

## The Center for High Impact Philanthropy

School of Social Policy & Practice | University of Pennsylvania

# High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality

## Focus on High-Need Secondary Students

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need to improve our education system is urgent and clear. Over the past twenty years, despite increases in per-pupil spending, drop-out rates remain alarmingly high, achievement gaps persist, and U.S. students rank behind their peers in many other countries.

Researchers, educators, and funders across the political spectrum increasingly agree on one critical change lever in schools: *teachers*.

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Teachers are the top in-school factor affecting student achievement.<sup>1</sup> A good — or bad — teacher has a greater impact on student outcomes than class size, school culture, or parental involvement in school.<sup>2</sup> Students taught by highly effective teachers for three consecutive years outscore students with poor quality instructors by as much as 50 percentile points,<sup>3</sup> a gap that can mean the difference between being prepared for college and dropping out of high school. Studies find that teaching quality has an especially strong effect on poor students.<sup>4</sup>

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For donors seeking to improve student outcomes, the critical question is,

### *How can my funds improve teaching quality?*

#### About the Center for High Impact Philanthropy

The nonprofit Center for High Impact Philanthropy was founded in 2006 by Wharton alumni and is housed at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice. Our Center provides analysis, education and assistance to donors seeking the greatest impact in improving the lives of others. Our team brings a multidisciplinary approach, in-depth knowledge of research methods, and seasoned judgment to the analysis of high impact philanthropic opportunities.

***High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality*** outlines actionable, evidence-based solutions for donors. The report focuses on high-need secondary students, those in grades 6 – 12 who are at risk of dropping out or leaving high school without the skills and knowledge to succeed in college or the workforce; however, many of the solutions described can apply to all K–12 students — high or low need.

The report is organized into three main parts:

1. ***Solutions for improving individual teachers' skills*** discusses the ways donors can support better preparation of teaching candidates before they enter the classroom; programs that help novice teachers be effective from the beginning; and high-quality, ongoing professional development that allows teachers to improve their effectiveness and provides a powerful incentive for strong teachers to stay.
2. ***Solutions for creating an environment for great teaching*** discusses the ways donors can strengthen principal leadership and support effective whole-school reform models, two key leverage points for improving teaching quality not just in one classroom but across a school or network of schools.
3. ***What donors should know about the broader policy environment*** provides guidance for donors on policy issues relevant to teaching quality, including how government policies can impede or sustain a donor's impact, and how donors can get involved with policy change.

In Parts 1 and 2, donors will find:

- An analysis of the current situation, outlining key problems
- A description of what donors should look for to identify high impact models
- Examples of Models in Practice to help potential donors understand how nonprofits target issues effectively, including estimates of the impact and cost of each model that were derived from our team's analysis of available data
- Additional resources to help donors identify other organizations implementing similar models

In Part 3, donors will find:

- Guidance about how policy affects a donor's investments
- A discussion of hot topics in education policy
- Tips and resources for those who wish to influence policy change directly
- Examples of impact at the district level, in district turnaround profiles

The contents of this report are the result of a year of searching for and analyzing high impact models to improve teaching quality for high-need secondary students. Our multi-disciplinary

team has reviewed the academic research; met with policymakers; reviewed program and financial data; conducted site visits; asked questions of students, teachers, and principals; and interviewed dozens of people involved in efforts to improve teaching quality. We have done what would be near impossible for any one donor to do on his or her own. By doing this legwork, our aim is to move donors more quickly and confidently from concern and good intentions to action and impact.

### **Stay Connected: Get on the List for the Public Release**

Our completed report will be publically released in Winter 2011. To ensure that you receive a free copy, click [here](#) to be added to our [education listserv](#). We look forward to your comments. Please contact us at [impact@sp2.upenn.edu](mailto:impact@sp2.upenn.edu) with any specific comments or feedback. In the meantime, follow [@ImpactTeaching](#) on [twitter](#), Answer our [million dollar question](#) on [facebook](#), and subscribe to our [High Impact Philanthropy blog](#) for updates and commentary on issues relating to teaching quality. Stay tuned and stay in touch!

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<sup>1</sup> Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1-44. Retrieved August 11, 2008, from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/392/515>; Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L.V. (2004). How large are teacher effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 237-257; Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. E. (2005, March). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458. Retrieved January 25, 2010, from <http://www.econ.ucsb.edu/~jon/Econ230C/HanushekRivkin.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Marzano, R. J. (2000). *A new era of school reform: Going where the research takes us*. Prepared for Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). Retrieved August 26, 2010, from [http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/SchoolImprovementReform/5002RR\\_NewEraSchoolReform.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/SchoolImprovementReform/5002RR_NewEraSchoolReform.pdf); Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. E. (2005, March). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458; Sanders, W. L. & J.C. Rivers. (1996). *Research project report: Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center. Retrieved July 31, 2009, from [http://www.mccsc.edu/~curriculum/cumulative\\_and\\_residual\\_effects\\_of\\_teachers.pdf](http://www.mccsc.edu/~curriculum/cumulative_and_residual_effects_of_teachers.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, W. L. & J.C. Rivers. (1996). *Research project report: Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center. Retrieved July 31, 2009, from [http://www.mccsc.edu/~curriculum/cumulative\\_and\\_residual\\_effects\\_of\\_teachers.pdf](http://www.mccsc.edu/~curriculum/cumulative_and_residual_effects_of_teachers.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L.V. (2004). How large are teacher effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 237-257.

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