

Report: Carnegie Forum's "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-first Century".

The Carnegie Forum has proposed a revolutionary plan to reform the present educational system. Their goal in this report is to promote higher standards for teachers and students alike. They create these higher standards through simple incentive programs. The Forum feels that it is crucial that the United States improve its educational system in order to keep up with foreign competitors economically. The current apathy towards the pursuit of knowledge existing in today's classrooms could be devastating to the future of the U.S.

The plan includes the following major elements:

- * Create a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, organized with a regional and state membership structure, to establish high standards for what teachers need to know and be able to do, and to certify teachers who meet that standard.
 - * Restructure schools to provide a professional environment for teachers, freeing them to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for student progress.
 - * Restructure the teaching force, and introduce a new category of Lead Teachers with the proven ability to provide active leadership in the redesign of the schools and in helping their colleagues to uphold high standards of learning and teaching.
 - * Require a bachelors degree in the arts and sciences as a prerequisite for the professional study of teaching.
 - * Develop a new professional curriculum in graduate schools of education leading to a Master in Teaching degree, based on a systematic knowledge of teaching and including internships and residencies in the schools.
 - * Mobilize the nation's resources to prepare minority youngsters for teaching careers.
 - * Relate incentives for teachers to school-wide student performance, and provide schools with the technology, services and staff essential to teacher productivity.
 - * Make teachers' salaries and career opportunities competitive with those in other professions.
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The ideals of the Carnegie Forum's A Nation Prepared are enthusiastically lauded by such groups as the American Federation of Teachers, the National School Board Association and the National Education Association. Although these groups support the concept of the report, they appear to have little support concerning the Forum's actual restructuring plan.

Generally speaking, they feel that the report poses as many questions as answers. They feel that the report places too much emphasis on creating a national teacher standards board and pays too little attention to the importance of creating state level professional standards boards - with teacher majorities. State level boards are very important because they maximize opportunities for teacher involvement in the governance of their profession. It is widely felt that Lead Teachers could create bureaucratic hierarchies that deny all teachers an active role.

The AFT, NSBA, and the NEA are all very skeptical about the "Market Approach" that is suggested in the report, feeling that it throws education to the entrepreneurs. The "market could lead to full opportunity for some and less for others. *- that the point of the free market*

Despite these disputes I believe that all three groups will support the report. The idea of reform is a popular one and evidently a needed one. After speaking to some representatives of these groups it became evident that their grievances would be moderately muted until the idea of reform is widely acknowledged and generally accepted. Despite the problems, they feel that it is a strong statement about the current flaws existing in the current system.