

# COURAGE TO TEACH

## Longitudinal Program Evaluation

Compiled for the Center for Teacher Formation  
and the Fetzer Institute

*by*

Sam Intrator

*and*

Megan Scribner

• March 2000 •

# The Center for Teacher Formation

Under the guidance of Parker J. Palmer, author of *The Courage to Teach*, the Fetzer Institute created the Courage to Teach (CTT) program, piloting an approach to professional development called “teacher formation.” This approach is rooted in the belief that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher. The formation process invites educators to reclaim their own wholeness and vocational clarity, and makes connections between the renewal of a teacher's spirit and the revitalization of public education.

The Center for Teacher Formation was established in 1997 to develop, deepen, and expand the work of teacher formation nationally. The center provides information, consultation, and program development assistance to schools, colleges, and communities that wish to initiate CTT programs. A primary mission of the center is to select and prepare facilitators for CTT programs.

Center for Teacher Formation  
PMB 375  
321 High School Rd. NE  
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110  
Ph: 206-855-9140 Fax: 206-855-9143

e-mail: [info@teacherformation.org](mailto:info@teacherformation.org)  
website: [www.teacherformation.org](http://www.teacherformation.org)

## Center for Teacher Formation Leadership:

Rick & Marcy Jackson  
*Co-directors*

Parker J. Palmer  
*Senior Advisor*

*The Center for Teacher Formation is supported by the Fetzer Institute.*  
The Fetzer Institute is a nonprofit private operating foundation that supports research, education, and service programs exploring the integral relationships among body, mind, and spirit.

March 1, 2000

This longitudinal evaluation—a study of Courage to Teach participants three to five years after completing the program—documents the program’s lasting impact. It lifts up the importance of helping educators reconnect with their vocational purpose and passion, and the potential of this approach to retain good teachers and improve educational outcomes.

For most educators, teaching is a calling inspired by love for children, an ethic of service, and a desire to make a positive difference. But a growing body of evidence suggests that the difficult conditions in our public schools, the excessive demands on a teacher’s time, and the heightened job pressures too often grind teachers down, distort their ideals of teaching, and erode their commitment to the profession.

The Courage to Teach (CTT) is a program for the personal and professional renewal of public school teachers and administrators. Using an approach called “teacher formation,” this program is rooted in the belief that good teaching—and inspired student learning—flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher. The formation process helps educators reclaim their own vocational clarity. It makes connections between the renewal of a teacher’s passion, the retention of our best educators, and the revitalization of public education.

This is the second formal evaluation of the Courage to Teach program conducted by Dr. Sam Intrator, professor of education and child study at Smith College, and Megan Scribner, independent educational consultant from Washington, D.C. Their first evaluation report is available in the Resources section of the Center for Teacher Formation website: [www.teacherformation.org](http://www.teacherformation.org).

Our hope is that this report will lead to further investment in meaningful professional development for teachers—individuals on whom our society depends for so much but for whom we provide so little support and encouragement. The importance of doing so may best be expressed in the words of a CTT participant: *“Teachers who know themselves, who have integrity, make more significant connections with their students. Respecting children, being able to see their individual gifts, is the foundation for teaching that makes a difference.”*

**COURAGE TO TEACH**  
**Longitudinal Program Evaluation**

*TABLE OF CONTENTS*

Preface ..... v

Executive Summary ..... 1

Background Information on the Courage to Teach Program.....4

Evaluation Methods.....6

SECTION I. CTT: A Program of High Quality Professional Development.....8

SECTION II. CTT’s Impact on Teachers ..... 11

    Finding 1: CTT Rejuvenates Teachers’ Passion for Teaching..... 11

        Antidote to Teacher Overload

        Antidote to the Press for Standards and Assessment

        CTT Teachers Act with Professional Courage

    Finding 2. CTT Teachers Undertake New Leadership Roles .....15

    Finding 3. CTT Teachers Seek Out Interactions with Colleagues .....16

    Finding 4. CTT Teachers Practice Reflective Inquiry.....16

    Finding 5. CTT Teachers Change the Way They Teach .....17

        Teaching to Create Connections

        Teaching From the Heart

    Finding 6: CTT Teachers See Tangible Benefits for Their Students.....19

        Creating Safe and Joyous Learning Environments

        Celebrating the Individual Gifts of Students

    Finding 7: CTT Teachers Practice More Mindful Living.....21

SECTION III. CTT’s Impact on Educational Reform ..... 22

    CTT within a Larger Research Context ..... 23

Appendix #1 CTT Post-participation Survey..... 26

# COURAGE TO TEACH

## Longitudinal Program Evaluation

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last decade, a set of pivotal national research reports has spotlighted a compelling finding: **What a teacher knows and what a teacher can do is the most dramatic influence on what students learn.** Yet, the difficult working conditions in our schools, the excessive demands on teachers' time, and the lack of support for sustaining their energy and commitment, has caused many teachers to leave the profession or lose the hope and idealism that initially fueled their choice of vocation. For those concerned with creating excellence in our schools, we must find ways to attend to the teacher. We must also provide conditions and structures that enable teachers to perform well, flourish in their professional roles, and sustain their engagement, energy, and commitment to teaching throughout their career.

*The data in this longitudinal evaluation was used to answer the following three questions:*

*SECTION I. To what extent does CTT represent high-quality professional development?*

*SECTION II. To what extent does CTT impact teachers in enduring ways?*

*SECTION III. To what extent does CTT contribute to education reform?*

## SECTION I. CTT: A Program of High-Quality Professional Development

Most teachers rarely experience high-quality professional development; instead, most teachers experience “training.” The data profoundly illustrates how the CTT program consistently met the standards for high-quality professional development. One hundred percent (**100%**) of the participants called it the most influential professional development experience they have had in education. **When asked, 100% of the participants believed that teacher formation could lead to enduring and vital change in American education.** This should not be read as an idle finding. The CTT participants are veterans of the classrooms and of America's revolving door relationship with school reform. Their endorsement of the CTT program's capacity to invite thoughtful, caring improvement in education might be, in the final analysis, the most compelling finding in this evaluation.

## SECTION II. CTT's Impact on Teachers

### Finding 1: CTT Rejuvenates Teachers' Passion for Teaching

Every teacher shared how CTT helped revitalize his or her passion and commitment for teaching. Sixty percent (**60%**) of the teachers stated that the CTT experience helped renew their commitment to wholehearted teaching, despite the current limited visions about what constitutes learning and development. More than half indicated that CTT's focus on their inner

voice and convictions helped bolster their courage and foster a greater trust in their skills, beliefs, and capacities as educators. Aside from recharging a teacher's zest, CTT also keeps teachers in teaching. Over half of the teachers who enrolled in the CTT program expressed feeling burned out, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Many had lost touch with their vocation. Remarkably, since being in the program 3-5 years ago, 104 of the 113 educators are still active in teaching and administrative roles, 6 have retired after full careers, and only 3 have left education.

### **Finding 2. CTT Teachers Undertake New Leadership Roles**

A significant number of participants shared that the program inspired them to pursue formal and informal leadership positions in education. Teachers linked their experience in CTT to their enhanced leadership skills and the capacity to assume new challenges and risks. Since participating in CTT, **39%** of the participants have taken on new leadership positions in education.

### **Finding 3. CTT Teachers Seek Out Interactions with Colleagues**

Research indicates that schools where teachers have high levels of interactions with colleagues have better student performance, higher rates of teacher retention, and higher levels of teacher commitment. Sixty-eight percent (**68%**) of the participants described how their CTT experience led them to initiate more collegial relationships when they returned to their school site.

### **Finding 4. CTT Teachers Practice Reflective Inquiry**

Many calls for improving the teaching force recommend encouraging teachers to become critical practitioners who scrutinize and reflect on their own teaching. According to the data, **90%** of the teachers indicated that CTT helped them develop more reflective habits in their practice.

### **Finding 5. CTT Teachers Change the Way They Teach**

The CTT program does not explicitly set out to change a teacher's classroom practice. Yet, remarkably **100%** of the teachers describe how their experience in CTT altered and improved their classroom practice in significant ways over time. The teachers saw developing genuine connections with their students and teaching from the heart as the most significant changes.

### **Finding 6. CTT Teachers See Tangible Benefits for Their Students**

While the CTT program is focused on teachers, **83%** of the teachers reported that their students had tangibly benefited by the changes they made in their pedagogical style and approach. While many themes emerged, teachers asserted that their newfound ability to create safe and joyous learning environments and identify and lift up their students' individual gifts were key to their students' learning.

### **Finding 7. CTT Teachers Practice More Mindful Living**

One of the unique features of CTT is that it touches the teachers' personal lives. Eighty-two percent (**82%**) of the respondents specifically referred to ways that participation in the program enabled them to live more mindfully and in a more balanced way.

This longitudinal evaluation concludes that the CTT program significantly impacted the participants in profound and enduring ways. The program rejuvenated teachers' passion for the vocation, it provided experiences instrumental for developing a more robust professional repertoire, it changed the methods and pedagogy of the participating teachers, it resulted in tangible benefits for the students of the participating teachers, and it helped teachers develop more mindful practices that were then integrated into all dimensions of their lives.

### SECTION III. CTT's Impact on Educational Reform

One important way to view the contribution of CTT to American education is to think about the program in a larger research context. A number of influential books and research reports identify a set of obstacles that impede sustained educational progress.<sup>1</sup> These obstacles include the following: teacher overload, teacher isolation, well-intended group think, inadequate professional development, and the narrow undifferentiated character of the teacher's role. These obstacles can be condensed to a simple statement: **Until we begin to attend to teachers, enduring productive reform will remain elusive.**

*The most promising contribution of the CTT program is its unwavering focus on teachers, providing them with the sustenance and courage necessary to remain committed to their profession. Both research and common sense suggest that to be sustaining and renewing, we must provide opportunities for teachers to further develop and reinvigorate their core mission and purpose.*

*Teachers are continually told what to do, how to do it, when, where, etc. The results expected are fleeting and changeable. The methods are often contradictory. When an individual is unable to stop and reflect on the meaning of it all, that individual may become weakened and discouraged. The CTT program allows this reflection to happen in a variety of ways. You owe it to those, from whom much is asked, to allow them to slow down and gather the courage to continue. (Middle school teacher, 9-years' experience)*

---

<sup>1</sup> In compiling this list of obstacles we relied primarily on the following research reports and texts: Linda Darling-Hammond's *The Right To Learn: A Blueprint For Creating Schools That Work*; Richard Ellmore's (1996) *Restructuring in the Classroom: Teaching, Learning and School Organization*; Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (1996) *What's Worth Fighting for In Your School*; Seymour B. Sarason's (1996) *Revisiting "The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change."*

## Background Information on COURAGE TO TEACH

*The Courage to Teach program is a two-year program of quarterly retreats for the personal and professional renewal of public school educators. The program is especially designed for K-12 educators—teachers, counselors, and administrators on whom our society depends for so much but for whom we provide so little. The Courage to Teach focuses neither on "technique," nor on school reform, but rather on renewing the inner lives of professionals in education.*

*Each Courage to Teach group consists of 20 to 30 educators who gather for three-day quarterly retreats over a two-year period. In large-group, small-group, and solitary settings, concepts of teacher formation and "the heart of a teacher" are explored, making use of personal stories, reflections on classroom practice, and insights from poets, storytellers, and various wisdom traditions. Each retreat follows a seasonal theme, using the rich metaphors of the seasons as a way of exploring vocational and life questions. For example, the fall theme of "Seeds of True Self" provides a way to revisit the passion, experiences, gifts, or values that drew one into teaching in the first place, and to reflect on how one's education journey has unfolded. The winter retreat themes of darkness, dormancy, and death provide a context to talk about seasons of grief and loss in life and teaching. Spring offers the paradox of new life emerging from apparent dormancy, and summer is a time to reflect on fruition and abundance.*

*The Courage to Teach program was developed by Parker J. Palmer, Ph.D. and the Fetzer Institute and was piloted in Michigan from 1994-1996. Following the extremely positive response to the pilot, four additional Courage to Teach groups were sponsored by the Fetzer Institute at various locations across the country—in coastal South Carolina, southwest Michigan, Baltimore-Washington, D.C., and Washington State. These groups completed their two-year programs in the summer of 1998. Since then, additional programs have begun or are developing in North Carolina; Louisville, Kentucky; Boston, Massachusetts; Vermont; Baltimore, Maryland; Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Michigan; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Austin, Fort Worth, and Dallas, Texas; Portland, Oregon; and Washington State.*

*The Center for Teacher Formation was established in 1997 to further expand and develop the Courage to Teach program through the training and mentoring of new facilitators (Courage to Teach Facilitator Preparation Program), program consultation activities, Courage to Teach introductory retreats, and Formation Principles and Practices Workshops. Funding for new Courage to Teach programs comes primarily from partnerships between local communities, school districts, or other grant-making organizations. Several different models for funding have emerged as teachers, communities, and schools find ways to bring the Courage to Teach program to their areas.*

*The COURAGE TO TEACH focuses on:*

- renewing heart, mind, and spirit through the exploration of the inner landscape of a teacher's life;
- reconnecting to one's identity and integrity; identifying and honoring gifts and strengths, and acknowledging limits;
- creating a context for careful listening and deep connection that also honors



diversity in person and profession;

- helping educators create safe spaces and trusting relationships in their schools, with their students and colleagues, and within their communities; and
- exploring the connection between attending to the inner dimension of teachers and teaching and the renewal of public education.

### Resources related to COURAGE TO TEACH:

- Reflections on a Program for “The Formation of Teachers”  
Parker J. Palmer  
Fetzer Institute Occasional Paper
- Evaluation of the Courage to Teach Program—Full Report  
Center for Teacher Formation, October 1998
- “The Heart of a Teacher—Identity and Integrity in Teaching”  
Parker J. Palmer  
Reprinted from *Change*, November/December 1997
- “Evoking the Spirit in Public Education”  
Parker J. Palmer  
*Educational Leadership* December 1998/January 1999
- *The Courage to Teach—Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*  
Parker J. Palmer  
Jossey-Bass Publishers 1998
- *The Courage to Teach: A Guide for Reflection and Renewal*  
Rachel C. Livsey, in collaboration with Parker J. Palmer  
Jossey-Bass Publishers 1999
- *Teaching from the Heart—Seasons of Renewal in a Teachers Life*  
Documentary video  
The Center for Teacher Formation  
Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998

# COURAGE TO TEACH

## Longitudinal Program Evaluation

### *EVALUATION METHODS*

The Fetzer Institute commissioned an outside evaluation to document and analyze the longitudinal impact of the CTT program on the educator participants and on education reform. The evaluation was focused on understanding the impact of participation in the program after at least three years had passed since the educators had been enrolled in a Courage to Teach Retreat program. To assess the impact of the CTT program, two evaluators (see below) solicited open-ended surveys from 95 participants from five CTT retreat programs. Fifty written responses were received (53% return rate). Six of the respondents were contacted by phone and additional data was collected. A copy of the question protocol can be found in Appendix #1. The five retreats included a two-year pilot CTT program in Michigan from 1994-1996, and four other two-year programs held in 1996-1998 in Maryland, Washington State, South Carolina, and Michigan.

#### ***Analysis of the evaluation data***

The responses were transcribed. The two evaluators analyzed the content of the responses and coded the data into themes. The conceptual analysis guiding the organization of this evaluation was also informed by the research on teaching and school organization. The bulk of this report provides a qualitative portrait detailing the effects of the CTT program on the participants; the report also provides a statistical summary of the responses.

*The authors of the evaluation pursued interpretive validity and reliability in several ways. First, several mailings and reminders were sent out to encourage a high response rate. The 53% return rate is extremely high given the span of time between participation in the program and the commencement of this evaluation. Second, the follow-up phone interviews provided an alternative form of data for analysis. Third, the data analysis process followed a deliberative process that allowed for corroborating of conceptual categories between the data, Courage to Teach resources, and other research done in the field of education. Reliability of our findings was addressed through the ongoing process of data collection and analysis. The authors individually coded the data into themes. Once themes were identified, they were compared between evaluators. Further, a statistical portrait of the responses was developed. This portrait provided a broad view of the responses that could be compared to the interpretive themes generated by the analysis of the data. Lastly, the authors maintained an objective dialogue with the program leaders throughout the process.*

## EVALUATORS

**Sam Intrator, Ph.D.** is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Child Study at Smith College in Northampton, MA. Prior to receiving his Ph.D. in Curriculum and Teacher Education and an M.A. degree in Policy and Administration from Stanford University, Intrator was a high school English teacher and a high school administrator. He has worked in public schools in Brooklyn, New York, Vermont, and California. Intrator also has a Master's Degree in English literature from the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College in Vermont.

In 1994, Intrator was awarded the *W.K. Kellogg National Leadership Program Fellow*. He was one of 45 national fellows selected from across all professions. He also received the *Presidential Teacher Award: White House Commission on Presidential Scholars* in 1995 and was the *National Honor Society Teacher of the Year* in 1994. Aside from his own experiences as a teacher, Intrator is the son of two career New York City public school teachers.

**Megan Scribner** received an M.A. in American Studies from George Washington University in September 1988. She graduated from The University of Redlands, May 1978 with a double major in Philosophy and Comparative Literature.

Since 1985, Scribner has worked as an independent writer/consultant and has worked on project design, development, assessment, and documentation for non-profits. From 1988-1991, Scribner was the director of programs for Eisenberg Associations. From 1981-1985, Scribner was the research coordinator for the Kettering Foundation, developing the research agenda for all the foundation's projects and coordinating all research activities.

# COURAGE TO TEACH

## Longitudinal Program Evaluation

### SECTION I. CTT: A Program of High-Quality Professional Development

*In this section, we examined to what extent the CTT program represents high-quality professional development. We used five common principles drawn from the research on effective school organizations to evaluate the CTT program.*

- High-quality professional development focuses on teachers as central to student learning.
- High-quality professional development provides opportunities for individual growth.
- High-quality professional development provides opportunities for teachers to be part of larger learning communities that are sources of support and ideas.
- High-quality professional development promotes continuous inquiry and reflection on the part of teachers.
- High-quality professional development provides the time and mental space for teachers to become involved in the protracted process of changing roles and practice.

The data profoundly illustrates how the CTT program consistently met the standards for high-quality professional development. CTT represented a formative milestone in the professional and personal lives of the participants. One hundred percent (**100%**) called it the most influential professional development experience they have had in education. In the following excerpts from the questionnaires, teachers describe the ways in which CTT met the attributes of a high-quality professional development program.

*Professionalism is the “name of the game.” Throughout the program, we were treated with respect and trust. Although it varies for each participant, the impact that this program has on students in classrooms is far greater than other forms of professional development. (High school teacher, 13-years’ experience)*

#### **1. High-quality professional development focuses on teachers as central to student learning.**

One hundred percent (**100%**) of the respondents reported that the CTT program focused on the teacher.

*This program is not centered on measurables, charts, tables, or graphs. It is **centered on teachers**. It is through the strength of a teacher that students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. (High school teacher, 20-years’ experience)*

Eighty-three percent (**83%**) of the respondents indicated that their participation in the CTT program tangibly impacted the experience students had in their classrooms.

*To be a valuable and effective teacher, one must know oneself.... CTT helped me gain and celebrate that knowledge. Students respect integrity and can sense hypocrisy. It is essential to be willing to share enough of oneself and to admit areas where there are challenges—to be able to teach from the heart. CTT gives the participants the knowledge and confidence to be able to teach from that base. The students certainly respond and seem to learn more from that safe place. (Elementary school teacher, 9-years' experience)*

## **2. High-quality professional development provides opportunities for individual growth.**

*Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents indicated that their participation in the CTT program nourished their personal life.*

*I learned to be still and to get glimmerings of how to be present and quiet. I learned to live more in the moment and to trust the process of life... that changes my reactions to everything. (High school teacher, 25-years' experience)*

*I work at not overachieving but doing my best within a balance of who I am (my interests, talents, etc.) and who I want to be as a teacher (effective, efficient). I am still available to others but work at finding moments for myself to meditate, relax, or take a walk for renewal. (Elementary school teacher, 23-years' experience)*

## **3. High-quality professional development provides opportunities for teachers to be part of larger learning communities that are sources of support and ideas.**

Eighty-seven percent (**87%**) of respondents indicated that their participation in the CTT program helped them develop strategies and practices that enabled them to become more effective professionals.

*I am no longer a principal over a school but have been promoted to an executive director serving 23 elementary schools. The contacts made through CTT have given me trusted allies to approach when "working through" decisions. Spending approximately 24 days over two years, uninterrupted, with educators of similar ilk, has broadened my knowledge base and insight. The experience will be cherished by us all forever. (Elementary principal, 20-years' experience)*

*I am more relaxed with my class and coworkers. I have modified and integrated activities for personal insights into the classroom. Through the program and the relationships that have come about as a result of the program, I feel that I have been (am) valued as a person, as a professional. (Anonymous)*

#### **4. High-quality professional development promotes continuous inquiry and reflection on the part of teachers.**

One hundred percent (**100%**) of the respondents indicated that the CTT program led them to continually reflect and examine their lives both personally and professionally.

*It is the best professional and personal “training” I have ever experienced. It was life changing in many ways and I think about the program all the time and apply it to my life daily. (High school teacher, 11-years’ experience)*

*What tired, burned out, good teachers need most is to “rest” or to retreat. The CTT program offers seasoned teachers a chance to recall what brought them into the profession in the first place. To get in touch with one’s inner teacher is invigorating and sustaining. This type of professional development is far more effective at improving the physical, spiritual, and emotional health of a teacher than traditional one-shot in-services. When teachers are living more fully, the students win because their teachers are more “present” in the classroom. (High school teacher, 13-years’ experience)*

5. High-quality professional development provides the time and mental space for teachers to become involved in the protracted process of changing roles and practice.

One hundred percent (**100%**) of the respondents indicated that their participation in the CTT program impacted the way that they design and teach their classes.

*I know that the self-learning and centering I gained through the program have helped me to slow the pace of my teaching/working life, and to act intentionally rather than blindly reacting and rushing from point A to B. The result is [that I am able to create] a learning environment that is focused and responsive to the needs of learners. I have watched student experience deepen in meaning and understanding, creating more in-depth and long-lasting growth. They are able to be more articulate and insightful about their progress and what they have learned. That is an amazing thing to witness. (High school teacher, 7-years’ experience)*

The evaluation data establishes the CTT program as an exemplary and unique model of professional development.

*It is not a workshop or in-service. It is inner work that no other professional development does. It takes teachers where they are and works with them. Just as we are expected to take students where they are. It feeds teachers’ souls and imaginations. (Elementary school teacher, 27-years’ experience)*

## SECTION II. CTT's Impact On Teachers

*In this section, we evaluated to what extent CTT impacts teachers as professionals and individuals in enduring ways.*

### Finding 1: CTT Teachers Rejuvenate Their Passion for Teaching

In its most energized and glorious, teaching is a magnificent vocation. Teachers embrace the profession because they have a commitment to serve children and a mission to make a difference by teaching. While teachers know occasional moments of near-sublime triumph when they connect to children or create a moment of powerful learning in their classroom, the research on the profession of teaching suggests that these moments are rare. This reality combined with the excessive demands on a teacher's time and the pressures of the job cause many teachers to lose heart. In evaluating the responses of the participants, **86%** credit CTT's program with renewing their passion for teaching. As these veteran teachers said,

*The CTT model is an incredible gift to public educators because it gives us a way to replenish the sources of energy and wisdom inside us that can so easily be depleted by the relentless demands of students, parents, and school systems. It allows us to give back to ourselves so we can keep giving to the children. It encourages us to bring an honesty and integrity to our work that is a very powerful model for the students. (High school teacher, 14-years' experience)*

*It has renewed my joy in teaching. I still see the school issues but I can separate those aspects more easily now from my classroom experiences. I feel renewed and excited about teaching itself. (Elementary school teacher, 23-years' experience)*

*We all need to be more attentive to the needs of the soul—our own and that of children. Without this deeper perspective, all the well-meaning reforms will wither along with your teaching staff. WE cannot do this work without replenishment. (Elementary school teacher, 21-years' experience)*

*In CTT, teachers are encouraged to explore their inner lives and to tap the inner strength and love of teaching that brought them to the profession. (High school counselor, 25-years' experience)*

*These quotes embody the spirit of the collective responses to CTT. Throughout the data two themes emerge. CTT helps teachers remain whole and energized amidst overwhelming demands. CTT helps teachers maintain their humanistic values in an educational environment crazed by tests and endless calls for standardized outcomes.*

## *Antidote to Teacher Overload*

All indicators suggest that teaching conditions have deteriorated over the last few years. Many studies on the lives and practice of teachers suggest that the work has become increasingly taxing and stressful. Teachers feel stretched in every direction by the increasing demands of students, parents, and administrators and overwhelmed by the crazy quilt of roles they are asked to play. Teachers must teach their subjects, serve as advisors to their students, invent cutting-edge curriculum, prepare students for high-stakes tests, participate in both local and national school reform projects, take courses to meet new and rigorous certification requirements, work on teams with colleagues, and keep up with the ceaseless flood of grading and paperwork. Having to juggle this amalgam of roles grinds down teachers. Adding to their state of depletion and frustration is the fact that society expects them to pull this off without providing them with adequate time. Teachers face all this while being undercompensated financially and underappreciated by a society where teaching lacks professional status. It is no wonder that burnout is manifesting itself more frequently in the profession.

*If public education is going to be a true road to a meaningful life and healthy community membership, we must nurture educators so they do not burn out and despair beneath overwhelming demands, but maintain an inner gyroscope and persevere. (Elementary school teacher, 21-years' experience)*

In our study, time and again, teachers confirmed these realities and **99%** said that CTT helped them to maintain their balance amidst such conditions. As one teacher said, *“It is responsible for my remaining in the profession as an active, contributing member. It has provided me with personal resources to come back fresh nearly every day and avoid the cynicism that prevails among many teachers.”* (High school teacher, 9-years' experience)

Others teachers share similar experiences:

*I consider myself a merchant of hope whenever I share my story about beginning my formation work. I can only “testify” what impact the program had in my life. I know that my teaching has become more humane. I have found an authentic way to clear my thoughts of the many conflicting voices that deform rather than inform my work on a daily basis. I am not feeling burned out but “on fire” in terms of reaching out and embracing the many paradoxes of my teaching life. This program is a must for teachers who are so busy reaching out that they have forgotten the need to reach within and bring forth something worthy of their students' attention. This takes courage and that is what the CTT program provides. CTT provides participants a time to retreat, remember, and respond to the needs of their soul. (High school teacher, 29-years' experience)*

*I am more aware of my own worth as a human being. It is less important for me to prove myself by volunteering for every committee and by overextending myself outside of the classroom. I have a clearer view of what is most important. Being “present” when I am teaching, and not distracted by fatigue and/or frustration, has made me a better teacher. (High school teacher, 13-years' experience)*



## ***Antidote to the Press for Standards and Assessment***

More than half of the teachers spoke of CTT as an antidote to the educational trend of focusing on testing and measurable outcomes. These teachers felt diminished by the growing insistence of measuring educational success solely by narrow cognitive tests. The pressure on teachers to teach to the test and focus their curriculum on those limited, testable objectives was cited as deflating, demoralizing, and ineffective.

*The current overemphasis being placed on testing is driving teachers from the profession and stressing children. The negative consequences are apparent, but no one wants to name or claim them. Something is very wrong with the system. It has lost its heart and is slowly dying. The CTT program is a viable alternative. (Writer, 20-years' experience)*

Teachers painfully describe the tension between this emphasis on testing and their own desires to inspire a love of learning and honor the multitudinous gifts of their students. One teacher gave voice to how this focus on tests diminishes teachers and students alike: “*I feel like I work in a warehouse for children. The people in charge are more concerned about numbers and not about the children.*” (Anonymous)

*More than half of the teachers declared that the CTT experience is desperately needed given this current climate.*

*“It is needed now more than ever as students/parents and teachers go over ‘measurables.’ We know we (students and teachers) are more than scores, but the feelings are out there.” (Elementary school teacher, 22-years' experience)*

*Renewal at this time is so critical for teachers if we are to hang in there in the midst of all the testing stuff. We need opportunities like this not only for our sake, but for the sake of the students we serve. (Elementary school teacher, 21-years' experience)*

Three-quarters of the teachers commented on how their CTT experience helped renew their commitment to the humanity of education despite the current limited visions about what constitutes learning and development.

*There is high-stakes testing in our state. There is more pressure on teachers, principals, and superintendents to teach and align curriculum with state standards. All of that is a waste of time unless you can develop that sense of cooperation and community in the classroom. My feeling is that the most important job a teacher can do to be successful is to develop a sense of community in the classroom. If you can just touch one child everyday, just one child's heart, you have made a difference. (Superintendent, 31-years' experience)*

*Sometimes in the face of standards and exams, grading papers and marking report cards, going to school board meetings and reading newspaper articles about poor SAT scores, we lose the vision and grow tired. This process rejuvenates the soul in teaching, thus igniting the fire within, the desire to be and help others to be our joyful best. (Elementary school principal, 20-years' experience)*

## ***CTT Teachers Act with Professional Courage***

The product of teaching is complex and often intangible and it eludes most assessment devices. In the face of all these outside pressures and demands, teachers often feel unable to act from their convictions. More than half of the CTT teachers indicated that the program's focus on their inner voice and convictions helped bolster their courage and foster a greater trust in their skills, beliefs, and capacities as educators.

*I trust myself more than I used to. We must do what we believe is truly good for kids, in spite of what the latest educational gurus have to say. We cannot follow the edicts of well-meaning people outside of the classroom who claim to have the answers to problems in education. We must stand firm in our commitment to make sure that students feel connected and contributing. These are values that we embrace in our community at CTT. (High school teacher, 13-years' experience)*

*In the classroom, I'm more focused on the children and what I can do for them. Politics and what I can't accomplish are relegated to another place, another time. My movement with staff and colleagues is forward. I don't look back as often. I'm more satisfied with the job I did today, more positive about the job I'll do tomorrow. (Elementary school teacher, 22-years' experience)*

*I have increased my practice of integrating head, heart, and soul. I continue to find this practice increasingly important in light of the almost obsessive focus on assessment and the growing tendency to view students as products. In my work with elementary students my guiding question has become: How do I serve them now? (Elementary school teacher, 21-years' experience)*

Connecting to the children and teaching from the heart rejuvenates teachers' love of teaching. CTT teachers assert that it also enables them to better meet the demands of society for accountability and standards. As one teacher stated, "*Society's expectations translate to school district expectations and as long as I remember my gifts and teach from the heart, I find that I cover those requirements placed on me by outside forces.*" (Elementary school teacher, 9-years' experience)

*The honoring of participants as individuals in the program models the honoring good teachers demonstrate toward students in the classroom. This respect and attention increases students' connection to school and learning. The research shows that this increases test scores. (High school teacher, 7-years' experience)*

## **Finding 2. CTT Teachers Undertake New Leadership Roles**

Teaching has often been called a flat career. There is little room for advancement and role variety. Historically, teachers have had little chance to influence or change practices in their school or community. This static feature of teaching often leads to diminished commitment and motivation on the part of teachers over time. Many researchers report that encouraging teachers

to embrace new leadership positions, develop more collegial habits, and develop a more systematic habit of reflection are integral in transforming schooling.

Effective reform initiatives lift up leadership roles for teachers. These new roles include participating in the governance of the school site, mentoring junior colleagues, and providing curricular expertise around issues such as standards and assessment. The evaluation data indicates that CTT teachers become multifaceted contributors and teacher leaders in their school communities. Since participating in CTT, **39%** of the participants have taken on leadership positions in education. Twenty-five percent (**25%**) of these were formal changes such as moving into administrative positions, mentor positions, or official supervisory roles.

*My work with CTT gave me a powerful model for how to promote teacher growth by empowering individuals and supporting a very personal honoring of what people already know and the power of what's in their hearts. I learned a lot about supportive listening, nonjudgmental feedback, and a variety of processes that can be used to deepen self-knowledge. With my increased interest, confidence, and skills in the interpersonal area, I took a number of big steps into new terrain professionally last year. I became a department chair and math curriculum specialist in my building, both jobs involve providing lots of support for other teachers' growth. (High school teacher, 14-years' experience)*

*My job expanded to include a teacher leader position in my department. I restructure meetings to open with a sharing of passions. I have found that people show up to the meetings more regularly and on time. Maybe because we now have the space to discuss what brought us to the profession in the first place. (High school teacher, 7-years' experience)*

*Other responses indicate that teachers link their experience in CTT to their enhanced leadership skills and the capacity to assume new challenges and risks. For example, one-third of the teachers describe how they are less anxious about failure and are more willing to act on the basis of their own authority and convictions. Another third indicate that they possess the courage and conviction to take risks for what they believe is right.*

*I have begun to make decisions and take actions based on what I feel is right, rather than trying to find someone who agrees with me and tells me to do it. I guess that means I have begun to act on my own authority and to take full responsibility for my actions without needing others to agree with me. Paradoxically, I also find myself talking with more people about what I'm doing— not to look for support, but to invite input that will inform future decisions and actions. (High school teacher, 15-years' experience)*

### **Finding 3. CTT Teachers Seek Out Interactions with Colleagues**

One of the most pernicious characteristics of American schools is the sense of isolation that many teachers feel. Often, teachers can go days without having a meaningful interaction with another adult. Aside from the emotional toll this takes on teachers, it also deters teachers from working and planning collaboratively.

*To be an excellent teacher is to risk burnout at an early stage in one's career. The isolation from other professionals and the constant need to be "on" while teaching can exhaust and*

*deplete a good teacher's inner resources. We simply cannot afford to lose good teachers through negligence of their need to connect with other teachers in ways that are respectful and safe.* (High school teacher, 13-years' experience)

Sixty-eight percent (**68%**) of the participants described how their experience of collaborative processes during their CTT retreats served as a model for nurturing more collegial relationships when they returned to their school site. This particular finding is important because the research shows that schools where teachers have healthy norms of interaction and a commitment to collegial habits have better student performance and higher rates of teacher retention. These relationships spur innovative practice essential to a teacher's growth. As one teacher wrote, *"I believe that CTT is the best way to bring teachers together to work for the survival of public education. Teachers must begin talking together, caring about each other and working together to improve education for children."* (High school teacher, 15-years' experience)

*[One of] the most important and distinctive aspects of the CTT program is learning to listen without judgment to others. It allows us to develop a greater sense of connection with our colleagues and to learn the difference between "fixing" others and supporting them in their efforts to solve their own problems.* (High school teacher, 14-years' experience)

*School reform can't take place without the involvement and support of teachers. Continually requiring teachers to learn and use the latest instructional fad won't make a significant improvement in student achievement. Providing time for teachers to reflect, nurture their souls, engage in small- and large-group candid discussions help teachers discover or rediscover their birthright gifts.... Personal insights about who they are and "whose" they are enable them to grow as individuals and therefore they have more to give to their students.* (Superintendent, 31-years' experience)

#### **Finding 4. CTT Teachers Practice Reflective Inquiry**

Challenges in teaching rarely lend themselves to simple solutions or mechanical processes. The classroom environment is rife with dilemmas and human predicaments and teachers must develop the capacity to act with judgment and sensitivity. As we learn more about how teachers make these thorny decisions and how they develop full repertoires of practice, the habits of reflective inquiry have gained significant attention. Many calls for improving the teaching force recommend encouraging teachers to become critical practitioners who scrutinize and reflect on their own teaching. According to the data, **90%** of the teachers indicated that the CTT program helped them develop more reflective habits in their practice.

*I devote time to self and see my personal well-being as an integral component to my teaching. I begin each day by taking time to focus and reflect. This allows me to be much more intentional in my teaching practice. It also gives me a solid foundation of strength and wellness that affords me the security to risk to open my heart to students and colleagues and connect with them in a more genuine and mutually satisfying way.* (High school teacher, 7-years' experience)

*If a teacher is always incorporating what everyone else says is important in the classroom, they have little time for anything else. The teacher must deal with all the information and demands for accountability. Yet the teacher must also be able to reflect on how this can be brought into the learning space of the classroom. The teachers must create a learning space so that the teacher and students can learn together. If the teacher is always fielding things from the outside it is impossible to reflect on this relationship. (High school teacher, 22-years' experience)*

*With CTT, students have teachers who are teaching from a place of authenticity and integrity, from the heart more than from a handbook. Teachers who have learned the value of reflective practice are likely to incorporate it into their teaching. When I am comfortable about myself, I am more likely to be able to listen to my students and appreciate their diverse perspectives and gifts. (Teacher educator, 20-years' experience)*

## **Finding 5. CTT Teachers Change the Way They Teach**

The CTT program does not explicitly set out to change a teacher's classroom practice. Yet, remarkably **100%** of the teachers describe how their experience in CTT altered and improved their classroom practice in significant ways over time. The teachers indicate developing more genuine connections with their students and teaching from the heart as the most significant changes.

### ***Teaching to Create Connections***

As the following responses indicate, many attribute their association with CTT to be pivotal in reinforcing the significance of a caring, compassionate pedagogy. As one teacher says: *“When you connect with your students it reinforces for them that we are equal partners—teachers and students—with a common path.”* (High school teacher, 25-years' experience) These teachers share that their CTT experience better attuned them to what children and parents really care about.

*I feel that in mirroring the beliefs I hold for connectedness; the hope is that no student (not one!) will feel on the outside looking in. I make sure in this data-driven year of test scores, that I don't lose heart and that my children feel cared for or connected to at the end of each day. (Elementary school teacher, 23-years' experience)*

*I have a broader and deeper perspective which I think/hope has strengthened my ability to reach and work with kids who are already “outside” or in danger of leaving the system of education because they don't feel listened to. (Elementary school teacher, 21-years' experience)*

*I am able to see through a sharper lens—to make choices as action rather than reaction. I feel calm and focused as a teacher. I feel more “tuned-in” to my students and their needs, so I am*

*better able to accommodate them and encourage their growth.* (High school teacher, 7-years' experience)

### ***Teaching from the Heart***

When teaching is diminished to technique and treated as an enterprise of information transmission, teachers can lose faith in the immense power of the heart and spirit in educating children. While many forces advocate for more prescriptive procedures that can be reduced to routine, others believe teachers need a combination of artistic intuition and experienced technique to cope with the unpredictability of classroom encounters. Teaching done well is imaginative, artistic, and guided by a compassionate inner voice.

*The pressure teachers are under right now with the standards movement and test orientation is very threatening and disheartening at the same time ... their intimate way of their knowing their craft and their students is not being valued. What is powerful about CTT is it gives depth to the inner voice of the teachers. They have to be able to find that inner voice to be able to teach with joy in a system that is not thinking about joy right now. If teachers don't find that, they'll quit. A lot of them are and more will.* (High school teacher, 14-years' experience)

Teachers need to trust their emergent judgments and allow themselves to be guided by their pedagogical heart. Many of the CTT teachers shared that an important aspect of CTT was how it attuned them to this voice and gave them the courage to heed its call. As one teacher said, *"My students get a wiser, more low-keyed, accepting teacher. They may sense the intentions of creating a more nurturing space of dialogue. I know I capitalize on the moment and feel empowered to run with their interests and concerns."* (Middle school teacher, 25-years' experience)

### **Finding 6: CTT Teachers See Tangible Benefits for Their Students**

While the CTT program is focused on teachers, the teachers reported that their students benefited greatly. As one teacher said, *"CTT is not student-focused even though the inner work done by teachers translates to a better job done in the classroom."* (Anonymous) While many themes emerged, teachers saw that their newfound ability to create safe and joyous learning environments, and to identify and lift up their students' individual gifts, were key to their students' learning.

### ***Creating Safe and Joyous Learning Environments***

Eighty-three percent (**83%**) of the teachers reported that students had tangibly benefited by the changes they made in their pedagogical style and approach. Students benefited from their focus on the importance of creating a safe and joyful learning environment. As one teacher said, *"I believe I am more human. I treat [students] with greater respect and understanding and they benefit immeasurably from this two-way open, caring communication."* (High school teacher, 11-years' experience)

Other teachers expanded on what happens in a classroom when a teacher works to hold

students with greater respect.

*They get a better teacher, for sure! They have a clear sense of the material and my expectations for their learning. A student from last year was talking with me just two days ago and said, "It took me a while to figure you out, because you were different than other teachers. You were different because you had these incredibly high expectations of us. Not in the sense of mechanical work, but in that you wanted us to really think, to stretch and use our minds. When I realized the odd feeling I had in your classroom was that and complete acceptance, it suddenly all seemed possible to do."* (High school teacher, 7-years' experience)

*Teachers who realize that they are unique as individuals are more likely to respect their students as individual learners, possibly teaching to a greater variety of learning styles. The focus on diversity within a community is greatly needed in classrooms and schools. I also think that students benefit from teachers who know the importance of creating relationships. Teachers who are passionate about teaching and/or their subject matter turn students on to what they are learning about. Many teachers change how they teach as a result of this program, encouraging students to try new things as well. Lastly, because the program is built around key concepts, teachers might realize the importance of identifying the key concepts that their students need to learn, and as a result, teach for understanding instead of "covering the curriculum."* (Anonymous)

More than half of the teachers credited their renewed classroom presence as a powerful consequence of the CTT program. They saw how their students directly benefited from teachers who returned to the classroom renewed and reinvigorated.

*What difference does this program make for students? We as teachers can only give what we have. If we have more to give because of CTT (and we do), more is accomplished in the classroom.* (Elementary school principal, 20-years' experience)

### ***Celebrating the Individual Gifts of Their Students***

Eighty-four percent (**84%**) of the teachers pointed out that they transported practices and pedagogies learned from participating in the retreats. These teachers mentioned how the program helped them become better listeners, better discussion facilitators, and more willing to pay attention to students as individuals who possess unique gifts.

*CTT has strengthened my teaching by encouraging me to listen more deeply to where my students are and work from that starting place, honoring their individual growth more. It has helped me put more heart in the teaching of mathematics. My students feel more cared about and valued as individuals.* (High school teacher, 14-years' experience)

Many teachers said that CTT's exploration of the teachers' birthright gifts enabled them to better see the gifts of their students.

*CTT seeks to honor the individual teacher by providing an opportunity to reflect and understand his or her own birthright gifts. We honor ourselves by taking the time (four times per year) to retreat to a place where it is safe to take risks. There we can examine our values, fears, concerns, and commitment. Best of all, we are accountable to ourselves, not to an outside entity. (High school teacher, 13-years' experience)*

*I am able to listen to and respond to my students on a deeper level. I feel much less directive and can more easily set the stage and the boundaries for them to do their work. Then be able to step away a bit as they do their own learning. (High school counselor/social worker, 25-years' experience)*

*Education is about helping children find the strength inside of themselves and cultivating them to their fullest. To help others do that, we have to be in touch with our own strengths and how they propel our own directions. CTT helps us learn this. (Middle school social worker, 20-years' experience)*

Other teachers reported how their students evidenced a new joy and commitment to learning as they raised their own personal commitment and standards in the classroom.

*They work harder. They think more. They like working and thinking. They create for themselves. They construct from information gathered in discussions and research from others. They are not robots and after they get used to it, it's hard to go back. (Parent educator, 11-years' experience)*

*Students respond even more positively to my renewed belief that self is the focus of study no matter the subject. I continue to be amazed by how much students will work at learning when hospitality is genuine and invitations are negotiable. (High school teacher, 29-years' experience)*

*The students, in the beginning, become uncomfortable with the degree of earnest effort a class from me now requires. As time passes, they willingly, and with begrudging joy, "lean into" our tasks of learning. (High school teacher, 17-years' experience)*

## **Finding 7: CTT Teachers Practice More Mindful Living**

In numerous studies about the teacher's work life, teachers describe their school year as "always busy" and "incredibly hectic." They describe how during the school day they rarely have time for planning or meeting with colleagues. They also describe the "never-ending take-home work" that they must do, including grading papers, preparing lessons, calling parents, typing handouts, and other such tasks. Several studies have identified the never-ending pile of take-home work as a significant source of stress and tension for teachers that, in particular, adversely affect their home and family life.



One of the unique features of the CTT experience noted by the respondents was how the program reached beyond their lives as teachers. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the respondents indicated that their participation in the program leads them to live more mindfully and in a more balanced way. More than half mentioned that their experience in CTT enables them to be more successful at balancing their time and commitments and better able to create constructive boundaries between their home life and their professional life.

*It has given me the courage to give myself permission to slow down, take a deep breath, and live from the heart. I have the courage to believe in my own convictions and not get as caught up in societal expectations. I am treasuring the moments with my family and taking the time to live in the moment. (Elementary school teacher, 9-years' experience)*

*I have continued the practice of silence and reflection in my daily life. I recognize the need for taking the time to explore my inner thoughts and feelings, so that I can be more helpful to my students and my family as well. I know and appreciate the close connections between seasonal cycles and human cycles as we live our lives. I feel more balanced. (High school counselor, 25-years' experience)*

Almost all the teachers indicated that an enduring gift of the program was their newfound ability to diminish the fragmentation of their lives. CTT helped the teachers sort out their priorities, balance their lives, and harmonize their personhood.

*As I spend more time focusing on life at home with my family, I have been surprised that my teaching has actually improved, gained greater clarity, as a result. I carve out safe spaces for personal reflection in my daily round, recognizing now that this is central to my well-being, not an indulgence. (Teacher educator, 20-years' experience)*

*As an African-American woman my voice was never respected. For so many years, I squelched my voice as being not as important as theorists, professors, and principals. I would talk the way other people would expect me to so that I would be accepted but it was destroying who I was. My CTT facilitator was the first professional person that actually listened and valued my voice. I realized that my voice had never been heard before and that my voice is valuable. Now with my kindergartners, I ask real questions. As I am about to read a piece, I ask them to listen carefully to the words, to share with the group anything that comes to them. It is awesome what they come up with when they speak into the center of the circle. (Elementary school teacher, 20-years' experience)*

## SECTION III. CTT's Impact on Education Reform

In Section III, we examined to what extent CTT contributes to overcoming fundamental obstacles that deter sustained improvement efforts.

This longitudinal evaluation concludes that the CTT program significantly impacted the participants in profound and enduring ways. The program rejuvenated teachers' passion for the vocation, it provided experiences instrumental for developing a more robust professional repertoire, it changed the methods and pedagogy of the participating teachers, it resulted in tangible benefits for the students of the participating teachers, and it helped teachers develop more mindful practices that were then integrated into all dimensions of their life.

The evaluation clearly demonstrated that the CTT program is capable of catalyzing enduring personal and professional growth in the individual participants. The question we now consider is to what extent does CTT contribute to enduring and productive reform in education?

When asked, **100%** of the participants believed that teacher formation could lead to enduring and vital change in American education. This should not be read as an idle finding. The CTT participants are veterans of the classrooms and of America's revolving door relationship with school reform. Their endorsement of the CTT program's capacity to invite thoughtful, caring improvement in education might be, in the final analysis, the most compelling finding in this evaluation.

*A synthesis of the teacher's responses suggests that the CTT program impacts the profession of teaching in three fundamental ways. First, it honors the teacher within by nourishing the ideals so core to the vocation of teaching. Second, it guides the teacher toward engaging in affirming conversations and productive relationships with their colleagues that, in turn, evoke their capacity for creativity and inspiration. Lastly, CTT provides a worthy antidote to endemic problems that have long thwarted well-intended efforts to make schools more humane and intellectually captivating for both teachers and students.*

### ***CTT within a Larger Research Context***

*Another way to view the contribution of CTT to American education is to think about the program in a larger research context. A number of influential books and research reports identify a set of obstacles that impeded sustained educational progress.<sup>2</sup> These include the following: teacher overload, teacher isolation, well-intended group-think, inadequate professional development, and the narrow, undifferentiated character of the teacher's role. These five obstacles can be condensed to a simple statement: **Until we begin to attend to teachers, enduring productive reform will remain elusive.***

**1. Teacher Overload:** Research on the profession of teaching points out that the demands on teachers are increasing exponentially. Teachers are expected to serve as advisors, develop innovative curriculums, and interact with community members and parents in new ways. In particular, teachers working in reforming school contexts experience role overload because of the multitudinous tasks they are being

---

<sup>2</sup> In compiling this list of obstacles, we relied primarily on the following research reports and texts: Linda Darling-Hammond's *The Right To Learn: A Blueprint For Creating Schools That Work*; Richard Ellmore's (1996) *Restructuring in the Classroom: Teaching, Learning and School Organization*; Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (1996) *What's Worth Fighting for In Your School*; Seymour B. Sarason's (1996) *Revisiting "The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change."*

asked to perform. As Fullan and Hargreaves say, "Innovations are not making the teacher's job more manageable. They are making it worse. Overload of expectations and fragmented solutions remain the number one problem."

*While the typical school environment fractures and dissipates a teacher's energy, the evaluation data suggests that the CTT program helped teachers set reasonable expectations, harmonize their personhood with their professional identity, sort out their priorities, and balance their lives.*

**2. Teacher Isolation:** Teaching has long been called the “private profession.” The culture and organization of schools is not organized to invite collaborative endeavors between teachers. Despite being in busy and crowded classrooms, teachers often describe their job as lonely because they rarely have opportunity to have sustained interactions with other adults. While the typical teacher works solo, numerous research studies note that a culture of collegiality is the hallmark of a healthy school. It is in schools where collaborative practices are the norm that enduring reform occurs and schools dominated by reclusive, isolationist practices rarely can adapt to meet new educational challenges.

The testimony of the teachers clearly indicates that their CTT experience inspired them to create and support collegial practices in schools. These collegial relationships began in the CTT retreats, but then continued back in the home buildings of the CTT teachers. In addition to forming networks with CTT teachers, many of the teachers went back determined to build successful collegial relationships with their fellow teachers in their own schools.

**3. Well-intended Group-Think:** While the research highlights the importance of collaborative practice in improving schools, teachers and administrators in the profession can sometimes fall prey to an indiscriminating herd mentality when it comes to adopting reform initiatives. These accusations, which are often levied by teachers against their own profession, point out that educators can habitually bounce from one glitzy reform proposal to the next. As a result of this well-documented tendency, observers caution teachers to be aware of the dangers that lurk in bandwagon thinking and to approach reform efforts with a more critical and thoughtful stance.

CTT participants highlighted how the program helped them clarify their professional and personal ideals of teaching and learning. Teachers shared how they scrutinized new practices more critically and made sure that changes would align with their own principles of practice. As one teacher wrote, “*I became more attuned to considering what it is that I believe. My deliberations in the CTT program helped me clarify my beliefs and enabled me to act with more integrity.*” (Anonymous)

**4. The Problem of Narrowness in the Teacher’s Role:** Teaching has been called a flat career. There is little room for advancement and variety. This often leads to reduced commitment, motivation, and effectiveness. Many reformers advocate fostering multifaceted teacher leaders who will contribute to the all-essential dialogue about what our schools should be like. Elevating the voice and influence of teachers to the decision-making circles may be the most fundamental, basic step necessary if we are to change schools. Leadership by teachers should be practiced, valued, encouraged, and recognized.

The CTT evaluation suggests that the participant teachers became more committed and active in embracing new roles as educators. Some talked about being more prone to stand up in a faculty meeting, others talked about being more involved in developing curriculum, or mentoring new teachers. The findings clearly suggest that participants in the CTT program were inspired or called to occupy more diversified professional roles.

**5. The Problem of Poor Solutions and Failed Reform:** The history of educational change is littered with fads, superficial campaigns, and oversimplified responses to complicated problems. Typically, educational reform movements attempt to trigger fundamental change by altering the curriculum, embracing new teaching methods, or tinkering with the schedule. While the expectation is often that these kinds of adjustments will set in motion enduring change in the fabric of schooling, they rarely do. Simply put, there are far more failed reform efforts than successful ones. Why?

Educational reforms cannot be installed into schools. Changes in a teacher's classroom practice cannot be mandated nor can “teacher-proof” strategies be devised. Teachers teach who they are. Their personal identity is entwined with their professional role. If we strive to invite teachers to teach differently than we must recognize that change is a multidimensional process that must include changes in the fundamental belief systems of overworked, underappreciated, and often overwhelmed teachers. This position can be concisely framed: **Until we begin to attend to teachers, enduring productive reform will remain elusive.**

*The most promising contribution of the CTT program is its unwavering focus on teachers, providing them with the sustenance and courage necessary to remain committed to their profession. Many observers of teachers have said that until we provide dynamic, supportive, and intellectually challenging conditions for our educational personnel we will not be able to carry out our vision for creating dynamic, supportive, and intellectually challenging schools. Both research and common sense suggest that to be sustaining and renewing, we must provide opportunities for teachers to further develop, explore, and renew their core mission and purpose.*

*In our state, there is a huge pressure to meet the standards. As an administrator, it is my responsibility to make sure our school is right up there at the top. It's a huge pressure on teachers and they are scared to death. I ask them to remember: Why are we here? What are we doing this for? I hold out for my teachers that if we go for quality, our scores are going to be high. We teach to quality rather than the tests and we have been successful. (Elementary school principal, 20-years' experience)*

## Appendix #1

### COURAGE TO TEACH Postparticipation Survey

1. In what specific ways has participation in the COURAGE TO TEACH continued to inform your life and work? What practices have you incorporated into your ongoing work as a teacher?

- Personally
- Professionally

2. Imagine meeting with one or more of the following individuals: school superintendent, foundation director, business leader interested in education, school board member, teacher union official. What points would you make to help them understand the importance of the COURAGE TO TEACH program?

3. With much current attention being paid to "measurables" like student academic outcomes and test scores, it would be helpful to receive your responses to these frequently asked questions:

- "What is distinctive about COURAGE TO TEACH as professional development?"
- "How has COURAGE TO TEACH strengthened your teaching?"
- "What difference does this program make for students?"

4. Is there anything else you want to say about the importance of the COURAGE TO TEACH program to public education?