



Arne Duncan's Search for More Teachers

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November 18, 2013

This week, Education Secretary Arne Duncan will re-launch a campaign he initiated a few years ago to get more college students interested in becoming teachers. Funded by Microsoft and State Farm, and supported by Teach for America and the teachers' unions, the effort will draw attention to the importance of teaching through public service announcements that encourage the best and brightest to consider entering the profession.



As a former official at the U.S. Department of Education, I applaud the administration for leveraging the power of its bully pulpit to attract the ingredient most important in a child's success: a high quality teacher. Research consistently shows that next to parents, a high-quality teacher is the most important factor in determining a child's success in the classroom and beyond. And a key step in getting these high-quality teachers in the schools where the need is greatest is by expanding the pool of applicants who are interested in entering the profession.

America's schools are currently handling this recruitment through traditional means, but in many areas where the need is greatest, like rural communities and inner-cities, sharper ad campaigns aimed at attracting talent are needed.

Of course, recruitment is only one part of the equation. Making sure the talent we attract enters the classroom ready to teach is another piece of the puzzle.

Those who have taught can attest that no amount of education and pre-service training beats on-the-job training with the aid of a master teacher. Charter schools like Boston's MATCH have developed a teacher residency program based on the lessons they have learned in training their own teachers. These lessons have proven crucial in developing what they call "highly effective rookie teachers" who are able to succeed in inner-city classrooms. The program attracts talent through its after school tutoring program and relies on intense coaching, role-plays and ongoing assessments.

Expanding the reach of programs like MATCH will ultimately determine the success of this teacher-recruitment strategy. Success won't come easily, but the administration is smart to focus its energy on teachers, given their essential role in student achievement.