



Ed Trust's Proposals for Changes to the HQT and Equity Provisions

NCLB Reauthorization

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October and November 2006

- **Ensure data systems that can support the equity analyses we need.** The lack of data in the state teacher quality “equity plans” is indicative of the states’ lack of good data generally. Having reliable, longitudinal data is critically important to diagnosing problems and evaluating success. Many states reported that they did not have data systems that could answer the questions of whether poor and minority students are being disproportionately taught by unqualified, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. Just as NCLB required states to administer additional assessments and added significant resources to cover associated costs, so the NCLB reauthorization should require states to build and maintain longitudinal data systems and should include resources to get this job done. This would allow the Department to set some basic quality standards and could ensure that teacher records are matched with student achievement records over time. (For more context, see “Missing the Mark: An Education Trust Analysis of Teacher-Equity Plans,” August 2006. Available: <http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5E2815C9-F765-4821-828F-66F4D156713A/0/TeacherEquityPlans.pdf>).
- **Elevate equity in public reporting.** Data from the teacher-quality equity plans should be added to the Consolidated State Performance Reports that states must submit to the federal government annually to demonstrate compliance with NCLB. Regulations should articulate state obligations to publicly and regularly report progress in eliminating inequitable distribution. In addition, Congress should consider adding data requirements to school and district report cards that would indicate the percentage of novice teachers and the percentage of annual teacher turnover as compared to the district and/or state averages.
- **Move from measuring teacher qualities to teacher effectiveness.** Recent research confirms that there are massive differences in the effectiveness of individual teachers, but the proxies that are currently most popular in measuring teacher quality are turning out to have only limited power to predict who will be effective. The evidence suggests that we should keep some quality control on those who enter the classroom, but we should focus much more attention on who *stays* in the classroom. Once teachers have been on the job for two to three years, they should have to demonstrate that students learn in their classrooms to earn tenure. In essence, we need to move from measuring teacher *qualities* to teacher *effectiveness*. Teachers who cannot demonstrate that they can boost student learning should get assistance, but then should not continue teaching if they do not improve.

- **Provide funding for innovation in teacher assignment and distribution.** Teachers whose students gain the most should be given significant incentives to stay in the classroom and to teach the most challenging students. Congress sought to seed innovations in teacher assignment and distribution with the creation of Title II in NCLB. Title II grants have provided almost \$3 billion per year since NCLB was enacted—close to \$15 billion—that was supposed to help states and districts to ensure students in high-poverty schools got their fair share of the best teachers. Instead, the money mostly was used for generic programs that weren't targeted to the teachers or schools that need the most help. This \$3 billion should be re-purposed to provide well-designed support and innovative incentives to raise teaching quality in the highest poverty schools – and nothing else.
- **Equalize within district spending on teacher salaries by including teacher salaries in the Title I comparability provisions.** Federal law must prod states and districts to be more equitable in the way they spend their own money. Part of the reason high-poverty and high-minority schools are so consistently shortchanged in teacher talent is because state and local policy fail to acknowledge that, all other things being equal, most teachers migrate away from the highest-poverty and highest-minority schools. (For more information, see www.hiddengap.org).

We need for policies to take cognizance of these preferences and to provide conditions and incentives that give teachers more pay, more status, and more support if they are successful in schools where success has been all too rare.

One important aspect of the systemic inequality in public schools is that budgets are not aligned with the goal of closing achievement gap. In fact, high-poverty, Title I schools often get less money than schools with more affluent students in the very same school districts. This has to do with arcane budgeting rules that ignore differences in teacher salary across schools. Schools with senior, high-paid teachers don't offset this expense elsewhere in their budgets and schools with novice teachers don't get extra money even though their salary budget is much lower than other schools.

Federal law actually provides cover for these unfair budgeting practices in its comparability provisions. To be eligible for Title I, school districts must promise to provide “comparable” educational opportunities in both Title I and non-Title I schools. But the law actually says that differences in teacher salaries are not considered evidence in determining comparability. Indeed, NCLB includes an old provision stating that if a school district has a single-salary schedule for teachers, then it has demonstrated compliance with the comparability requirement. This is a hold-over from another era, and works to perpetuate disparate and lower-quality educational opportunities in high-poverty and high-minority schools. If Congress does nothing else to improve teaching and learning in Title I schools, it should withdraw its sanction from this harmful practice.