

Workplaces That Support High-Performing Teaching and Learning: Insights from Generation Y Teachers

A new report issued jointly by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) finds that three out of four Generation Y (Gen Y) teachers support the idea of more rigorous and frequent feedback from their principals and peers on the effectiveness of their instruction. The study provides insights into the attitudes of Gen Y teachers - those born between 1977 and 1995 - as well as the implications for school policy and practice. The report was released at the annual conference of the national Education Writers Association in New Orleans on April 7, 2011. Gen Y teachers represent a rapidly growing proportion of the teaching workforce. Research shows that Gen Y will make up nearly half of all workers by 2020 as the Baby Boomer generation transitions out of those positions. These generational shifts have significant implications for teacher workforce development, which education leaders need to be aware of in order to develop and sustain high performing schools.

The study, funded by the Ford Foundation, found that successful practices include: Ensure teachers receive regular feedback on their effectiveness; Support peer learning and shared practice; Recognize (and reward) high performance; Have fair, rigorous, and meaningful evaluation systems; Leverage technology intelligently to enhance performance.

Generation Y public school teachers—those born between 1977 and 1995—have been serving students for nearly a decade now, represent an increasingly large proportion of the teaching workforce, and, with concerted support, promise to help bring needed transformation to schools that too often remain stuck in an earlier age. Members of this incoming and up-and-coming generation of teachers want to make a difference for their students and, somewhat counter to expectations, intend to make the teaching profession theirs for the long haul. They are also, however, entering the workforce during a time of significant uncertainty and transition.

Unfortunately, teachers—both young and less so—are often left to negotiate these changes alone in workplaces that lack shared responsibility among teachers and management for teaching and learning and thus are troublingly slow to keep pace. This causes too many promising teachers to leave the profession and too many others to struggle along with their students. This report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which presents the results of a study of this new generation of teachers, demonstrates that school and union leaders at every level can and must work together to transform schools into the kinds of organizations that are well fitted to Generation Y.

Cogshall, J.G., Behrstock-Sherratt, E., Drill, K., Menon, R., & Cushing, E. (2011, April). *Workplaces that support high-performance teaching and learning: Insights from generation Y teachers*. American Institutes for Research & American Federation of Teachers.

