

**Senate HELP Committee Hearing  
ESEA Reauthorization: Teachers and Leaders  
April 15, 2010, 10:00 A.M.  
Room 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Oral Testimony by Camilla P. Benbow**

Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss how the federal government can support states and districts in ensuring that all students have great teachers and school leaders.

I would point to the critical role of higher education. There can be no great teaching without great teacher preparation, and we prepare more than 85% of teachers .

To demonstrate that we are part of the solution, consider special education. Thanks to schools of education, since PL 94-142 was passed in 1975, teachers trained in special education have enabled students to make strides once unimaginable. Our challenge now is to apply the same intensive effort to transform teaching and learning for all students

At Vanderbilt, our teacher candidates gain hundreds of hours of clinical experience beginning in their first year, including in hard-to-staff schools. They become expert at collecting and using data to tailor instruction. They double major. To determine their readiness, we are working on a national teacher assessment.

Our National Centers on School Choice and Performance Incentives conduct experiments to evaluate reform efforts, while numerous other researchers work to improve instruction in reading, math, and science—and to pioneer strategies like response-to-intervention.

We just announced a partnership with Nashville Schools to improve middle school teaching in math, science and literacy. This highly selective program provides a free master's degree to teachers in high-need schools. The program will help attract and retain great teachers, strengthen instruction (and assessment), improve student outcomes, and foster systemic change.

To strengthen school leadership, we devised VAL-ED, a performance evaluation for school leaders; developed a Principals Leadership Academy; and trained more than 1,800 superintendents and leaders across Tennessee.

I offer these examples to illustrate what Ed Schools can do if empowered by strong federal policy. The Higher Ed Task Force on Teacher Preparation has made recommendations to strengthen our ability to provide highly effective teachers, such as keeping Teacher Quality Partnership grants under Title II of HEA, and investing in teacher preparation reforms under ESEA. Both are needed. Higher Ed wants to be, and should be, a valued partner in transforming learning for all students. Thank you.



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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**Camilla P. Benbow  
Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development  
Vanderbilt University's Peabody College**

**Summary of Written Testimony**

This document containing the written testimony of Dean Camilla P. Benbow includes the following elements:

- A transcript of opening remarks (current as of April 13, 2010) prepared for delivery on the date of the hearing
- A brief description of Peabody College's National Center on Performance Incentives
- A brief description of Peabody College's National Center on School Choice
- A program description of a joint effort developed by Peabody and the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools to prepare highly skilled middle school teachers in mathematics, science and literacy
- A description of the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), a performance assessment tool for school leaders
- Recommendations regarding funding from the Higher Education Task Force on Teacher Preparation

## Written Testimony

Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, members of the Committee, I am very appreciative of this opportunity to discuss teaching and leadership in American schools.

You asked that we be prepared to address the question of how the federal government can support states and districts in ensuring that all students have great teachers and great school leaders. I would add to this question the critical role that institutions of higher education play in producing these teachers and leaders. Colleges and universities prepare more than 85 percent of teachers; there can be no great teaching without great teacher preparation, just as there can be no great principals without great principal preparation.

Schools of education are and must be part of the solution. To demonstrate that we can be, permit me to point to special education. Thanks to schools of education, since Public Law 94-142 was originally passed in 1975, teachers trained intensively to work with students with special needs have enabled such students to make strides that were unimaginable 35 years ago. The challenge we now face is how to apply the same intensive effort to transform teaching and learning in high-need, urban schools.

To this end, our teacher candidates gain hundreds of hours of clinical experience beginning in their first year of study, including in hard to staff schools. They become expert at collecting and using data to tailor instruction. They double major. And, to determine their readiness, we are among those institutions working to develop a national teacher assessment.

Other strategies include incentives for teachers, school choice and charter schools, improved teacher training and evaluation, and new roles for school leaders. In each instance, my own institution—Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College—is proud to play a role in the transformation of education. Our National Centers on School Choice and Performance Incentives, for example, conduct research to assess the effectiveness of various reform strategies.

We also work with partners to strengthen practice by current teachers. We recently announced a partnership with the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools to improve middle school teaching in mathematics, science and literacy. This highly selective program provides master’s degree training to early career teachers in high-needs schools, with tuition underwritten by Vanderbilt and the public schools. The program promises to attract and retain great teachers, to strengthen instruction (and assessment), to improve student outcomes, and to help foster systemic change.

To strengthen school leadership, we have devised and disseminated the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), a performance evaluation for school leaders. Our Principals Leadership Academy of Nashville annually prepares aspiring leaders for service in local schools. We have provided leadership training to more than 1,800 superintendents and school leaders across Tennessee.

I offer these examples to illustrate what more schools of education could do if empowered by strong federal policy. The Higher Education Task Force on Teacher Preparation has offered recommendations which I believe can strengthen the contributions of our institutions to meet the critical need for highly effective teachers. These include full funding of the Teacher Quality Partnership grants in the Higher Education Act at \$300 million and increasing the set-aside for higher education in Title II of ESEA to 5 percent. Both are needed. Institutions of higher education want to be, and should be, valued partners in the effort to transform learning for all students. Thank you.

### **National Center on Performance Incentives**

Policymakers have grown increasingly interested in innovative compensation plans, including performance-based pay for K-12 educators. Yet, efforts to reform pay have lacked grounding in a scholarly base of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of such plans. Educators, policymakers, and the greater public should know whether altering traditional compensation practices is an effective path to improving teaching and learning. The National Center on Performance Incentives was established to examine such questions as: does pay-for-performance work, what makes an effective teacher, what are the unintended consequences of performance pay, and how cost effective is performance pay? The signature research initiative of NCPI is a randomized field trial in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) in which student achievement-related bonuses are being offered to teachers.

#### **To Learn More:**

<http://www.performanceincentives.org>

### **National Center on School Choice**

Since 2004, the National Center on School Choice (NCSC) has been doing research on how school choice affects individuals, communities, and systems. The Center's work takes place across multiple disciplines and methodologies, and its aim is simple: to provide national intellectual leadership on the study of school choice in all its forms.

Policymakers, educators and families need to know: Does school choice raise student achievement or improve school quality? Stratify students along racial, class, or ability lines? Spur traditional public school districts to change their behavior? Face limitations from political and legal constraints?

To answer these questions, the Center has assembled an expert team of scholars--sociologists, economists, psychologists, political scientists, curriculum experts, psychometricians, statisticians--from some of the nation's top research organizations. This collaboration partners the center's lead institution, Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, with the Brookings Institution, Brown University, the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University, Harvard University, the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Northwest Evaluation Association, and Stanford University.

The Center is conducting major experimental and quasi-experimental studies of charter and magnet schools, voucher programs, parent involvement and satisfaction, student achievement, and what makes schools work. Scholars are also considering school transfer options under No Child Left Behind, supplemental education services, and home schooling. And they are examining school leadership, governance, laws, and policies.

### **To Learn More:**

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/>

## **Master's in Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools Peabody College in Collaboration with Metro Nashville Public Schools**

### **Curriculum Overview**

Peabody College is collaborating with the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools to offer a set of innovative, customized Master's degree programs focusing on improving teaching in urban school settings and designed expressly for Metro teachers. Drawing on the rich intellectual resources available at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education and Human Development and using the Metro schools as an applied laboratory setting, this two-year program will work with cohorts of teachers in the upper elementary grades through grade 8 to deepen their knowledge and refine their instructional skills in one of three areas: literacy, mathematics or science. Admission to the program is highly selective.

The Master's in Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools (TLUS) program provides capability for enhanced instructional effectiveness, improved student learning, and increased retention of excellent teachers within Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.

### **The Program Vision**

The new Master's program is designed to achieve the following outcomes:

1. ***Retain and attract excellent teachers.*** The program will recruit and retain outstanding new teachers. Teachers will want to remain in the Metro schools because the program will enable them to become more fully intellectually engaged and more professionally adept, and will promote networking among teacher colleagues who also attended the program and who may share the program's vision of learning and goals for continued improvement.
2. ***Improve instruction.*** Teachers will deepen their disciplinary knowledge and understanding of learning and refine instructional methods as they experiment with new practices in their classrooms and discuss their experiences and best practices with colleagues.

3. ***Improve student outcomes and change assessment practices.*** The definitive evidence that more effective instruction is being provided must come from assessments of student learning, but assessments used must align with skills and concepts being fostered. Students will be helped to learn to employ new assessments and assessment practices, to understand the proper conditions under which those practices may be deployed, and to use them to track student learning and make needed adjustments in their instructional methods to improve instruction and student outcomes.
4. ***Foster systemic improvement.*** This Masters program must do more than educate and retain a few stellar teachers. It is designed to support development of communities of reflective practitioners in participating middle schools.

Achieving this vision requires that Peabody College design a program tailored to the needs of working teachers and the school district to create conditions that facilitate teachers' efforts to deepen their knowledge, employ new instructional methods, assess children's learning and create nurturing professional learning communities.

### **Program Design Strategies**

Peabody College's Department of Teaching and Learning will deliver a 30-hour program that also draws on resources in the Department of Special Education and the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations. The TLUS program will be organized around the following core design elements:

1. ***Cohort structure.*** Groups of 24 students enter the program simultaneously, with the cohort being divided into those specializing in literacy, mathematics or science. The three tracks have some classes in common as well as domain-specific classes. All students in a track take the same classes at the same time thereby ensuring intellectual cohesiveness that fosters communication among participants.
2. ***Integration of content with practice.*** Classes are created with the intention of providing intellectually rigorous content instruction and realistic, research-based instructional methods. Students are taught by leading researchers and classes integrate research with practice. Each class includes classroom-based applications and supports teachers as they grow to understand how the things they are learning apply in their classrooms.
3. ***Field-based learning.*** When students take courses specific to their instructional specialization they have on-site supervision from Peabody faculty who assist teachers in learning methods and reflecting on practice. Teachers also are supported as they begin to engage in discussions with colleagues about teaching and learning.
4. ***Urban focus.*** The program is designed to assist students in understanding and experiencing instructional success working in urban classrooms. Every semester

students participate in a seminar designed specifically for the program that addresses urban issues and provides a setting for discussing classroom instruction. Also, depending on the program specialization, students take one or more classes that address the needs of English Language learners and discuss how to work with children who use nonstandard varieties of English in their home.

5. ***Reflective practice.*** The entire program is designed to assist teachers in becoming reflective practitioners by enabling them to grasp underlying principles governing learning and teaching and guiding them in learning how to reflect on their own practice. The ultimate realization of these experiences is the students' Capstone that serves as the culmination of their Masters program. Students complete the Capstone (also bearing 5-credit hours) in the second summer of their study, the program's final term.
6. ***Create communities of practice.*** The program supports development of sustained reflection on practice at the building level by allocating an hour of course credit each semester to on-site discussions. When the TLUS students are prepared, these discussions are opened to other teachers in the building with interest in participating.

The following are elements necessary for our vision to be maximally realized:

1. ***Protected spaces for innovation.*** Teachers are expected to adopt instructional and assessment practices that in many cases are different from those currently being used. Teachers need to be in buildings where their principals not only allow but support such efforts.
2. ***Communities of practice.*** For teachers to adopt instructional innovations that result in sustained improvements they need to be part of a community of practitioners who share their vision and understand their approach. These communities need to include several teachers who are in the same building. The Peabody-Metro cohort program can provide teachers settings for professional conversations while they are enrolled, but if these conversations and the novel practices are to be sustained there need to be several teachers in the same building who have participated in the program.
3. ***Pathways of innovation.*** A single effective teacher can make a significant difference in a child's skills and knowledge and enthusiasm for learning, but for these effects to be retained and fully realized children need to experience superior teaching for several years. This could occur if the program enrolled teachers who were in the same feeder system from elementary into middle school. Having teachers across grades involved in the program would also make possible rich discussions across grade levels.

If the vision we have for this program is fully realized we believe the result will be schools where teachers are engaged in cutting edge instruction that results in exceptional

levels of student learning. We also believe the Peabody-MNPS partnership could become an exemplar of an effective and sustained university-school partnership nationally.

### **Program Evaluation**

In the program's formative stage, we seek to understand the degree to which the program is delivered successfully and its impact on helping the teachers establish themselves in their classrooms. Drawing on resources in the Department of Teaching and Learning and the Peabody Research Institute, we will keep records of what happens in Vanderbilt classes, we will intermittently debrief coaches about classroom instruction, and through interviews and surveys find teachers' reactions to the program. If resources permit, we also will develop and use a tool to guide observation of classrooms. We also will work with MNPS to track our teachers' success using material the schools routinely use to track the performance of middle school teachers.

The evaluation will help us document the initial start up phase of the program, collect formative assessment data that will help to improve it, and gain insight into how the program is affecting teachers and communication among faculty. One goal is to understand in some detail how the program was created so that others can learn from our experience and to document effects in hopes that we find effects that will encourage others to replicate our program. Once the program is established we hope to seek funding from the Institute for Education Sciences to conduct an even more rigorous evaluation of its impact on teachers' instructional practices and children's learning.

### **For Additional Information**

[http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Teaching\\_and\\_Learning/Graduate\\_Programs/Masters\\_Program\\_\(MEd\)/MNPS\\_Teachers\\_Masters.xml](http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Teaching_and_Learning/Graduate_Programs/Masters_Program_(MEd)/MNPS_Teachers_Masters.xml)

## **Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED)**

### **About the Program**

The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) utilizes a 360-degree, evidence-based approach to measure the effectiveness of school leadership behaviors known to influence teacher performance and student learning.

### **Questions Being Addressed**

Raising student achievement and closing the achievement gaps in America's schools depends on school leaders who effectively guide instructional improvement. However, the identification and development of effective school leaders has been significantly hampered by the lack of technically sound tools for assessing and monitoring leadership performance.

## **Funding Sources:**

VAL-ED was developed with \$1.5 million in funding from the Wallace Foundation.

## **Research to Practice**

- VAL-ED measures performance in six core components (high standards for student learning, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction, culture of learning and professional behavior, connections to external communities, and performance accountability) and six key process (planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring).
- VAL-ED is aligned with the national leadership standards set by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium.
- Results are reported as comparisons to normative national profiles as well as proficiency standards (basic, proficient or distinguished).
- The assessment was field tested in 100 elementary schools, 100 middle schools and 100 high schools in 53 districts and 27 states.
- The assessment incorporates psychometric properties typically unavailable in other evaluation instruments
- A review by Learning Point Associates concluded that “VAL-ED comes closest to measuring the leadership attributes and behaviors that research finds to be associated with how well students perform.” (*Education Week*, January 6, 2010)

## **For Additional Information:**

[http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Faculty\\_and\\_Research/Peabody\\_Research\\_Office/About\\_Peabody\\_Research/Funded\\_Projects/VAL-ED\\_Project\\_Home.xml](http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Faculty_and_Research/Peabody_Research_Office/About_Peabody_Research/Funded_Projects/VAL-ED_Project_Home.xml)

## **HIGHER EDUCATION TASK FORCE ON TEACHER PREPARATION\***

### **The Obama Administration’s FY 2011 Budget for Teacher Preparation in Higher Education**

#### **Background**

- **Taken together, the President’s proposals would eliminate all targeted federal support for teacher preparation in higher education.**
- The president’s FY 2011 budget eliminates the one program in higher education that supports the university-based preparation of teachers – the Title II Teacher Quality Partnership Grants, currently funded at \$43 million (plus an additional \$100 million added as part of the stimulus).
- The budget proposes moving these funds into a new authority in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) called the “Teachers and Leaders Pathway”

- program, under which \$405 million would be available for competitive grants to support the creation or expansion of high-quality pathways to becoming a teacher or principal. The role of institutions of higher education is not clear.
- In addition, the prior requirement of a 2.5% set-aside for higher education (equal to \$72.5 million) in the Title II ESEA Improving Teacher Quality State Grant is proposed for elimination.
  - These eliminations would mean that the sector that produces over 85% of all new teachers (higher education institutions) would not necessarily be receiving any funding for preparation of teachers. However, the demanding accountability and data-collection requirements in Title II of the Higher Education Act would remain in place.
  - The Teacher Quality Partnership Grants are a new comprehensive reform program, just designed in the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. It was unanimously endorsed by both Republicans and Democrats. Only in September 2009 were the first grants awarded. While 179 proposals were submitted, funding was only available for 28. This program has not had a chance to prove its effectiveness.
  - Higher education supports competition for funding, as is currently required by the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants. Institutions of higher education also match federal funding for teacher preparation at 100%. This contribution would be lost in the Obama Administration's proposal.
  - The purpose of Title II of the Higher Education Act is to support reform of teacher preparation in higher education; this purpose would apparently become unfunded, while accountability requirements would remain.

#### **Our Position**

- We oppose the elimination/consolidation of the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants in the Higher Education Act and the elimination of the 2.5% set-aside for higher education in Title II of ESEA in the FY 2011 budget. We recommend full funding of the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants at the authorized level of \$300 million. We recommend that the set-aside for higher education in Title II of ESEA be increased to 5% in order to meet the critical need for high quality effective teachers.
- Higher education is committed to innovative evidence-based educator preparation. The research demands that we invest in clinically based programs.
- Our colleges and universities have changed significantly in the last decade to respond to the needs of today's diverse K-12 classrooms by expanding partnerships with K-12 schools, strengthening partnerships with arts and sciences, and recruiting career changers into teacher preparation.
- Higher education continues to be in a unique and unparalleled position to deliver effective teacher preparation, bringing together the expertise of the arts and sciences and research-based pedagogy to ensure highly effective K-12 teachers.
- Removing funds that strengthen teacher preparation programs from institutions that supply 85% of teachers entering the field will undermine progress toward moving us forward to the President's goal of having a highly effective teacher in every K-12 classroom.

**\*Text in this section is from a document prepared by the Higher Education Task Force on Teacher Education in March 2010. Members of the Task Force include:**

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