience for teachers, students, and families. Especially important is educating
 families about what to expect and why it matters. Invite a teacher to help you tell the
 story and answer questions.
- Be an active, bold part of improving pre-service training and professional
 development, and make sure that all stages of a teacher's education reflect the new
 instructional world they will inhabit. Teachers deserve a continuum of professional
 growth; that means designing career lattices so that teaching offers a career's worth of
 dynamic opportunities for impacting students.
- Read and take ideas from the RESPECT Blueprint, a plan released last month
 containing a vision for an elevated teaching profession. The blueprint reflects a vision
 shaped by more than a year's worth of intimate discussions the department convened
 with some 6,000 teachers about transforming their profession. Teaching is the nation's
 most important work, and it's time for concrete steps that treat it that way RESPECT
 offers a blueprint to do that.

Don't get me wrong — teachers deserve a week of celebration with plenty of baked goods. But I hear, often, that this is a time that teachers want some extra support. They deserve real, meaningful help — not just this week, but all year long.

Arne Duncan is U.S. secretary of education.



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Sonja · 3 days ago

+5

So your idea of support is forcing Common Core on the nation when many schools don't have the infrastructure to implement it. Where's the pilot program? Is support is pushing Race to the Top grants to "qualifying" schools instead of fully funding education as it should be? Is support backing charter business interests that practice exclusive and discriminatory enrollment by refusing students with moderate/severe disabilities, English language learners, Foster and homeless youth? Is support putting our national school districts in such a precarious position with lack of funding that they become ripe for take-over by business

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Your support and policies are business decisions and do not reflect the true needs of our schools.

1 reply · active 3 days ago

Report



Ken · 3 days ago

Here here Sonja! We need real support, not platitudes.

Reply

Report

Report



I Vote ⋅ 3 days ago

Don't believe ONE WORD Duncan says. He doesn't write his talks. His communication man does the writing. Arne is just another megaphone, a mouth piece.



Anna · 2 days ago

Well said Sonja! I too agree. I would appreciate the day when leaders and the government start making changes in education that support the development of children and stop thinking of them as robots in an industry

Reply Report



Tammy Board · 2 days ago

0

UMMMMMM.....RESPECT would be nice...

Reply Report



Ų jonbordeaux ∙ 2 days ago

Arne, are you also "listening" to these teachers or are you, as many have long suspected, struggling from an affliction common among my middle school students: selective hearing?

Reply Report



CaliforniaTed23 · 2 days ago

+1

Arne slaps teachers with his right hand, while praising them with his left! How confusing!

Reply Report



Becky Reed · 2 days ago

I wonder if anyone has any ideas..

After the bullying experienced against my grandson appeared to be handled, one of the non-teacher lunchroom/playground monitors heard from one of the boys who kicked, punched, and bruised my grandson that this child wanted a swing and my grandson beat him to it. So, she took it upon herself to tell my grandson that he, my grandson, is a bully. We jumped through hoops for 5 months and that term was never used against the bully. We were told "he's having a hard time making friends."

My inquiry: are there grants or funds that could help with transportation to get my grandsons out of this $school\ district\ (Anaconda,\ MT)\ and\ into\ another\ (Philipsburg,\ MT)?\ Man!\ When\ it\ rains,\ it\ pours!!!$

A response: I'd send a letter to the principal and explain how abuse and bullying works and while you can appreciate the other child's social challenges, given what has transpired you are shocked and appalled at how ill informed his/her staff is when it pertains to handling children. I'd totally 'educate' them give them no wiggle room and suggest that his staff be held to some form of professional development on bullying (workshops) they have them. I'd also explain that given the 'trauma' your grandson has been exposed to, you are doing your part; however re-victimizing a victim almost makes his staff members now seem like an abuser by proxy. Explain how you might have resolved this problem for the betterment of BOTH children, how the adults are supposed to be the role models and there is little hope for helping children at this tender age with learning proper behaviors if the models themselves are in need of an intervention.

Reply



■ David · 2 days ago

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http://www.examiner.com/article/mr-duncan-you-are...

Reply Report



Tim ⋅ 1 day ago

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Arne, Arne.....lots too late and you have no credibility left. The 6 figure salary people in admin have it

They have NEVER cared about anything other than their paycheck. Teachers, you shut up and do what we want this week, next week we have not figured out yet. Arne resign. Reply Report Post a new comment Enter text right here! Comment as a Guest, or login: Name Email Website (optional)

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