

NEWS RELEASE – August 18, 2005

"PROFILE OF TEACHERS IN THE U.S. 2005"

Results of a national survey of K-12 public school teachers conducted by the National Center for Education Information

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**NCEI SURVEY OF TEACHERS SHOWS AGING, INCREASINGLY FEMALE FORCE -
PLANNING TO RETIRE SOON - OPPOSED TO STANDARDIZED TESTING AND OTHER
SCHOOL REFORMS**

The K-12 public school teaching force in the United States is getting older, more female, slightly less White and more experienced. Teachers are generally satisfied with most aspects of their jobs, except salary and tests of student achievement. They teach primarily because they want to work with young people. They feel very competent in several aspects of teaching, including the subject matter they are teaching. They think "one's own teaching experience" is the most important variable in developing competence to teach.

Public school teachers think "compliance with No Child Left Behind" is a serious problem. They think "standards of academic achievement should be flexible enough that every child can feel successful." They are strongly opposed to using "academic progress of students as measured by standardized test scores" to determine whether or not a teacher is qualified to teach.

Forty percent of the current public school teaching force expects not to be teaching five years from now.

These are among the findings of a national survey of 1,028 randomly selected K-12 public school teachers conducted by the National Center for Education Information, March 23 – June 22, 2005 and published in a 42-page report, ***PROFILE OF TEACHERS IN THE U.S. 2005***.

"The teaching force, since we first started surveying teachers two decades ago, has been pretty 'steady as she goes,' **C. Emily Feistritzer**, President of the National Center for Education Information, said in releasing the findings of the survey Aug. 18. She added, "That is all about to change very soon with a rapidly aging population of teachers who are retiring at increasing rates and who are increasingly being replaced by adults coming into teaching from other careers, who view education and teaching quite differently."

NCEI conducted similar surveys of teachers in 1986, 1990 and 1996. Comparisons are made between teachers now and in those earlier years. In addition, from Nov. 12, 2004 – March 12, 2005, NCEI conducted a separate survey of teachers who are entering the profession through alternative routes to teacher certification and compared their responses, where applicable, with those of K-12 teachers in this latest survey.

The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) is a private, non-partisan research organization in Washington, D. C. specializing in survey research and data analysis. Founded in 1979, NCEI has conducted several national and state studies which include: four national surveys of teachers, school

administrators, school board presidents, state departments of education, local school districts and individuals interested in becoming teachers. NCEI has produced 38 data-based reports including: PROFILE OF TEACHERS IN THE U.S. 2005; PROFILE OF ALTERNATE ROUTE TEACHERS (2005); ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION: A State by State Analysis, (published every year since 1990); PROFILE OF TROOPS TO TEACHERS (upcoming, 2005 and 1998); THE MAKING OF A TEACHER: A Report on Teacher Preparation in the U.S. (1999 and 1984); PROFILE OF TEACHERS IN THE U.S. (1996, 1990 and 1986); WHO WANTS TO TEACH? (1992).

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HIGHLIGHTS of the Teacher Survey Results

- *The public school teaching force in the United States is getting more female and older.* Eight out of 10 public school teachers (82 percent) are female. This is up from 74 percent in 1996, 71 percent in 1990 and 69 percent in 1986. Eighty-four percent of teachers who have five or fewer years' experience teaching in 2005 are women. This is up from 79 percent in 1996. While 28 percent of teachers with 30 or more years experience are male, only 16 percent of those with five or fewer years of experience teaching are male.
- *The K-12 teaching force is aging rapidly.* The proportion of K-12 teachers who are 50 years of age and older has risen from one in four (24 percent) in 1996 to 42 percent in 2005. Meanwhile, the proportion of teachers under 30 years of age has not changed much in the last two decades. However, the percentage of teachers in their 30s has dropped from 37 and 36 percent in 1990 and 1986, respectively, to 21 percent in 1996 and 22 percent in 2005. The proportion of teachers in their 40s has dropped from 44 percent in 1996 to 26 percent in 2005.
- *There is a slight shift toward more teachers of color.* The proportion of K-12 teachers who are white has gone from 91 percent in 1986 to 92 percent in 1990 to 89 percent in 1996 to 85 percent in 2005. The fastest growing group of non-white teachers are persons of Hispanic origin.
- *The proportion of the K-12 public school teaching force that has 25 or more years of teaching experience has doubled in the last 15 years – from 12 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 1996 to 27 percent in 2005.*
- *Public school teachers are strongly opposed to using “academic progress of students as measured by standardized test scores” to determine whether or not a teacher is qualified to teach.* Only 2 percent of public school teachers surveyed “strongly agree” that this would be a good measure to use; about one-third (35 percent) “somewhat agree” that it would be a good measurement to use; about one-third (34 percent) “somewhat disagree” that it would. One in three (29 percent) public school teachers “strongly disagree” that using academic progress of students would be a good measurement to use in determining whether or not a teacher is qualified to teach.
- *Public school teachers think schools should adjust to student needs.* Three out of four (76 percent) public school teachers agree that schools should adjust to the needs, interests and learning styles of individual students, rather than expecting students to meet the norms of the school. Nineteen percent – up from 15 percent in 1996 and 13 percent in 1990 – think students are the best judges of what they need to learn and when they are ready to learn it. Sixty-nine percent of teachers surveyed in 2005 – compared to 68 percent in 1996 and 77 percent in 1990 –

agree that standards of academic achievement should be flexible enough that every child can feel successful.

- *Only half (51 percent) of teachers agree that a national proficiency exam for entry into teaching would make teaching more a profession.* This is down from 65 percent in 1996 and in 1990.
- *Teachers favor traditional measures to determine whether or not a person is qualified to teach.* Nearly nine out of ten (89 percent) of teachers agree that “successful completion of a teacher preparation program” and “evaluation by an administrator that includes direct classroom observation would be good measurements to use in determining teacher qualification. Following closely behind were “being fully certified by the state” (83 percent) and “evaluation by peers that includes direct classroom observation” (79 percent).
- *While 85 percent of teachers in 2005 agree that paying teachers based on their level of education and 74 percent agree that paying teachers based on seniority would make teaching more a profession, only 42 percent agree that paying teachers based on job performance would do so.* Nearly eight out of ten (79 percent) of teachers surveyed agree that having career ladders to afford upward mobility within the ranks of teaching would improve the profession.
- *Public school teachers are not in favor of school choice.* Allowing parents to send their children to any school they choose, with the government paying all or part of the tuition is favored by only 19 percent of teachers in 2005, compared with 16 percent in 1996. Slightly more teachers (29 percent) favor allowing parents of children in low-performing public schools to send their children to any public, private or church-related school they choose, with the government paying all or some of the tuition.
- *Teachers are not in favor of individuals from other careers becoming school administrators.* Only 31 percent of public school teachers think recruiting individuals from other careers into school administration would improve America’s educational system; 58 percent think bringing such individuals into teaching would improve the education system.
- *Ten percent of teachers report earning \$65,000 or more and 7 percent earn less than \$30,000 in 2005.* Seven out of 10 (71 percent) of K-12 public school teachers earned between \$30,000 and \$55,000.
- *The number one reason teachers teach is because they want to help young people learn and develop.* This has been true in every year NCEI has asked the question (1990, 1996, and 2005), and it is also true for teachers entering through alternate routes to teacher certification. The reasons teachers give for teaching are similar across age groups, gender, race, types of communities they teach in, and grade levels they teach.
- *Seventy percent of current K-12 public school teachers report they obtained their certification to teach through a traditional college campus-based undergraduate teacher education program. An additional 24 percent said they got certified through a campus-based graduate teacher education program.* Six percent say they got certified to teach through an alternative program.
- *About four in 10 (38 percent) current public school teachers report they have taken 50 or more college semester hours of education courses.* An additional 37 percent say they don’t remember how many hours of college education courses they have taken. Only 8 percent have taken fewer than 25 college semester hours of education courses.

- *Teachers overwhelmingly rank “one’s own teaching experience” highest when asked to rate the value of eight variables in developing competence to teach.* Ninety-one percent of teachers in 2005, compared with 92 percent in 1996, say their own teaching experience was “very valuable” in developing their competence to teach. About one-third (37 percent) of teachers surveyed in both 1996 and in 2005 said their courses in education methods were “very valuable.”
- *Virtually all teachers surveyed feel competent in their ability to teach the subject matter they are teaching.* Nine out of 10 now feel “very competent” to teach the subjects they teach – up from 36 percent of teachers who felt “very competent” to teach the subject matter when they first began teaching.
- *When they **began** teaching, only about one-fourth to one-third of teachers felt very competent in all eight of the areas of teaching surveyed:* ability to teach subject matter (36 percent), ability to motivate students (34 percent), dealing with fellow teachers (34 percent), organizing instruction (30 percent), managing time (26 percent), dealing with the administrative hierarchy (26 percent), classroom management (25 percent) and classroom discipline (24 percent).
- *Public school teachers are generally very satisfied with most aspects of their jobs.* They are most satisfied with their relationships with students (95 percent) and with other teachers (94 percent). Teachers are least satisfied with their salary (46 percent) and with tests of student achievement (44 percent).
- *Teachers are “home-grown.”* Six out of 10 (60 percent) of public school teachers in 2005 got their undergraduate college education within 150 miles of where they were born. Four out of 10 (41 percent) individuals entering teaching through alternate routes completed their undergraduate college education within 150 miles of where they were born. Two out of three (66 percent) of public school teachers in 2005 are teaching within 150 miles of the place where they received their undergraduate degree.
- *Teacher attrition is expected to average about 8 percent per year in the next five years.* Forty percent of current public school teachers expect not to be teaching in K-12 schools five years from now.
- *One in five (22 percent) current public school teachers expects to be retired five years from now.* Twelve percent expect to be in an education job other than K-12 teaching. Only 4 percent expect to be employed in a non-education-related job.
- *Half (50 percent) of current high school teachers expect not to be teaching in K-12 schools in 2010.* One-third (34 percent) of high school teachers expect to be retired by then.

Order a copy of the full 42-page report, ***PROFILE OF TEACHERS IN THE U.S 2005*** for \$35 [online](#) or by mail from: National Center for Education Information, 1901 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 201, Washington, D.C. 20006. Phone: 202-362-3444. Fax: 202-822-8284. Email: chaar@ncei.com

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