

National Council on Teacher Quality

State Policy Recommendations for Attaining Equitable Distribution of Highly Qualified Teachers

States should actively contribute to the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers within their school districts by adopting strong reporting systems and undertaking reforms that will expand the pool of qualified teachers.

Part 1: Reporting

States should consider collecting the following data:

- The annual teacher turnover rate at each school and school district in the state, disaggregated by reasons that teachers leave and by years of teaching experience; comparison of schools' teacher turnover rate relative to schools of similar poverty backgrounds within the same district and statewide;
- The annual teacher absenteeism rate within each school; comparison of schools' teacher absenteeism rate relative to schools of similar poverty backgrounds in the state;
- The ratio of new hires to the full school staff; comparison of schools' ratio of new hires to the full school staff relative to schools of similar poverty backgrounds in the state;
- The percentage of highly qualified teachers (disaggregated by teaching area) working in every school in the state, with comparison of schools by poverty (free/reduced lunch) and minority status.
- The percentage of inexperienced teachers (disaggregated by teaching area) working in every school in the state, disaggregated by teaching area, with comparison of schools by poverty (free/reduced lunch) and minority status.

Rationale: Only by achieving greater stability in the staffing of individual schools can school districts hope to achieve the nation's goal of the more equitable distribution of the teaching force. A strong reporting system reflecting data on teacher attrition, teacher absenteeism, and teacher credentials can lend much-needed transparency to those factors that contribute to staffing instability and inequity.

The lack of such data feeds a misconception that all high-poverty schools are similarly unable to retain staff because of their socioeconomic and racial status. If collected and disaggregated to the level of the individual school, though, such data could shift the focus of districts and states *toward* the quality of leadership at the school level and *away* from the notion that instability and inequity are simply the unavoidable consequences of poverty and race. The truth is that there are huge variations in staff stability among schools with similar numbers of children who are poor and/or minority. School culture, largely determined by school leadership, contributes greatly to teachers' morale, which in turn affects teachers' success and student achievement. By revealing these variations between schools facing the same challenges, school leadership can be held accountable—and, when successful, rewarded.

Within-district comparisons are crucial in order to control for as many elements distinct to a district as is possible, such as the collective bargaining agreement (or personnel policies) and the amount of resources.

Part 2: Beyond reporting

To achieve the goal of equitable distribution as intended by No Child Left Behind, states should also consider a variety of additional reforms:

- Removing any policies that block school districts from paying higher salaries to qualified teachers working in high-poverty schools (including restrictions that block salary differentials for high-shortage subject areas and pay for performance);
- Targeting resources to qualified teachers who agree to serve in Title One schools (for example, replacing across-the-board bonuses to National Board-certified teachers with bonuses or pay differentials for National Board teachers who choose to work in hard-to-serve schools);
- Cultivating alternate routes to certification that can prepare qualified teachers, especially in high-shortage subject areas such as math and science;
- Making it more practical for special education teachers to complete undergraduate training and achieve “highly qualified teacher” status in multiple subjects; and
- Abolishing regulations that permit teachers who have not attained “highly qualified teacher” status to teach on waivers for more than one year.