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MetLife Survey of the American Teacher Examines Views about the Path to College and Careers

Today's teachers believe preparing students for college and careers is a top priority, but see obstacles to postsecondary access and success

Dallas, Texas — March 9, 2011 — According to the new *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers*, a substantial majority of teachers, parents, and Fortune 1000 executives believe that one of the nation's highest priorities in education should be preparing secondary students for college and career success. The survey is the 27th in an annual series. The first of two reports from this year's survey, *Part 1: Clearing the Path*, released today, examines the implications of ensuring all secondary students are college- and career-ready.

"The professional development implications for ensuring all students are college-ready are significant," stated Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. Despite agreement among parents, teachers, and Fortune 1000 executives overall on the value of college- and career-readiness, the survey reveals their disagreement about strategies for achieving it.

Teachers believe that one of the highest priorities in education should be strengthening programs to help diverse learners with the highest needs meet college- and career-ready standards. Teachers in schools with more than two-thirds minority students are more likely than those in schools with one-third or fewer minority students to support common core standards (English: 68% vs. 55%; math: 69% vs. 52%). Hirsh noted, "Teachers are not backing away from their commitment to ensure that all students meet college- and career-ready standards. We need to continue to listen to what teachers say they need to be successful in meeting these standards."

Both students and parents report that establishing a college-going school culture appears to make the most difference in predicting student success. In addition to setting expectations and providing appropriate information to students and parents, schools with such a culture also excel at preparing students in core subjects as well as the interdisciplinary areas that build global awareness. Unfortunately, most of the schools with college-going cultures serve students who traditionally are more successful. Schools with strong college-going cultures include fewer diverse and low-income students and English language learners.

"Creating a culture of high expectations and schools where all educators take collective responsibility for all students are central to what we know is essential to improving student learning," said Hirsh. Previously, the 2009 MetLife survey revealed an expectation gap between teachers and students with regard to college readiness and success. A high percentage of students (79%) reported planning to attend a two- or four-year college,

while teachers expected only 50% to attend. One year later, teachers report that 64% of their students will graduate from high school ready for college without the need for remedial coursework. While there is a slight increase in teachers' expectations for student success, there remains a significant gap between what students and teachers expect will happen and what parents and Fortune 1000 business leaders expect.

Hirsh concluded that “revisiting teachers’ views from last year’s survey about teacher collaboration and professional development provides insights into the strategies and resources teachers need to ensure that all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready.”

The second part of this year’s survey, to be released on March 23, will shed additional light on teachers’ views on how to best address the needs of students with diverse learning needs. Links for current reports and the entire MetLife Teacher Survey series are available at www.metlife.com/teachersurvey.

About Learning Forward (formerly National Staff Development Council) Learning Forward's purpose is ensuring that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international association of learning educators focused on increasing student achievement through more effective professional development. To learn more about the impact of high-quality professional learning, visit www.learningforward.org.