

Center for American Progress



Equitable Distribution of 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.

The following proposals concerning the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers should be considered for addition to NCLB when the reauthorization process begins:

1. Improvement of data collection and reporting on the quality of teachers for all schools in every state. Specifically, on the state report card for each school, the state should report annually the number and percentage of: classes not taught by highly qualified teachers; teachers on emergency or provisional credentials, teachers who retired or transferred, and first year teachers plus the absentee rate of teachers.
2. Similar to proposals outlined in the TEACH Act introduced by Congressman Miller and Senator Kennedy, highly qualified teachers with a demonstrated record of effectiveness with their students' achievement gains should receive substantial bonuses (e.g. \$10,000 to \$15,000) if they agree to serve full-time for a period of 4 consecutive school years at a public high-need elementary or secondary school.
3. More sensible, transparent school financing systems need to be substituted at all levels. What is needed are weighted student formulas where funding comes on a per-student basis to each public school. Per-student funding should vary according to each child's need with funds arriving at the school as real dollars (i.e., not teaching positions, ratios, or staffing norms) that can be spent flexibly. For example, a high poverty school would have more funds available to hire mentor and master teachers and reduce class sizes for new teachers. With regard to NCLB two changes are important:
 - Elimination of the loophole in the Title I comparability requirement (i.e. the requirement for equitable distribution of state and local funds before Title I funds are added on top) that exempts teacher salary differentials based on years of employment.and
 - Redesign of the Title I formula so that wealthy states with relatively few low-income students no longer get a disproportionate share of Title I funds. Instead Title I should be distributed so that states with greater poverty, less wealth, and high spending "effort" receive more funding. Currently, for example, in 2001 Arizona and Michigan had close to the same number of low income students, but in 2001 Title I provided \$761 per low-income child in Arizona and \$1786 per child in Michigan solely because Michigan has more wealth and consequently can spend more of its own money on education.