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# from the President's Pen

## *Celebrate Teachers*

There is no profession with a greater impact on our collective future than teaching. It is at once a creative pursuit and an awesome responsibility. The relationship between teacher and student can be deep and profound. A teacher's pride is in lives touched, nurtured, changed, and loved, as celebrated in films like *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, and *Freedom Writers*. Few of us nonteachers can claim such a legacy.

When I was state superintendent in Ohio, I loved interacting with teachers and celebrating them. One of my greatest joys was announcing the State Teacher of the Year. In my final months in that post, a history teacher at Oberlin High School, Kurt Russell, earned that title. He went on to become the 2022 National Teacher of the Year. In recognizing him, I believe that we pay homage to the thousands of teachers who give of themselves each day to help each child succeed. Kurt's application was stellar, but talking with his students gave me the best sense of what makes him great. They spoke of his passion for history, care for their learning and well-being, dedication, enthusiasm, ability to connect classroom learning to the real world, and attention to student engagement.

I hope some of Kurt's students are inspired to become teachers themselves. I lament every time a teacher says, "I don't encourage my students to become teachers." It's a sad statement about the conditions we have created around the profession. We all have teachers to thank for who we have become, so we owe it to them to respect their professionalism, commitment, intentions, and service. We should all commit ourselves to celebrating and honoring them.

Teaching is a complex pursuit. What works for one student may not work for another. An approach one teacher uses may fall flat for another. And as the authors herein attest, education leaders have neither perfected nor aligned ways in which they recruit, develop, support, and reward teachers to reach optimum results. In the best of all possible worlds, the following would all align:

- evidence-based teaching practices and the science of learning and development;
- state standards that specify what teachers should know and be able to do;
- accreditation and program approval requirements for teacher preparation programs;
- what is actually taught in teacher preparation programs;
- knowledge and skills that new teachers actually acquire during preparation;
- requirements for licensure and certification; and
- supports, coaching, and mentoring for teacher induction, success, and continued growth.

That is a tall order, but there is enough evidence to point us to better ways of ensuring that every student has a great educational experience every day.

At a particular meeting in Ohio I will never forget, teachers gave me and my agency some pretty harsh feedback. As they got up to leave, they said, "Even though you heard a lot of complaints, it's still the greatest job ever." Join me in extending gratitude and in committing to making that statement true for every teacher. ■