

GIVE TEACHERS A BREAK: Cutting Red Tape to Unleash the Potential of America's Great Teachers

TOP TAKEAWAYS *State Solutions*

Data showing that teacher turnover has hit all-time highs in the past five years suggest that the education system is profoundly broken. The system fails American students by failing American teachers first.

This dysfunction frequently begins with red tape and regulation on the local, state, and federal levels. Subject to an ever-expanding and ever-changing bureaucracy, teachers today are often barred from holding their students to any real academic or behavioral standards, leading to unruly, out-of-control classrooms in which little teaching or learning can be accomplished.

This doesn't need to be the case, and shouldn't be: America is a special country, in which everyone, regardless of background, has the ability to make the most of his or her life.

A CRISIS OF DISCIPLINE

According to a [2021 analysis](#), at least 15 states and the District of Columbia restrict suspension and expulsion for certain ages and grade levels, and at least 14 states and the District of Columbia prohibit suspension and expulsion for chronically absent or tardy students.

Empower Schools to Make Their Own Decisions: State and federal policymakers should step away from writing legislation that takes away schools' and teachers' abilities to suspend or expel students appropriately.

END MANDATORY GRADE INFLATION

End Equitable Grading: School districts that have implemented equitable grading policies should return to traditional grading standards that allow for higher expectations and more student growth.

Promote Transparency Through Standardized Testing: Districts and states should implement some level of standardized testing to accurately measure student performance.

Crack Down on Absenteeism: Enforcing and implementing truancy laws at the state and local level can help ensure students attend school and do the work they need to do in order to pass without any additional so-called equity-based measures artificially inflating their achievement.

STOP SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Mandatory SEL programs in many states and districts force students to partake in a form of group therapy, creating a troubling ethical situation that is also a recipe for teacher burnout.

End Taxpayer-Funded Grants for SEL: By cutting all SEL-promoting grants, Congress, as well as state legislatures, can disincentivize schools from investing further in SEL.

States Should Survey Public Schools: In the interest of transparency, states should follow in the [footsteps of Florida](#) and send surveys to public schools to gain knowledge of whether or not schools are using SEL curricula.

States Should Reject SEL-Forward Curriculum: Legislators can ensure public school textbooks and teacher training curricula free of SEL are taught, and, at minimum, can pass bills mandating parental notice and opt-out for SEL curriculum use.

TEACHER LICENSURE REFORM

While private schools and many charter schools don't require teachers to have licensure, public schools across the country do. Unfortunately, licensure often solely serves the credentialing organizations, which, by controlling the supply of teachers, effectively have a monopoly over American public education. Instead of following the default mode, states should work to have the best individuals teaching their children.

Focus on Subject-Matter Exams: States should focus on high-quality teacher licensure exams, especially in math and science, in order to ensure quality instruction, as opposed to relying on education degrees or credentials like master's degrees.

Expand the Teaching Force by Relaxing Degree Requirements: More states should seek to emulate [Louisiana](#), which allows people who hold associate's degrees in a given subject to teach in that subject, so long as they are above the age of 25, are continuously enrolled in a bachelor's program for teacher education, and become bachelor's certified within five years.

Open the Profession to Second-Career Teachers: Career switching can bring older and wiser teachers to the workforce but can also be difficult because of bureaucratic licensure requirements. States can pursue policies like [Virginia's](#), which has a career switcher program for those with at least three years of full-time work experience who earn qualifying scores on the state licensure exams and who complete a more flexible teacher training program.

Establish Licensure Reciprocity: As of June 2020, only eight states offer full teacher license reciprocity, i.e., only eight states honor the licenses of teachers licensed to teach in other states with few or no additional licensure requirements. By choosing to expand licensure reciprocity, states can minimize the burdens for good, vetted teachers to stay in the teaching profession if they move—giving states access to a talented supply of teachers they would otherwise be shutting out.

Excise Ideology From Teacher Licensure: States have the authority to certify which schools of education are allowed to license teachers; they should also use this authority to regulate schools of education from spreading and further entrenching pernicious and partisan ideologies in the teaching workforce.

REFORMING EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children with special needs deserve special education: nearly everyone agrees on this, which is why we have federal laws that protect the right to education for children with special needs.

Nevertheless, the definition of “disabled” has expanded dramatically to include students with relatively minor problems that don’t impair their learning in general education classes, compared to those with larger problems that do.

Expand School Choice: Expanding school choice broadly can be an equitable solution for all students—those with disabilities and those without. Students with disabilities can go to schools that are more effective for them, where teachers who desire to teach special education can fully concentrate on those students.

Likewise, teachers whose primary qualification is general education are better able to dedicate their teaching to general education students, and students who desire general education environments can reap their benefits. With expanded school choice measures, teachers and students alike win.

Click [HERE](#) to read the full report.