

Quality Teachers Equal Quality Schools

A Hearing at California State Polytechnic University

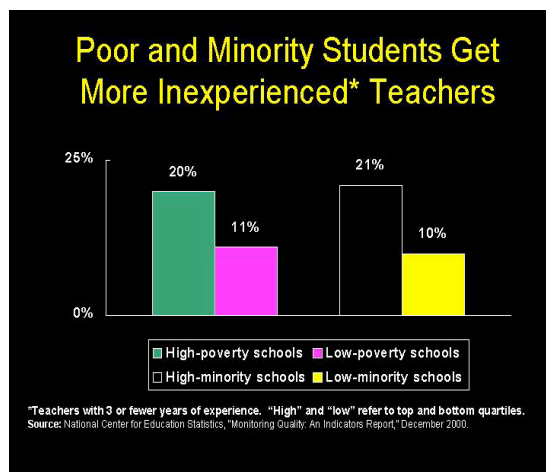
Pomona, CA
April 11, 2006



Recent research offers strong evidence that teachers are the most important factor in student achievement. Yet, many high-poverty and high-minority schools have high teacher turnover rates and a greater percentage of inexperienced teachers than schools with fewer poor and minority students. The retention and recruitment of highly qualified teachers (HQT) in these schools is key to closing the achievement gap. The Commission recognizes the complexity and importance of these and other teacher quality issues. As it develops recommendations for the upcoming reauthorization of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Commission will consider information from a variety of sources including testimony from witnesses and the public at our California hearing, written comments sent to the Commission, quality research and state, district and school performance data.

Distribution of High-Quality Teachers

Minority and disadvantaged children in academically struggling schools are twice as likely to be taught by less qualified and inexperienced teachers than their more affluent peers. An interim report, *National Assessment of Title I* by the Independent Review Panel (IRP), released in February of 2006, finds that less than 1 percent of teachers in elementary schools that are meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals consider themselves not



EMERGING ISSUES FROM TESTIMONY AT THE HEARING

- Meeting NCLB's HQT requirements may not guarantee quality instruction that leads to increased achievement
- HQT requirements for measuring teacher quality are focused on factors such as certification and passing subject matter tests, rather than results such as higher student academic performance
- Research and experience suggest that supporting and mentoring new teachers, rather than adhering to specific preparation and certification routes, will more likely ensure good teacher performance
- Working conditions and supports for teachers are elements which significantly affect whether teachers stay in the profession
- School districts continue to struggle to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of highly qualified teachers—a problem that will grow because of impending baby-boomer retirements and projected student enrollment increases
- Performance pay, bonuses and loan forgiveness for those teaching in hard-to-staff subjects and schools may improve districts' ability to recruit and retain quality teachers
- Despite the intentions of NCLB, states and districts still are facing challenges in ensuring that low-income and minority children are taught by highly qualified teachers at the same rate as their peers

highly qualified, compared to 5 percent of teachers in schools under improvement, 8 percent of teachers in schools in corrective action and 6 percent of teachers in restructuring schools. This trend is also evident among high-poverty schools where 5 percent of elementary school teachers and 12 percent of secondary school teachers report not being highly qualified, compared to 1 percent in low-poverty elementary schools and 3 percent in low-poverty secondary schools. As Governor Roy Barnes, co-chair of the Commission, stated in his opening remarks at the hearing, “These stark facts translate into the children most at risk of academic failure receiving the least amount of support.”

Studies highlighted during the hearing show that poor funding practices are further contributing to the inequality in American schools. The 2003 Brookings study *How Within-District Spending Inequities Help Some Schools Fail* shows that generally high-poverty schools in Cincinnati, Seattle and Baltimore receive significantly less per-student funding for teacher salaries than low-poverty schools. The Education Trust–West 2005 report *California’s Hidden Teacher Spending Gap* finds that California’s schools on average spend \$2,576 less per teacher in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools, and \$3,014 less in high-minority schools.

What Does NCLB Currently Require?

Highly Qualified Teachers

NCLB requires all teachers to become “highly qualified” by the end of this 2005-2006 school year. The HQT definition requires a teacher to have all of the following:

- State certification or licensure
- A bachelor’s degree or higher
- Demonstrated knowledge of the subjects he or she teaches

The demonstration of subject matter competency can be accomplished in any one of the following three ways:

- Passing a test of the subject
- Possessing a college major in the subject
- For veteran teachers, completing a state-defined peer review process called HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation)

Comparability

NCLB requires school districts to ensure “comparability of services” in schools that receive Title I funding. Services provided in these schools are required to be comparable to services provided in schools that do not receive Title I funding. This requirement is intended to ensure that the quality of teachers in Title I schools is comparable to the quality of teachers in non-Title I schools.

Flexibility in Meeting HQT Requirements

Some additional flexibility has been allowed in meeting HQT requirements, including:

- Some rural school districts may allow teachers who are highly qualified in at least one subject to have three school years to become highly qualified in the additional subjects that they teach
- Teachers with general science certification in some states may be considered highly qualified to teach any of the individual science disciplines

- Special education teachers may be considered highly qualified in certain circumstances if they are certified by the state as special education teachers, teach children assessed against alternative standards and have used the HOUSSE process to demonstrate competency in multiple subjects

One-Year Extension for Certain States on HQT Requirements

The U.S. Department of Education recently issued guidance that will allow certain states a one-year extension for meeting the requirement to have 100 percent highly qualified teachers. To qualify for this extension, states must do all of the following:

- Tighten the rigor of the state’s HQT definition
- Determine whether and how the state is reporting on the number of classes taught by highly qualified teachers
- Improve the completeness and accuracy of HQT data provided to the Department
- Increase the rigor of the steps taken by the state to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught by a greater number of inexperienced teachers than their non-disadvantaged peers

WITNESSES WHO TESTIFIED AT THE HEARING

Full witness testimony can be found by going to www.nclbcommission.org

- Gavin Payne
Chief Deputy Superintendent
Office of the Superintendent
California Department of Education
Sacramento, CA
- Don Iglesias
Superintendent
San Jose Unified School District
San Jose, CA
- Russlynn Ali
Executive Director
The Education Trust–West
Oakland, CA
- Kitty Dixon
New Teacher Center
Santa Cruz, CA
- Pixie Hayward-Schickele
Teacher and Chair of the CTA
ESEA Workgroup
California Teachers Association
Buelingame, CA
- Thomas Kane
Professor of Education and
Economics
Graduate School of Education
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA

Some Observations From Witnesses

The panelists brought varied perspectives to the issue of teacher quality, including specifics on California. Thomas Kane, Professor of Education and Economics at Harvard University, citing research conducted with colleagues Robert Gordon and Douglas Staiger, recommended reducing entry barriers into teaching to expand the pool of eligible candidates and making it harder to tenure the least effective teachers. Citing their report that gave results from Los Angeles, Kane suggested there is little difference in student achievement based on whether teachers were certified or uncertified. However, they found that dropping the lowest performing quarter of teachers would result in a net increase in student test scores of as much as 14 percentile points by graduation.

Panelists also recognized that the nation has to do better in encouraging college students to consider teaching as a profession. Don Iglesias, San Jose Unified School District Superintendent, urged the federal government to offer incentives and “issue a ‘call to action’ with a clear message to our country’s university students regarding the importance of teaching and giving back to the community.” As an example he added, “[I]n the early 70’s, the newly formed Federal Teacher Corps Program attracted a number of graduates, including me, to attend graduate school with the commitment to teach in an urban or rural high-poverty school. The teacher corps paid graduate school expenses for its interns and we received a teaching credential and a

master’s degree...” Gavin Payne, Chief Deputy Superintendent for California Department of Education, recommended that the federal government create a national certificate of compliance with the HQT definition, allowing easier state-to-state teacher mobility.

To help address recruitment and retention challenges, Kitty Dixon, Outreach Coordinator for the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, recommended a national push to create mentoring programs for novice teachers. New teachers would be paired with experienced teachers who would coach them on best practices in their first few years of teaching. Pixie Hayward-Schickele added that by implementing mentor programs for new teachers, schools are also improving the working conditions for teachers, an important factor in retaining teachers.

Russlynn Ali, Executive Director of The Education Trust–West, added that recruitment and retention of teachers is an even bigger challenge in high-minority and high-poverty school districts. She testified that not all states are targeting Title I and Title II funds to the neediest schools and teachers. She recommended that the federal government provide greater leadership and more effective oversight of states’ use of funds.

Witnesses’ Recommendations for Improving NCLB

- Reduce entry barriers into teaching for those with four-year undergraduate degrees and demonstrated content knowledge, regardless of certification or path to certification
- Use teachers’ impact on student achievement to determine their highly qualified status and to steer the least effective teachers out of the profession
- Require mentoring and other supports for new teachers to increase teacher effectiveness and retention
- Give bonuses to and improve working conditions for highly qualified teachers willing to teach in high-poverty schools
- Track student performance and teachers’ impact on student achievement gains over time
- More clearly define progressive and appropriately rigorous federal sanctions to increase school districts’ compliance in implementing and adhering to HQT and comparability requirements
- Establish reciprocity of teacher certification and licensure so that effective teachers can work in many states without having to meet each state’s varying requirements
- Extend HOUSSE to teachers in rural schools

Teacher Quality Improving Student Learning: Hollingworth Elementary School

After the hearing, commissioners visited the high-achieving and diverse Hollingworth Elementary School in West Covina, CA. Hollingworth is a Title I school that uses classroom-level student performance data to regularly assess student achievement and influence instructional decisions. The school’s principal and teachers said that while NCLB’s testing requirements have put pressure on them, the law has had a positive effect on the school by focusing more attention on sub-group achievement and the use of achievement data to improve instruction and learning.

Rather than teaching to the test, these teachers and their principal are teaching to the standards. Focused on teamwork, standards

QUICK FACTS ABOUT: HOLLINGWORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Principal: Miriam Kim
- Student population: 763
- Grades: K-6
- Teaching staff: 35
- Made AYP: Yes
- ELL population: 18%
- Economically Disadvantaged: 65%

and data-driven results, the school fosters a culture of collaboration, cohesiveness and has strong professional development. Committed teachers work with the principal and district staff to create a successful school and to meet AYP goals.

Teaching is tough. We need people who love those kids and are willing to do what it takes.
- Principal Miriam Kim, Hollingworth Elementary School

For Further Discussion

Teacher quality is a critical element in improving academic performance in public schools and strengthening the positive impact of NCLB. Although states have made progress in increasing the number of highly qualified teachers, participants at this hearing asked whether NCLB's HQT requirement will ensure teacher effectiveness. Participants also expressed concerns about finding ways to ensure that minority and disadvantaged children have access to effective teachers at the same rate as their peers.

The Commission is seeking further comments from interested individuals on these topics:

- What successful strategies has your state or community used to recruit highly qualified teachers to address shortages?
- How has NCLB supported or hindered progress in retaining teachers in your state or community?
- How can NCLB help ensure that disadvantaged and minority children have access to the best teachers?

Comments can be submitted to the Commission via email at nclbfeedback@aspeninstitute.org

About the Commission

The bipartisan, independent Commission on No Child Left Behind is examining the strengths and weaknesses of the No Child Left Behind Act and will make concrete and realistic recommendations to Congress, the Administration, state and local stakeholders, parents and the general public to ensure the law is an effective tool in spurring academic achievement and closing the achievement gap.

In seeking to accomplish its mission, the Commission is guided by these principles:

1. All children can learn and should be expected to reach high standards.
2. Accountability for public education systems in the United States must improve to enable students to excel.
3. The achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their non disadvantaged peers must be eliminated to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed.
4. Education results for all students must improve in order for the United States to remain competitive in the global marketplace.
5. Parents have a right to expect their children to be taught by a highly qualified teacher. Teachers have the right to be treated like professionals, including access to sound working conditions and high quality preparation and ongoing professional development opportunities.
6. Education reform must be coupled with additional resources, but federal, state, and local resources must be used more efficiently and effectively to ensure results in return for the increased investment.