

Executive Summary

The Bush Administration Agenda for a Quality Teacher in Every Classroom

Background

Every child in America deserves a quality teacher. In an era of increasing standards and accountability in education, teacher quality and teacher training will be more important than ever.

President Bush knows the challenges facing today's teachers. For years, Federal programs have promised to strengthen State and local teacher quality efforts – but with few results. Through the *No Child Left Behind Act* and in his budget proposals, President Bush proposes to address these challenges of teacher quality and teacher training in two major ways by providing: (1) assistance to States as they strive *to improve teacher quality*; (2) specific steps to *enhance the teaching profession and work environment*; and (3) new *tools for teachers* in specific areas of instruction.

Some key elements of the President's teacher quality agenda include:

(1) Improving Teacher Quality

Teachers and Principal Training and Recruitment Fund: President Bush proposes to spend a record-level \$2.85 billion in grants to States to improve the quality of teachers and principals. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, these funds will be used to increase the number of highly qualified teachers and principals, and to hold school districts accountable for showing progress.

Qualified Teachers for Disadvantaged Students: Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, local schools will be required to use a portion of their Federal Title I dollars to improve teacher quality. These teachers must be highly qualified, and parents will be able to receive information about the qualifications of their children's teachers. President Bush proposes a \$1 billion increase in Title I funding for FY-03.

Record Support for Innovative Teacher Recruitment: President Bush proposes record level support for programs that provide innovative ways to recruit new teachers into the teaching profession, including the Troops to Teachers program (\$20 million), Transition to Teaching Program (\$39.4 million), and Teach for America (\$2.6 million).

(2) Enhancing the Teaching Profession and Work Environment

Teacher Protection Act: The President supports implementation of the Teacher Protection Act to ensure that teachers, principals, and other school officials are able to take reasonable steps to maintain order and discipline in the classroom without the fear of unnecessary litigation.

Teacher Tax Deduction: Teachers often pay for classroom supplies and supplemental materials out of their own pockets. To help teachers defray these costs, President Bush proposes a Teacher Tax Deduction on up to \$400 of qualified education expenses. This tax deduction will provide \$577 million in tax relief to teachers over the next five years.

Expanded Loan Forgiveness: Teachers who receive certain Federal education loans to pay for college and have taught in a low-income school for five consecutive years are eligible for up to

\$5,000 in student loan forgiveness, under current law. President Bush proposes to increase the student loan forgiveness ceiling to \$17,500, which will provide, over the next five years, \$112 million in relief for teachers who serve in low-income schools.

Flexibility for States and Districts: States and districts recognize that in order to attract teachers to the profession and keep good teachers in the classroom, they need to offer competitive salaries. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, States and districts are able to use a portion of the funds that they receive under certain Federal programs to meet their unique needs, including increasing teacher pay, reducing class size, and bolstering professional development and training for teachers.

(3) Tools for Teachers in Specific Areas of Instruction

Support for Early Childhood Educators: President Bush's budget for FY-03 provides record funding levels for the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program, which allows preschool educators and caregivers – particularly in low-income areas – to receive the training and professional development they need to provide a quality education for the children they serve.

Early Reading First: The President's Early Reading First initiative will help to prepare young children to enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills they need to be successful readers. The President's budget fully funds this initiative at \$75 million, and these funds will be available to give preschool teachers the training and resources they need to provide high-quality early education for the youngest Americans.

Reading First: The President's new Reading First initiative is aimed at helping every student become a successful reader by the end of third grade. The President's budget proposes almost 12 percent increase in Reading First for FY-03 – bringing overall funding to \$1 billion. Up to 20 percent of these funds are available to States, and a significant portion of the funds are available to support professional development to help teachers learn research-based reading instruction techniques.

Teaching English Language Learners: The Professional Development program for language acquisition provides discretionary grants to colleges and universities that work with State education departments to improve classroom instruction for students who do not speak English as a native language or are limited English proficient. President Bush supports maintaining funding at \$37.5 million to help teachers better serve these students and their communities.

Better Training for Teachers of Disabled Students: President Bush supports continued record-level funding for the State Improvement Grant program (\$51.7 million) and for the Personnel Program (\$90 million), which help teachers of children with disabilities to receive the training and professional development they need to better serve their students.