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## **NCLB Definition of and Provisions for Highly Qualified Teachers**

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The questions of how to improve teacher quality and equitably distribute effective teachers have been debated for many years. Urgency has built with calls to close the double student achievement gaps at home and on the international stage. Many things must be done simultaneously; there is no one solution. It will take a combination of sustained local, state, and federal actions if the quality of teaching is to be ratcheted up and high quality teachers placed in every classroom. With regard to the federal role, substantial federal funds are needed to trigger state and local innovation and experimentation.

NCLB efforts to ensure that every student is taught by a highly qualified teacher have been a disappointment as implemented. States have so gamed the NCLB provisions that today we have little, if any, more knowledge about the quality of teachers than we did in 2001. Congress needs to go back to the drawing board and focus on teacher effectiveness as an outcome measure rather than teacher quality as an input measure. Requirements for entry into the teaching profession make sense as long as there are alternative routes. But once a teacher is employed, there need to be measures of effectiveness for her or him to remain in the profession and progress.

Since historically all decisions about the employment and retention of teachers have been made at the state and local level, federal efforts to strengthen teacher quality through measures of effectiveness will need to proceed carefully. There is a fundamental need for much experimentation over significant time periods and careful evaluation of new ways of evaluating and compensating teachers particularly as well as principals.

Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger have made one interesting proposal worth testing through a federal demonstration program. There proposal would do several things including:

- Provide federal support to help states measure the effectiveness of individual teachers as determined by their impact on student achievement growth, subjective evaluations by principals and peers, and parental evaluations.
- Provide federal bonus pay to highly rated teachers willing to teach in high-poverty schools.
- Require in return for federal support that schools not offer tenure to new teachers who receive poor evaluations during their first two years on the job without obtaining district approval and informing parents in the schools. While tenure would not be granted to teachers with weak performance after two years, they would receive supports to strengthen their teaching practices and try again for tenure before their dismissal.

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