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INTRODUCTION

The primary mission of the Carlston Family Foundation is to identify and honor outstanding California High School Teachers, nominated by former students who believe their teacher had a significant and life-changing impact on their lives. Each year, the Board of Directors selects five teachers to honor with substantial monetary awards. As part of the annual Awards Ceremony weekend, the Foundation invites past and current Honorees to attend an Educational Symposium designed to focus on specific issues which the Foundation might address to improve the quality of instruction in California secondary classrooms.

The Foundation initiated the Educational Symposium in 2007 to coincide with the Annual Outstanding Teachers of America Awards Ceremony and with the intention of inviting an Advisory Board of Carlston Family Foundation Honorees to advise the Board about areas where the Foundation might be able to influence and improve classroom instruction and enhance the professionalism of California teachers. Since the fall of 2007, the Foundation has harnessed and shared the high level of collective skills and talents of this group and continues to work toward improving teacher preparation and professional development programs, as well as influence educational policy. The intended emphasis continues to find ways to have a significant impact on classroom instruction and student learning.

The inaugural 2007 Symposium focused on specific issues that impeded classroom instructional time and student learning and offered recommendations about how these issues could be resolved or improved. These recommendations also addressed ways to improve teacher recruitment and retention, improve professional development and teacher preparation and policy issues to address. (see "2007 Summary Report" on web site).

In 2008 the Symposium reviewed and re-visited the 2007 recommendations and created a set of "Position Statements," which also included a list of proposed research topics that might be beneficial in improving teacher preparation programs, improve policy and close the achievement gap going forward. These ideas were distributed to schools and colleges of education throughout California and have been very well received. (see "2008 Summary Report" on web-site).



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Stemming from the outcomes of the 2007 and 2008 Symposia, the foundation for the 2010 Symposium was based upon two important tenants:

1. Utilizing the collective skills of the Carlston Honorees, the Foundation intends to develop and present ideas to help to raise teacher standards, knowledge and pedagogical skills through targeted professional development, improved pre-service preparation and a more focused and improved teacher evaluation process, and
2. The Foundation also intends to continue to assist in improving teacher recruitment and retention by improving the effectiveness of teachers, offer ongoing support and thereby reduce the amount of attrition and the associated costs.

2010 Symposium

In October, 2010, the 4th Annual Educational Symposium focused on the characteristics of effective teachers and the role of teacher preparation programs in creating the most effective experiences for future teachers, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the next generation of teachers.

In preparations for the 2010 Symposium, the Foundation completed a comprehensive review of several hundred student interviews, conducted when searching for candidates who were being considered for the Carlston Family Foundation's Outstanding Teachers of America Award. From these interviews, the Foundation compiled a list of twenty nine characteristics, most common to the Carlston Nominees and Honorees.

The goal of the 2010 Symposium was to produce a document which could be published and distributed to schools and colleges of education, colleagues, legislators and parents and could also be used in staff development workshop and conference presentations. A secondary goal was to demonstrate how prospective teachers, novice teachers and veteran teachers can incorporate these skills into their personal repertoire of teaching practices to improve their instructional skills



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and techniques and, thereby, improve student performance. Finally, participants were asked to review and determine where teacher preparation programs could make significant changes that would improve the quality of young teachers entering the profession.

It was the consensus of the participants that teacher preparation programs have a responsibility to vastly improve teacher education and offer realistic preservice education that better prepares teacher candidates and also focuses on student learning. The Group expressed concerns that too many new teachers are unprepared for the classroom. It was also felt that many teacher preparation curricula are outmoded and that their standards for admission and graduation were not as rigorous as they should be. This was particularly true of universities that focused on research. From on going discussion, it was not evident among the group that there was much evidence of adequate research into what type of teacher training is most likely to produce successful and effective teachers.

However, all agreed that what is known and generally accepted is that the quality of teaching is what matters most to help students develop academically and close the achievement gap. The Foundation believes that teaching is a critical professional endeavor and for teachers to be “effective,” teachers must have not only a solid foundation in educational theory, but a thorough knowledge and understanding of their subject matter. Effective teachers must also understand their audience, how they learn best and be able to build and retain the information that is taught to them.

From the comments of the many students who nominated former teachers over the past 10 years, it is clear that Carlston Honorees consistently demonstrate their ability to overcome the considerable lack of resources, little parental support, low socio-economic conditions, poor home environments, crime and violence and poor administrative support, to inspire and motivate students to become academically and personally successful.

The Foundation reviewed the list of the twenty-nine common characteristics identified as core skills that make these teachers more inspirational, motivational and more effective than other teachers and compared these to recent, documented research studies. The list, as identified by



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nominating students actually mirrored the recent research studies. After further review, it was also determined that the list also mirrors the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP - 2009), published by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education.

Participants were presented with the list of the following common characteristics of “effective teachers” as identified in students interviews; (these are *not* in order of importance!)

Students interviewed said, “Effective Teachers.....

1. Have a deep passion for teaching – love their subject matter and know it thoroughly
2. Are scholarly, love learning themselves and constantly create new and unique lessons that are fun and motivating
3. Inspire students by their enthusiasm, energy and clear dedication to teaching
4. Have high expectations that are fair, reasonable, consistent and clear
5. Hold ALL students equally accountable and responsible for learning and for their behavior
6. Tell students what they will be learning and why it is important to know – “Why is today important?”
7. Never waste a moment of class time - every minute of class time is planned
8. Will not allow students to fail and is always available to assist and mentor students
9. Are able to engage and motivate their students by creating a dynamic and exciting classroom atmosphere
10. Care for all students and ensure a safe environment – are always in control of the classroom
11. Are dependable, consistent and follow through with their stated expectations
12. Can be trusted by their students to provide high quality instruction
13. Create opportunities for “earned success”
14. Will never leave students behind and will allow other students to help students who have difficulty



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15. Expect ALL students to perform to their abilities; push students beyond their comfort level
16. Challenge students to always do their best work – will not accept anything less than the best effort
17. Make the subject matter relevant to the immediate experience of students
18. Are optimistic about the abilities of ALL students and see them all as true “scholars”
19. Help students believe they are capable to do a higher level of work.
20. Have the ability and skill to assess capabilities of students
21. Have an ability to explain difficult material well – will “re-teach” if necessary
22. Have respect for students, are insightful about the needs of their students on a day to day basis and are non-judgmental
23. Are flexible in their teaching style – often changing the pace of the classroom –

24. Believe that student failure is NOT an option – will do everything to help students master the subject.
25. Use Humor effectively and appropriately
26. Are able to see when students are not tracking and adjust instruction accordingly
27. Are constantly checking to determine if students understand and comprehend material
28. Are authentic, real and appropriately autobiographical
29. Does not have “favorites” or, if they do, it is not obvious

THE PROCESS

Participants were separated into subject matter groups, asked to categorize the above statements, reduce the total number to a more manageable list and to add any additional commentary they believed would enhance understanding of the characteristics. The following is the consolidated list and comments from Symposium participants.

Participants separated the characteristic into two categories:

- (1) The Art of teaching - that which is more innate and part of the personality of a prospective teacher, and,
- (2) The Science of teaching - that which can be taught in a teacher preparation curriculum and learned through experience and mentoring.



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Participants concluded that even if an item was classified as an “art” it must still remain a critical and important component for the personal self assessments of prospective or current teachers, a means for assessing prospective teacher candidates and be part of the evaluation process of the student teaching experience.

ART of TEACHING

- Know love and share subject with knowledge and passion
- Demonstrate a scholarly and eager approach to personal on-going learning and self-improvement
- Be inspirational, motivational, animated and engaging in the classroom and incorporate appropriate humor and personal information into lessons and learning
- Create strong interpersonal connections and rapport with students

SCIENCE OF TEACHING

- Demonstrate mastery of pedagogical skills that underly effective teaching and a knowledge/application of teaching theory
- Establish clear, fair, reasonable and appropriate expectations that force students to exceed their comfort level and create a support system for those who struggle.
- Foster an environment of student accountability and responsibility
- Be consistent, trustworthy and dependable
- Be well organized and overly prepared for every class
- Be flexible in the pacing of instruction
- Create a safe classroom environment that expects mutual respect among students, is non-judgmental and allows for freedom of expression



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- Assess student understanding before, during and at the conclusion of every lesson, adjusting the pace and the approach to ensure 100% understanding of the concepts - do not leave students behind.
- Have exceptional knowledge of the subject in order to have the ability to re-teach concepts in a different manner and until all students demonstrate understanding- be able to explain complex concepts in a simple way.
- Be optimistic and believe *all* students are capable of learning the particular subject matter, view all students as “scholars” and challenge students to offer their best effort on every activity and/or assignment.
- Be able to assess student learning and adjust pedagogical skills and techniques to meet the learning needs and styles of students.
- Create opportunities for *earned* success in every classroom and do not accept failure as an option.
- Ensure time to support student efforts to reach expectations.
- Design, develop, create and present creative and relevant activities for students to demonstrate the usefulness of the subject matter.
- “Know thyself.” Learn and practice continual self assessment by reviewing successes and struggles of each lesson or encounter with students and build personal and pedagogical skills accordingly.

Participants expressed optimism related to the potential of sharing, incorporating and utilizing this information in the following ways:

- Incorporate into teacher preparation curricula at all Schools and Colleges of Education
- Incorporate into professional development programs at all levels



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- Use with mentors and student teacher supervisors as a rubric and benchmark for every student teacher
- Use as a means to screen potential teacher candidates
- Use as an assessment tool for hiring of new teachers
- Adapt and expand for use as a piece of formal teacher evaluations

From what students report and what research has substantiated, teacher qualifications and the knowledge of content must combine with the ability to teach to a wide range of learners. These are important keys to effectiveness in almost any environment. Well trained teachers, who have great passion for their subject and who love learning themselves, always seem to find a variety of ways to assess, motivate and inspire their students.

The conclusion of the participants was that to develop highly effective teachers requires:

- Targeted, high quality teacher preparation programs, exceptional preservice field experiences and meaningful professional development programs that are on-going and presented by qualified peers
- Close field supervision and monitoring and mentoring by experienced and trained mentor teachers
- The opportunity to collaborate, share and observe high quality teachers teach.

The discussion also addressed additional issues, such as salary and incentive plans, working conditions and administrative leadership, which contribute significantly to improving the experience of teachers by offering teachers more opportunity to overcome obstacles, reduce early burn out and encourage them to remain in the profession. However, while the Foundation agrees these issues must be addressed, they are beyond the scope and reach of The Foundation. Therefore, once the characteristics of effective teachers were identified, Participants moved their focus to the current general perceptions of teacher preparation programs in California and discussed their collective ideas related to how to improve teacher preparation in California colleges and universities.

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS



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Following the discussion related to teacher effectiveness, participants turned their focus toward how to incorporate information about what makes teachers, at all levels, more motivational, inspirational and able to ensure academic success of their future students into the curricula of teacher preparation programs.

First, participants brainstormed the “perceived” quality of teacher preparation programs in California. The group identified the following common general concerns and perceptions based upon their personal experiences with teacher preparation programs, their experiences with student teachers they have supervised or observed in their school setting and from interacting with new (first through fifth year) teachers at their respective schools. The following is a list of common concerns of the participants:

- Teacher preparation programs focus mostly on content knowledge, learning theory and methods with limited field experience.
- Too few candidates are well prepared in their content areas
- Candidates are not adequately prepared for what awaits them in their first years of teaching.

- Quality and standards of teacher preparation programs vary widely
- There is a pervasive lack of more immediate and recent classroom experience by professors, often resulting in a discrepancy between what is being taught and presented about the teaching experience and what is the reality of the current educational system.
- Lack of clear understanding, agreement and coherent presentation of “best practices” most effective in the “real” classrooms of today.
- Teacher Prep curricula seem to change with the most recent theory of “effective” teaching.
- The field experience for teacher candidates is not sufficient for proper preparation
- The student teaching experience frequently lacks effective and adequate professional supervision



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- Student teacher supervisors and University faculty frequently lack equal amounts of training to offer clinical and pedagogical evaluations related to what constitutes an “effective” teacher.
- There is little evidence that student teachers have subject mastery prior to their student teaching assignment or that they have the ability to review, reflect and evaluate both their own progress as a teacher candidate or their student’s progress in learning.
- There is a lack of coherence among system wide teacher preparation programs fostered by a lack of communication between education faculty, subject matter faculty and experienced classroom teachers
- There is an absence of connection and congruence between educational theory, teaching practiced in the subject matter and pedagogy used in the the actual classroom.
- Declining enrollments in California teacher preparation program has lead to a more lax and less rigorous selection process of teacher candidates, resulting in less qualified and less passionate prospective teachers.
- Teacher preparation curricula is often developed and updated without input from current classroom teachers and the school district in which they teach.
- Field experience supervision of teacher candidates lacks consistency and allows too little time for a collaborative evaluation and review of lessons and student progress with well trained mentors and/or current classroom teachers.
- Lack of evidence that teacher candidates demonstrate ability to accurately assess the needs of their students and to create the methodology to improve student learning.
- Teacher preparation programs do not track the success of their graduates nor can they prove their specific programs are effective in developing creative, successful teachers.

- Little evidence of coordination between single subject areas and school/ college of education to include methods of instruction specific to the subject matter.
- While involved in the student teacher experience there is little, if any, focus on mastery of theory of instruction as it relates, specifically, to the subject matter.



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- Little evidence that teacher candidates demonstrate effectiveness, are aware of and practice “best practices” or that they are involved in continuous quality improvement that accompanies their student teaching experience.
- There are few opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect and think about what they do, how they make decisions, how they “theorize” their work and how they integrate the content knowledge and pedagogical skills into their practice of teaching.
- Little evidence that enough teacher preparation programs work in conjunction with local school districts to better understand the community, students and needs of the school and to prepare teacher candidates to meet the needs of local schools.
- Curricula is designed for candidates to learn about teaching in general, rather than to use the knowledge to develop skills that help teachers assess and address the needs of their students.

It was the understanding of Participants that several schools and colleges of education throughout California are in the process of addressing several of the above “perceived” concerns and some are finding great early success. It is hoped that further research will be conducted to document and share improvements and results.

In consideration of the interest in reviewing and improving teacher preparation programs that is on-going among schools and colleges of education, The Carlston Family Foundation wishes to offer assistance by developing additional partnerships and strategic alliances with schools and colleges of education, to assist in the incorporation of ideas into teacher preparation programs, and professional development activities for preservice and current classroom teachers.

The Foundation believes its Board of Advisors of 50 exceptionally successful Secondary teachers is well positioned to model and lead educational colleagues toward more effective teaching practices. The evidence of their consistent success, with the most difficult students in some of the highest-need schools in California, consistently demonstrate their skills, unique ideas and creative practices.



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Moving forward, the Foundation plans to continue its efforts to pursue relationships and strategic partnerships with schools and colleges of education, foundations with similar missions, school districts and individual schools to explore a variety of ways to improve California education.

The Foundation offers the services of these exceptionally qualified Award winning teachers to assist in the following areas:

- Recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers who are adequately prepared
- Offering support required to improve and provide quality classroom instruction.
- Promote Teachers as being central to improvement and transformation of schools
- Encourage the inclusion of teachers in all matters related to assessment, instruction and evaluation of learning.
- Promote and present programs for preservice and current classroom teachers designed to regularly examine and improve their teaching skills and develop as active as leaders, learners and collaborators.
- Help transform current teacher preparation programs, top-down hierarchies and relevant professional development programs.
- Assist Teachers to identify their own measures of success and create plans for achievement in a climate that supports release time during the school day for collaboration and lesson planning.
- Disseminate findings from active research projects and best practices to other teachers.

RESEARCH OF TEACHING

It is also the intent of the Carlston Family Foundation to collaborate with California college and university researchers to promote and support research that will ask a variety of questions and identify multiple and diverse measures of teaching effectiveness. The Foundation Advisory Board Members suggested that current thinking about what effective teaching looks like is often misguided, and that the vision of quality teacher preparation programs and professional development programs related to best practices is frequently inadequate. In line with the needs for improving teacher preparation programs, the Advisory Board suggested the following areas for research consideration:

1. Profession of Teaching
 - a. How can/do effective teachers:



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- i. Assess students
 - ii. Engage students
 - iii. Affect behavior and discipline
 - iv. Reduce drop-out rate
 - v. Closing the achievement gap
 - b. What are the common characteristics of effective teaching/teachers?
 - i. How do they advance learning?
 - ii. How do teachers share skills?
 - c. Is teaching a science or art? What are the skills and practices that can be taught to improve teacher effectiveness?
 - d. What are the best measurements of teacher success, student learning and school success?
 - e. Why do teachers leave the profession and what can be done to motivate and retain teachers in the profession?
 - f. How does teacher empowerment influence student learning and achievement?
 - g. Do teacher involvement and participation in extracurricular programs or special programs influence teacher recruitment and retention?
 - h. Do increased pay and benefits affect teacher effectiveness and why/why not?
2. Induction and Pre-service Programs for New Teachers
- i. Where are the most effective teacher preparation programs, and how is their effectiveness measured?
 - j. Can credentialing programs pre-qualify prospective teachers and “weed out” marginal candidates?
3. Student Achievement
- k. What impact do standardized tests have on student learning?
 - l. What is the impact of integrated curricula on promoting student achievement and closing the achievement gap?
 - m. What are the most effective measures of student learning?
 - n. How do California/US educational practices and student learning compare to European and Asian practices, particularly with regard to standardized testing?
4. School Restructuring
- o. What are the policies, structures and supportive measures required to develop a supportive and professional culture in a school?



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- p. Where are the most successful school-based models that have been proven to advance student performance, what are their common characteristics, and are these characteristics easily transferrable?

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The Carlston Family Foundation continues to support the following:

1. Ensuring teachers are full partners in educational reform.
2. The promotion of teaching as an important and significant profession worthy of great respect.
3. The creation and promotion of an extraordinary group of exemplary teachers to lead their respective schools, local teacher credentialing programs and policy makers toward more effective decisions and best practices that focus on improving student and closing the achievement gap.
4. Supporting the use of teachers to act as liaisons, mentors, etc., with California Colleges and Schools of Education to review and revise credentialing curricula and teacher education.

Therefore, the Foundation will:

1. Inspire and guide the work of “re-imagining” the teaching profession in California school districts throughout the state of California
2. Develop and support a network of CFF Honorees to address common issues and solve common problems;
3. Support the sharing of “Best Practices” among Advisory Board Members, and will work to see that information is disseminated to all college and university schools of education, State and County Departments of Education and all school districts within the State of California;
4. Continue to create strategic partnerships with Schools of Education and research programs to promote core principles into teacher and administrative preparation programs;
5. Encourage the partnership of Carlston Family Foundation Outstanding Teachers of America Honorees with College and University Departments and Schools of Education to assist in the development of a variety of research projects related to



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teacher effectiveness, improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap;

6. Promote the voices of CFF Honorees in local, regional and statewide forums to promote dissemination of “Best Practices” and the promotion of teaching professionalism;
7. Continue to create opportunities for rich discussion and collaborative learning between classroom teachers and colleagues, teachers and college and university schools of education, and State and local policy makers.

Conclusion

Since the inception of the Carlston Family Foundation’s Outstanding Teachers of America Award, the Foundation has honored some of California’s most outstanding and successful teachers working in some of the most demanding, high-need areas of California. In each case, these Honorees have consistently produced students who have achieved academic and personal excellence and success at institutions of higher learning throughout the world. A majority of these students have been first-generation college students who never believed a college education was within their grasp until they had a life-changing experience with a high school teacher who recognized their talents and developed their capabilities to achieve.

Given the exceptional skills of this group of highly successful and experienced teachers, the Carlston Family Foundation made the decision to share the extraordinary competence of this group with schools and colleges of education, policy makers and other teachers with the purpose of helping to improve the quality of education in California. While the resources of the Foundation are limited, by forming partnerships and strategic alliances, we believe we can help facilitate small but significant change and improvement in classroom achievement.

The Foundation hopes to make our primary focus the future and current teaching force in California. We believe a higher quality of well-prepared classroom teachers will be the key to creating successful schools in California.



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It is understood that the current California economic crisis complicates the process of change at all levels. Thus, in the immediate future, it will be with the assistance and efforts of Foundations such as the Carlston Family Foundation that some of the budget limitations might be overcome, particularly as it pertains to teacher preparation, professional training and development.

The Foundation hopes to combine with other influential groups to help policy makers remain focused on creating systems that will support the development of a workforce of highly qualified teachers who can meet the growing challenges faced by the educational system in California.

If you are interested in working in partnership or forming strategic alliances with the Carlston Family Foundation or in accessing the expertise of the Carlston Family Foundation Board of Advisors, please contact Tim Allen, Executive Director of the Foundation.