Implementing the No Child Left Behind Teacher Requirements
Key Findings

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires all core academic classes to be taught by teachers who are “highly qualified” according to the law’s definition. This generally means they must have a bachelor’s degree, be fully certified, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the subjects they teach by having sufficient subject-matter coursework, passing a state test, or meeting other state criteria. NCLB also requires states to ensure that low-income and minority students are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. Together, these teacher requirements were viewed by the law’s sponsors as a critical step in improving student achievement.

Since 2002, the Center on Education Policy (CEP), an independent nonprofit organization, has been conducting a comprehensive study of the No Child Left Behind Act. This year, we looked more closely at how states and school districts have implemented the law’s teacher requirements. This report—one in a series of CEP reports on year 5 of NCLB implementa- tion—describes our findings. The findings are drawn from an annual survey of the 50 states; an annual, nationally representative survey of 349 responding school districts; case study interviews with local administrators in 17 school districts; and two roundtable discussions with representatives from nearly two dozen education associations.

Our key findings include the following:

- **According to a majority of state and school district officials, the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have had minimal or no impact on student achievement.** More than half (56%) of responding states and two-thirds (66%) of districts reported that the NCLB teacher requirements have improved student achievement minimally or not at all. About 28% of districts, but just 10% of states, said that these requirements had improved student achievement somewhat. Only 6% of states and 4% of districts indicated that the requirements have improved achievement to a great extent.

- **The NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have not had a major impact on teacher effectiveness in the view of state and district officials.** More than one-third (38%) of responding states and almost three-quarters (74%) of districts reported that these requirements have had minimal or no impact on the effectiveness of the teacher workforce. Only 8% of states and 6% of districts said that these requirements have improved teacher effectiveness to a great extent.
Most school districts, but only about a third of the states, reported that they were on track to be in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements by the end of school year 2006-07. As of late fall and winter of 2006-07, 66% of school districts reported that they were already in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements, and 17% expected to achieve full compliance by the end of this past school year. Another 6% of districts expected to fully meet the requirements within the next two years. But only 3 states reported being in full compliance with the highly qualified teacher requirements at the time of our fall/winter survey, and 14 more expected to comply fully by the end of this past school year. Another 14 states expected to reach full compliance within the next two years. Full compliance is more difficult for an entire state, however, because of the large number of teachers involved, disparities in districts’ resources and capacity to meet the requirements, and the persistent shortages or staffing problems faced by some districts in a state.

Some states and districts doubt they will ever be in full compliance with the highly qualified teacher requirements. At least 22% of responding states and 6% of districts acknowledged that they are unlikely to ever meet the requirement for 100% of their teachers to be highly qualified. Several state and district officials pointed out that this requirement is a moving target—even if they achieve full compliance at some point, this can change due to teacher retirements and turnover, enrollment growth, or different qualifications of new hires.

Special education teachers are the group that poses the greatest challenge to meeting the highly qualified requirements. Eighty-three percent of states and 47% of districts reported having problems complying with the highly qualified requirements for special education teachers. In addition, more than half of the states and one third or more of school districts mentioned secondary school science and math teachers as groups that present a compliance challenge. Although a majority of states reported problems meeting the highly qualified requirements statewide for teachers in high-poverty or high-minority-enrollment schools, only 4% of districts cited this as a challenge. This may be partly because many districts have just one school per grade span or have little variation among schools in poverty rates or minority enrollments.

Induction/mentoring programs and content-driven professional development are the strategies most commonly used by districts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Other strategies include using enhanced outreach efforts to recruit teachers who are highly qualified to fill vacancies; providing course tuition assistance or other programs to help veteran teachers become highly qualified; and providing teachers with assistance to help them prepare for state licensure and certification exams.

States reported varying degrees of progress toward an equitable distribution of experienced, well-qualified teachers in high-poverty and high-minority-enrollment schools across the state. Only five states reported that this distribution had become more equitable to a great extent, 17 said it had become somewhat more equitable, and another 17 states said it had become minimally more equitable. Among districts with more than one school, 55% reported that the distribution of experienced, well-qualified teachers has remained equitable or that no real difference in teacher qualifications exists in their district based on schools’ poverty or minority enrollments. Still, some districts do face challenges in ensuring an equitable distribution of teachers and are addressing them through such strategies as providing extra professional development funds to high-poverty or high-minority schools, intensifying recruitment and retention efforts in these schools, and reassigning staff.
Many state and district officials felt the NCLB definition of a highly qualified teacher was too narrowly focused on content knowledge. Many of our survey respondents and case study interviewees suggested revising the definition to take into account teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom and other qualities essential to a good teacher, such as the ability to relate to students and the ability to effectively teach students from different backgrounds and differentiate instruction according to students’ needs.

Recommendations

The Center on Education Policy offers the following ideas for policymakers to help strengthen NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirements. These recommendations grow out of what we have learned about the implementation of the teacher quality requirements not only from this year’s study, but also from the ideas that emerged from two roundtable discussions CEP hosted in the fall of 2007 as well as our previous four years of research on NCLB implementation.

- **Encourage states to develop methods to measure teacher effectiveness.** Grants and incentives should be provided to states to develop their own systems to measure and report on the demonstrated effectiveness of teachers. These measures could be incorporated into states’ teacher certification and licensure systems for veteran teachers.

- **Refine the current federal definition of a highly qualified teacher to address the special circumstances of certain kinds of teachers.** Our surveys and case study interviews show that districts are having difficulty ensuring that 100% of certain types of teachers, such as special education teachers, secondary school math and science teachers, and teachers in rural areas who teach multiple subjects, are highly qualified. More flexibility regarding qualifications of these teachers should be built into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

- **Adopt a comprehensive approach to recruiting and retaining teachers in high-need schools.** The requirement for equitable distribution of experienced, well-qualified teachers among high-need and lower-need schools should be supported through ESEA by a comprehensive approach, rather than a piecemeal assortment of small, narrowly focused programs. This approach could include financial incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified, experienced teachers who will make a long-term commitment to teach in high-need schools; high-quality “residency” programs, similar to those used in medical training, developed specifically for new teachers and their mentors in high-need schools and for school leadership staff; and improved working conditions for teachers, such as lighter course loads for new teachers, increased planning and collaboration time, shared decision making, and up-to-date textbooks, technology, and facilities.

- **Provide federal assistance to states to develop and implement comprehensive data systems.** To comply fully with the highly qualified teacher requirements, states need to strengthen their data systems. With more comprehensive data about teacher qualifications, student-teacher ratios, teacher time spent on preparation versus teaching, and mobility rates of teachers and administrators, states and school districts could better understand which conditions contribute to teacher and student success and what supports are needed to help teachers succeed.
Organization of the Report and Data Sources

This report looks at how states and local school districts have implemented the NCLB teacher requirements now that the Act has been in place for five years. The report examines the following specific topics:

- **Compliance.** State and local progress in complying with the requirements for all academic classes to be taught by highly qualified teachers by June 2007 and the challenges involved in meeting this goal.

- **Capacity.** The capacity of districts and states to fulfill their responsibilities under the law to determine the number of highly qualified teachers and publicly report these data.

- **Strategies.** Strategies being used by school districts to recruit, retain, and develop a cadre of highly qualified teachers.

- **Impact.** Impact of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements on teacher effectiveness, student achievement, professional development, and other aspects of the teaching profession.

- **Equitable distribution.** State and local progress in providing low-income and minority students with equitable access to well-qualified, experienced teachers, and the challenges and strategies involved in meeting this requirement.

- **Definition changes.** Suggestions from survey respondents and case study districts for changing the NCLB definition of a “highly qualified” teacher.

The analyses described in this report are drawn from four major data sources, listed below. More information about each of these sources and our research methods can be found in the Methodology link accompanying this report at the CEP Web site (www.cep-dc.org). Other CEP publications referred to in this report are also available at this Web site.

- **State survey.** Each year since 2003, CEP has surveyed state departments of education about the implementation and effects of NCLB. From fall 2006 through January 2007, officials from all 50 states responded to a detailed survey; however, some states did not complete every question or section, so response rates vary by question. To increase the likelihood that respondents would provide accurate information, we kept individual state responses anonymous.

- **School district survey.** Since 2003, CEP has also conducted an annual survey of a nationally representative, random sample of school districts. For 2006-07, the survey was administered to a universe of 491 districts, stratified by district type (urban, suburban, or rural), district size, and whether the district had at least one school identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB. Urban districts and districts with identified schools were oversampled to allow for separate analyses based on these categories. Between November 2006 and February 2007, local officials from 349 districts responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 71%. To ensure that each kind of district sampled was adequately represented in our overall national calculations, the data were weighted during analysis.

- **District case study interviews.** Since 2003, CEP has conducted case studies of NCLB implementation in up to 43 school districts, chosen to represent a variety of urban, rural, and suburban districts and to encompass all geographical regions of the country.
From this year’s universe of 43 case study districts, we selected a subset of 17 districts to be the subject of more in-depth research on teacher quality issues. These 17 districts were selected based on information they provided about the NCLB highly qualified teacher provisions during last year’s case study interviews (CEP, 2006). From fall 2006 through January 2007, CEP staff and a CEP consultant conducted in-depth interviews with district- and school-level staff in these 17 districts. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and later analyzed using a qualitative data analysis software program. Quotations and information from these interviews are interspersed throughout this report. Table 1 lists each case study district.

- **Roundtable discussions.** In fall 2006, the Center held two roundtable discussions on the NCLB highly qualified teacher provisions. On October 17, 2006, CEP convened 22 organizations to discuss possible changes to the law’s requirement to equitably distribute qualified, experienced teachers among high-need and lower-need schools. On November 29, 2006, CEP convened representatives from 23 organizations to discuss possible changes to the law's definition of a highly qualified teacher. Recommendations emerging from these roundtables are summarized in the CEP publication, *Principles for Reauthorizing the Teacher Provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act and the Higher Education Act*, available at www.cep-dc.org. Also available are summaries of each meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District Name and State</th>
<th>District Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avon Public School District, Massachusetts</td>
<td>Suburban, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley County School District, South Carolina</td>
<td>Rural &amp; suburban, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark County School District, Nevada</td>
<td>Urban, preK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloquet Independent School District #94, Minnesota</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuero Independent School District, Texas</td>
<td>Rural, preK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lupton Weld Re-8 School District, Colorado</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremont County School District #1, Wyoming</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartland Community Schools, Nebraska</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermitage R-IV School District, Missouri</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools</td>
<td>Urban, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodiak Island Borough School District, Alaska</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlboro Elementary School, Vermont</td>
<td>Rural, K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon School District, North Dakota</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans Central Supervisory Union, Vermont</td>
<td>Rural, preK-12</td>
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<td>Romulus Central Schools, New York</td>
<td>Rural, K-12</td>
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<td>Wake County Public School System, North Carolina</td>
<td>Urban &amp; suburban, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waynesboro Public Schools, Virginia</td>
<td>Small city and rural, K-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compliance with Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

The No Child Left Behind Act required all teachers of core academic subjects to be highly qualified according to the law’s definition by June 2006. Recognizing that most states were not on track to meet this deadline in all of their school districts, U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings issued a policy letter in October 2005 that extended the deadline until June 2007 for states that were making a “good faith effort” to comply (Spellings, 2005). As evidence of their good faith efforts, states had to submit plans to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that laid out the specific steps they were taking to meet the highly qualified teacher requirements by the end of school year 2006-07. State plans were put through a peer review process and assessed against six criteria specified by the Secretary. According to CEP’s evaluation of the reviewers’ responses to these plans, ED accepted nine states’ plans (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.). Another 39 states had partially met the review criteria and were asked to submit revised plans by September 29, 2006. Four states had not sufficiently met any of the criteria and were required to submit revised plans by November 1, 2006.

In a July 23, 2007, letter to the chief state school officers, Secretary Spellings reported that all but one state’s plan was approved (Spellings, 2007). Still, she noted, the Consolidated State Performance Reports that states submitted for school year 2005-06 indicated that as of that time, no state had met the 100% highly qualified teacher goal. ED intends to start a new round of monitoring in all states in fall 2007. This monitoring will focus on state implementation of the submitted highly qualified teacher plans. The Secretary noted in her July letter that ED will pay particular attention to the processes states use to collect and verify the accuracy of highly qualified teacher data but will “maintain the policy of not penalizing states financially solely because they have not reached 100 percent HQT.”

Most Districts on Track

When we surveyed school districts in late fall and winter of 2006-07, the majority—about 83%—reported that were on track to be in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements by the end of this past school year, 2006-07. Six percent of districts expected to meet the requirements within the next two years. Districts’ specific responses as to when they would fully achieve the highly qualified teacher requirements were as follows (see figure 1):

- Two-thirds (66%) of districts reported being in compliance at the time of our survey. This group in full compliance as of the winter of 2006-07 included a lower share of urban districts (41%) than of rural (69%) or suburban (66%) districts.

- Another 17% expected to be fully compliant by the end of school year 2006-07.

- Five percent expected to come into full compliance by the end of school year 2007-08.

- Another 1% anticipated meeting the requirements by the end of school year 2008-09.

- Six percent reported that they were unlikely to ever be in full compliance. As explained below, these districts noted that teacher attrition and turnover make the goal of 100% highly qualified teachers a moving target.
Districts that were not in full compliance at the time of our survey often reported that they were close to the mark and were waiting for a small percentage of their teachers to finish working toward the NCLB definition. In these districts, an average of 97% of elementary teachers, 94% of middle school teachers, and 94% of high school teachers were already highly qualified, according to survey responses.

Data from our case studies showed a similar pattern of some districts having met the requirements by the time of our interviews and others approaching compliance. Three districts—Cloquet Independent School District #94 in Minnesota, Fremont County School District #1 in Wyoming, and Waynesboro Public Schools in Virginia—reported that 100% of their teachers were highly qualified according to the NCLB definition. Many other case study districts were close to the 100% goal but had not quite reached it. In a few districts, including the rural Cuero Independent School District in Texas and the urban Wake County Public Schools serving Raleigh, North Carolina, and its environs, interviewees expressed concern about the district’s capacity to reach and stay in compliance with the 100% goal in light of teacher retirements, normal turnover, and continuing demands for new teachers.
MANY STATES NOT IN COMPLIANCE STATEWIDE

When we asked states in the fall and winter of 2006-07 when they expected to be in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements, their responses indicated that a majority were not on track to meet the requirements statewide by the end of school year 2006-07. Indeed, more than a quarter of the states doubted that they would ever be in full compliance. The specific state responses fell into the following categories:

- Three states reported they were already in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements. (The responses of at least one of these states to other open-ended questions on our survey, however, created uncertainty about whether these states meant they were in full compliance with ED policies for having an approved plan to ensure all academic teachers are highly qualified, rather than with the underlying requirement for 100% of these teachers to be highly qualified.)

- Fourteen states (or 28%) expected to be in full compliance by the end of this past school year, 2006-07.

- Six anticipated meeting the requirements by the end of school year 2007-08.

- Eight expected to come into compliance by the end of school year 2008-09.

- Eleven states—a full 22% of states—said that they were unlikely to ever be in full compliance. In addition, three states (6%) that selected “other” as their response also indicated they did not ever expect to meet the goal of 100% highly qualified academic teachers.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DISTRICT AND STATE RESPONSES

Why do the state survey responses about compliance with the highly qualified teacher requirements show considerably less progress than the district survey responses? The most obvious explanation is that states are much bigger entities than districts and are home to several thousand, or even hundreds of thousands, of teachers. For a state to be fully compliant, all of the academic teachers in every school district in the state must be highly qualified according to the NCLB definition. If the vast majority of districts in a state have met the requirements but a few districts with persistent staffing challenges have not, the state will still be out of compliance. Indeed, a state cannot attain full compliance until the hardest-to-fill positions in the school district with the greatest staffing challenges are filled by highly qualified teachers.

Moreover, school districts are the agencies directly responsible for employee matters and are likely to have more current information about teachers’ qualifications than states do. If a district had only recently come into compliance, this information may have been available at the district level but not at the state level at the time of our surveys. Further, districts are in charge of hiring and states are in charge of credentialing—hypothetically creating the pool from which districts can hire. But ultimately, decisions about which teachers to employ are made at the district and school levels and are largely out of states’ hands.

A MOVING TARGET

Maintaining a cadre of 100% highly qualified teachers is a moving target, several survey respondents and case study interviewees noted. Even if a district or state has met the goal at one point in time, it can slip out of compliance as teachers retire, switch schools, or leave the profession, and as staffing needs change due to enrollment growth.
Fluctuations in the teacher pool can have a particularly notable impact when aggregated for an entire state. One state survey respondent pointed out that as a result of normal teacher attrition, “it is most likely that there will always be a small (3%-5%) number of classes not taught by highly qualified teachers.” An official from another state summarized the dilemma as follows:

*We hope to achieve 100% HQT [highly qualified teachers] in 2006-07 and are currently at 99% of all core content classes being taught by HQ teachers. As teachers retire and/or move on and new staff are added (especially in special education and multi-subject areas), the HQT percentage will fluctuate.*

Ensuring that all academic teachers are, and remain, highly qualified is also a moving target at the district level. For example, Wake County Public Schools, a case study district, must hire more than 400 new teachers annually to keep up with enrollment growth of 8,000 students per year. David Howell, the district’s senior director of salary administration and licensure, described the complications of meeting the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements:

*We will get as close to 100% as we humanly can by the end of this school year. With this large a school system and . . . the constant flux and growth, it is hard to say [that] . . . we’re going to have 100% and it’s going to stay there. It’s much more like calculus, where you have that asymptote line that approaches 100% but never gets there.*

Officials from three other case study districts—Cuero, Texas; Fort Lupton, Colorado; and Kansas City, Kansas—also mentioned the difficulty of maintaining 100% compliance in light of teacher turnover and variations in the number and qualifications of new hires.

**COMPLIANCE MORE CHALLENGING FOR CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF TEACHERS**

State and district officials reported having more difficulty complying with the NCLB highly qualified requirements for certain categories of teachers. Both states and districts cited special education teachers as the group presenting the greatest challenge. In addition, more than half of the states and about a third or more of school districts mentioned secondary school science and math teachers as groups that pose a compliance challenge. State and local views differed, however, about the extent to which teachers in schools with high poverty or high minority enrollments represent a challenge.

*Table 2* shows the number of states that were out of compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements for various categories of teachers.
Special Education Teachers

On both our state and district surveys, special education teachers topped the list of groups that pose a compliance challenge to the highly qualified teacher requirements. As shown in table 2, 83% of responding states reported being out of compliance for special education teachers. At the district level, 47% of all districts surveyed reported having compliance difficulties for special education teachers. These percentages were notably higher, however, among urban (65%) and suburban (61%) districts than among rural districts (27%).

Interviewees in nearly all case study districts also mentioned compliance difficulties for special education teachers, and many cited this category of teachers as their greatest compliance concern. Some district officials felt this was because the supply of special education teachers falls far short of the current demand. Others commented that the highly qualified requirements are unclear for special education teachers and are particularly problematic at the secondary level, where special education teachers often assist students with multiple subjects. ¹ Randy Thudin, principal at Washington school and coordinator of federal programs in Cloquet Independent School District #96 in Minnesota agreed these requirements are unclear.

¹ According to ED policy guidance, experienced special education teachers responsible for teaching multiple subjects may demonstrate subject-area competency through a multi-subject standard under their state’s high objective uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE) system, rather than having to demonstrate competence in each subject individually. New special education teachers who are highly qualified in math, language arts, or science have two years after they are hired to demonstrate subject-area competence in any additional subjects they teach, and may do so using the multi-subject HOUSSE (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Table 2. Number of States Not in Full Compliance with NCLB Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements for Various Categories of Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Teachers</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Percentage of Responding States*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special education teachers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in high-poverty schools</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in high-minority schools</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school science teachers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school teachers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in rural schools</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school math teachers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school teachers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reads: Thirty-nine states surveyed in fall/winter of 2006-07 reported that they were not yet in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements for special education teachers.

*Although all 50 states responded to the overall survey, 47 states responded to this question.

Source: Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, Item 33.
He noted during a November 2006 interview that he had just spoken with the district’s spe-
cial education director, and they were both unsure of how special education teachers in their 
state are going to meet the highly qualified teacher requirements, “short of going back [to 
school] and getting some type of certification in every [area they teach].”

Paul Zinni, director of pupil services in the Avon, Massachusetts, school district and a pro-
fessor of education at two universities, noted that some Massachusetts districts have 
addressed the dire shortage of special education teachers by filling these positions with for-
mer teaching assistants who have nearly completed the necessary coursework but have not 
yet completed their practicum. Between half and two-thirds of special education majors in 
the state are employed in a teaching job by the time they do their internship or student 
teaching, Zinni estimated, which demonstrates these teachers are in very high demand.

Berkeley County School District in South Carolina is also grappling with a shortage of spe-
cial education teachers. Dr. Sheldon Etheridge, executive director of federal programs, 
described the district’s efforts to fill the shortage:

Finding the bodies . . . for example, math and special ed, there’s just not that many out 
there . . . We’ve paid signing bonuses. We’ve paid mileage stipends if they’ll teach in the 
rural schools. We have all kinds of incentives but the incentives are no good if there’s 
nobody even possible to pick them up.

Even in Waynesboro, Virginia, a district that has met the 100% highly qualified teacher tar-
get, officials reported having difficulty in finding highly qualified special education teachers. 
“I think special ed teachers are hard to find to begin with,” said Betsy Mierzwa, coordinator 
of federal programs. “But with that definition for highly qualified for special ed . . . it’s 
harder to fill them.”

Secondary Science and Math Teachers
As displayed in table 2, 68% of responding states had not complied fully with the highly 
qualified requirements for high school science teachers, and 64% had not done so for high 
school math teachers.

Our district survey asked a slightly different question that focused on difficulties complying 
with the highly qualified teacher requirements for “secondary” school teachers (which could 
include middle school teachers) rather than “high school” teachers, as in the state survey. 
(To further complicate the matter, some states group middle school teachers under “high 
school” for data collection purposes.) In response to the district survey question, 39% of dis-
tricts indicated they faced problems complying for secondary school science teachers, and 
32% reported problems for secondary math teachers.

Interviewees from case study districts as disparate as Orleans, Vermont, and Kodiak Island 
Borough, Alaska, agreed that science and math teachers present a compliance challenge. Stewart 
McDonald of the Kodiak Island district simply said, “Well, we share the same problems any-
body in the nation does. We’re trying to find highly qualified math and science teachers.”
Different Views about Teachers in High-Need Schools

Many states reported being out of compliance with the highly qualified teacher requirements for teachers in schools with high poverty (72% of responding states) or high enrollments of minority students (68%). Yet only a very small proportion of school districts—just 4%—reported having difficulty complying with the highly qualified requirements for teachers in high-poverty or high-minority schools.

It seems likely that the difference in the state and district responses about teachers in high-need schools is at least partly attributable to the issues of scale mentioned above. In particular, if the vast majority of districts in a state had met the 100% highly qualified goal for teachers in high-poverty or high-minority schools but a small share of districts had not, the state would still be out of compliance statewide. One should also keep in mind that many school districts have only one school per level (elementary, middle, or high school), or have little variation in poverty rates or minority student enrollments across the district. Since these districts do not have demographic disparities between multiple schools, the issue of distributing highly qualified teachers equitably among schools is not as relevant.

Middle School Teachers, Rural Teachers, and Other Categories

Two-thirds of states (see table 2) and about one-fifth of school districts reported difficulties complying with the highly qualified teacher requirements for middle school teachers (22% of districts) and teachers in rural schools (20% of districts). At Marlboro Elementary, a rural school in Vermont housing grades K-8, Principal Francie Marbury talked about compliance challenges in the 7th and 8th grades. “We have fifteen students in 7th and 8th grade,” she said, “and we have one full-time teacher who teaches science, math, and writing and one part-time teacher who teaches social studies and literature.” NCLB requires teachers to be highly qualified in all of the content areas they teach, she continued, so ensuring these teachers meet NCLB’s requirements is challenging.

State and district responses differed about other categories of teachers. A majority of states (62%), but only a small percentage of districts (6%), reported compliance difficulties for elementary school teachers. Seventeen percent of districts indicated having difficulties meeting the highly qualified requirements for teachers of English language learners, a category that was not explicitly listed on the state survey.

It should be noted that the state and district surveys included slightly different questions about compliance for various categories of teachers. The state survey asked, “For which of the following categories of teachers, if any, is the state not yet in full compliance with NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirements?” while the district survey asked, “If the school district is not in full compliance with the NCLB requirement that all core subjects be taught by highly qualified teachers, which of the following categories of teachers is the district having difficulty bringing into full compliance?” It is not clear to what extent these wording differences may have attributed to differences between state and district responses.

Capacity to Meet Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

Our surveys included questions about the capacity of states and districts to carry out various responsibilities related to the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirement. More comprehensive information about state and district capacity to carry out NCLB requirements in general can be found in the CEP report, Educational Architects: Do State Education Agencies Have the Tools Necessary to Implement NCLB?
STATE REPORTING CAPACITY

The No Child Left Behind Act requires states to report publicly the percentage of core academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Nearly all states—48 of 50—responded that they were able to fulfill this requirement. Of the two states that said they could not, one did not elaborate on why. An official from the other state explained that the state reports its highly qualified teacher data in a different way but will report the data in the required way as soon as its system for tracking students by identifier number is fully in place.

Even states that are meeting this public reporting requirement face challenges. As shown in table 3, a total of 23 states cited insufficient technological capacity as a great or moderate challenge to implementing the requirement. Furthermore, the five states that chose the “other” response mentioned technical issues related to data collection systems as challenges to complying with the public reporting requirement. For example, one state respondent explained that although the state implemented changes in its data collection system for 2006-07 to comply with NCLB requirements, these data will not be reported until 2007. Another state official complained that “the U.S. Department of Education want[ed] the data reported according to their specifications before our system was modified.” A third state respondent commented that the level of detail involved in reporting highly qualified teacher data “places an enormous burden on both [information technology] and program staff” in the state and will entail many systemic changes to the state’s data systems; consequently, “time, funding, and resources are all essential.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Challenge to Implementing Requirement</th>
<th>Great Extent</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient technological capacity</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient numbers of staff</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate federal funds</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient guidance from U.S. Department of Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate state funds</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to attract and retain qualified staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reads: Seventeen states reported that “insufficient technological capacity” challenged to a great extent their capacity to report publicly the percentage of classes in the state taught by highly qualified teachers.

Note: While all 50 states responded to this overall survey question, the response rates for the specific types of challenges varied from 49 to 50 states.

Source: Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, item 24A.
DISTRICT CAPACITY TO PROVIDE DATA

The data needed to determine the proportion of core academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers is typically generated at the school district level, so we asked districts whether they had experienced difficulty in making this determination. As shown in figure 2, the majority of district survey respondents (62%) reported no difficulty. About 10% said they had experienced a great deal of difficulty or some difficulty in making this determination, and 17% reported having minor difficulties. Twelve percent of districts indicated that the state, rather than the school district, determines the proportions of academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers, so the question is not relevant to them.

District respondents mentioned several reasons for their difficulties in determining the percentage of academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers. The following reasons were cited by multiple respondents:

- Discrepancies between course content and certification categories—for example, a teacher certified in life science may teach a course titled physical science
- Confusing requirements and difficulty interpreting guidelines, especially for special education teachers, middle and high school teachers, team teachers, and other teachers who teach multiple subjects

Figure 2. Percentage of Districts Reporting Difficulty in Determining Proportion of Core Academic Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers in 2005-06

Figure reads: Sixty-two percent of districts surveyed reported experiencing no difficulty in determining the proportion of core academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers in 2005-06.

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding. Baseline does not include districts that responded “don’t know” (2%).

• Discrepancies and confusion between NCLB teacher requirements and state certification and licensure requirements

• Time demands involved in gathering and completing required paperwork, especially in larger districts

• Changing requirements at the state and federal levels

• Insufficient resources and inadequate technical ability to determine and continually monitor the percentage of academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers

• Difficulty interpreting the state’s high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE), which offers an alternative means of meeting the NCLB teacher requirements for veteran teachers

• Confusion about alternative certification

GUIDANCE TO DISTRICTS ABOUT HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Our district survey included questions about the guidance and assistance districts received on implementing the highly qualified teacher requirements from their state education agency and the U.S. Department of Education. Districts were split on how much guidance and assistance they received from their state education agency on these provisions. Half (50%) of the districts reported receiving guidance from their state education agency “to a great extent” or “somewhat,” while the other half reported receiving minimal or no guidance from the state. Districts were more conclusive about a lack of guidance and assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. Almost two-thirds (62%) said they had received no guidance at all from ED about implementing the highly qualified teacher requirements, and 23% reported receiving minimal guidance from ED. This pattern mirrors findings from last year’s study (CEP, 2006), which showed that a higher proportion of districts reported receiving needed guidance and assistance about NCLB in general from the state education agency than from ED.

Case study interviewees gave varying reports of how much assistance their districts have received from the state on the highly qualified teacher provisions. The amount of assistance ranged from considerable to very little or none.

Some interviewees reported that their districts had received extensive support from their state education agency, including hands-on guidance, additional staff, and substantial grant money to help teachers who had not met the highly qualified requirements. For example, one case study district benefited from a statewide mentoring project to help recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, according to the interviewee. Another case study district official described various forms of assistance provided by the state, including auditing the district for compliance with NCLB teacher provisions, working with the personnel department to identify teachers and paraprofessionals in need of assistance, and offering small grants for teachers to pursue recertification or training. However, this official noted the challenges of keeping up with changing rules for what constitutes a highly qualified teacher, especially for special education and middle school teachers.

By contrast, an official from another district explained that the state takes a more regulatory than supportive approach and is not really set up to respond to the district’s needs.
Most other case study districts fell somewhere in between these ends of the spectrum. For example, one case study interviewee said that although the state department of education provides some guidance, a recent downsizing of state staff has led most district administrators and staff to receive hands-on professional development through regional service centers rather than directly from the state. An official from a small district remarked that although the state education department does the best it can, smaller districts face more difficulty in obtaining state assistance because they do not always have a voice at the state level.

**Strategies for Meeting the Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements**

States and school districts are using a variety of strategies to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, help their veteran teachers meet the NCLB highly qualified definition, and comply with the NCLB teacher quality requirements in other ways.

### OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT STRATEGIES

Table 4 shows the strategies used by districts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, according to our district survey. In the majority of districts, these strategies have been funded primarily with non-federal funds—the “other funds” column in the table. Typically these other funds include district, general, or local funds, sometimes in combination with state funds. A few of the strategies, such as content-driven professional development and assistance in preparing teachers for state exams, were supported through the federal Title I or Title II program in a notable percentage of school districts.²

The strategies in table 4, along with other strategies mentioned in our state survey and district case studies, are described in more detail below.

### RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

An obvious strategy for complying with the NCLB teacher requirements is to recruit candidates who are already highly qualified to fill vacant positions. In almost three-fourths (74%) of the states, experienced and credentialed teachers are, to a great or moderate extent, sources of highly qualified teachers to fill the state’s teaching needs.

Other sources of recruits include recent teacher graduates from within the state (cited as a source to a great or moderate extent by 96% of states) and recent teacher graduates from out of state (58% of states). Interviewees from several case study districts similarly noted that their recruitment efforts often focus on graduates of teacher education programs from inside or outside the state. For example, Romulus Central Schools, a rural district in New York, connects with several college and university teacher preparation programs in the region to fill its teacher vacancies, said Superintendent Mike Midey. Recruitment efforts in rural Fremont County, Wyoming, are aided by the state’s reciprocity agreements to accept teachers’ certification from surrounding states, said interviewee Karen Bierhaus. A team of Fremont administrators has attended regional job fairs and visited universities in South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, and Montana to find highly qualified teachers for vacancies created by retirements. Clark County, Nevada—a fast-growing urban district that includes Las Vegas—recruits teachers from nearly all states, the U.S. territories, and other countries.

¹ Under Title I, Part A, districts are required to set aside annually a certain proportion of their grants, which was at least 5% for fiscal year 2007, to provide professional development to assist teachers who have not met the NCLB requirements to become highly qualified. Under Title II, districts receive funds to carry out a number of activities related to improving teacher quality, including supporting induction programs, professional development, recruitment and hiring activities, and teacher retention initiatives.
About 64% of states responding to our survey question also indicated that alternative certification candidates were recruited to a great or moderate extent. Some case study interviewees corroborated this point. For example, the Kansas City, Kansas, district has implemented an alternative teacher certification program to recruit teachers that meet the NCLB highly qualified criteria. “It’s a lot of work . . . [but] we would not have been able to fill some of our science [vacancies] if it hadn’t been for the teaching fellows” developed by this program, said interviewee John Rios. Officials from Cuero, Texas; Fort Lupton, Colorado; Waynesboro, Virginia; and other case study districts also said that their districts relied to some extent on alternative certification programs or career switchers.

As for the specific recruitment strategies, more than a third (37%) of the districts surveyed reported that they used outreach or enhanced outreach strategies, such as advertising and job fairs, to recruit highly qualified teachers. These strategies were especially popular in urban areas; 68% of urban districts reported using outreach strategies to fill teacher jobs.

Table 4. District Strategies to Recruit and Retain Highly Qualified Teachers and Funding Sources for These Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Percentage of Districts Using Strategy</th>
<th>Percentage of Districts Using Funding Sources Listed for This Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Induction/mentoring programs</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>8% 24% 72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-driven professional development</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50% 56% 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (such as tuition or district-sponsored programs to assist veteran teachers) in meeting HOUSSE requirements</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20% 33% 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved working conditions (planning time, class size, leadership opportunities)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29% 31% 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach or enhanced outreach (advertising, job fairs, etc.)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>3% 21% 72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance in preparing for the state exam for certification and licensure</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15% 49% 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing bonus</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0% 19% 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention bonus</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11% 11% 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus or stipend/supplement for working in a high-need school</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>31% 13% 59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reads: Seventy-one percent of districts surveyed reported using induction or mentoring programs to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Of this group, 8% of districts used Title I funds to carry out these induction and mentoring programs, 24% used Title II funds, and 72% used other funds.

*Districts could select more than one funding source, so rows showing funding sources total more than 100%. Responses for “other” strategies and “don’t know” responses are not shown.

Source: Center on Education Policy, February 2007, District Survey, item 34 (tables TQ-5A & TQ-5B).
Some districts use financial incentives, such as bonuses, stipends, or competitive salaries, to recruit highly qualified teachers. Although just 6% or fewer of the districts we surveyed reported using bonuses or stipends, some case study districts found these strategies useful. The Berkeley County, South Carolina, district offered $5,000 bonuses to recruit teachers with national board certification to its rural Title I schools. The Napoleon, North Dakota, school district provides bonuses when necessary, according to Superintendent Jon Starkey. The Fremont County, Wyoming, school district used additional funding from the state legislature to raise its salaries by anywhere from $5,000 to $8,000; according to Karen Bierhaus, this was done to make the district’s salaries more competitive with those in surrounding states.

MENTORING AND INDUCTION PROGRAMS

Offering mentoring and induction programs for new teachers was the most popular strategy used by the districts we surveyed to attract, retain, and develop highly qualified teachers. Overall, 71% of districts surveyed used these types of programs, but a significantly higher proportion of urban districts (88%) than of rural districts (61%) relied on induction and mentoring. One cannot, however, determine the quality of the mentoring and induction programs from this survey data. Other studies have offered insight about the importance of strong, high-quality mentorship programs to the effective recruitment and retention of quality teachers (Berry & Hirsch 2005; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Many case study districts similarly looked to induction and mentoring programs to improve the qualifications of new teachers and decrease teacher turnover. The Avon, Massachusetts, school district provides an induction program that emphasizes classroom management skills—a particular challenge for new teachers—and offers training in the district’s curriculum. According to interviewee Paul Zinni, the district also pairs new teachers with teacher mentors, who undergo extensive training and are encouraged to help new teachers with classroom management skills. The Romulus Central Schools in New York have rehired qualified retired teachers to help mentor the district’s younger staff, according to Superintendent Mike Midey.

The Kodiak Island Borough district in Alaska developed its own teacher mentor program to increase the qualifications of teachers in its most rural schools and to improve teacher retention. As explained in box A, the program began with two master teachers, who traveled to remote schools to assist less experienced teachers. Eventually, additional mentors were trained within the district. Although it is too soon to determine the program’s full effects, Kodiak interviewee Stewart McDonald noted that the program “has been a great source of help for our new teachers in terms of retention.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, COURSEWORK, AND RELATED ASSISTANCE

Content-driven professional development was the second most common strategy used by our survey districts to develop highly qualified teachers. This strategy was used by 60% of all districts and by 75% of urban districts. In a related strategy, 44% of survey districts paid course tuition or offered district-sponsored programs to help veteran teachers meet HOUSSE requirements. Twenty-six percent of districts provided teachers with assistance to help them prepare for state licensure and certification exams.

Several case study interviewees also said that their districts provided professional development, tuition assistance for coursework, or exam assistance to help teachers meet the NCLB teacher quality requirements. In Berkeley County, South Carolina, teachers can choose from nearly 50 classes that are district-supported, said Dr. Sheldon Etheridge, and they “don’t have to go out of district to become highly qualified or better certified or even [to] get an advanced certificate.”
The Kansas City, Kansas district provides tuition reimbursement to help teachers complete the subject-area coursework necessary to become highly qualified, according to case study interviewees. The Fort Lupton, Colorado, district reimburses teachers for the cost of taking necessary exams in their content area.

The Waynesboro, Virginia, school district provides tuition assistance to teachers and also offers an on-site master’s degree program in reading through a local university. Within 35 miles of Waynesboro are 10 universities and colleges, said Superintendent Robin Crowder,
and the district has a very strong partnership with many of them. The district also “encourage[s] our employees to present at conferences,” said Crowder. “We think it’s just as important that we’re out there sharing our information and knowledge with folks.”

**IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS, TEAM TEACHING, AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS**

To meet the need for highly qualified teachers, 41% of districts indicated that they had improved teacher working conditions, such as reorganizing planning time, reducing class size, or providing teachers with leadership opportunities, to help recruit and retain highly qualified teachers.

Some case study districts have used team teaching, distance learning arrangements, and employment of retired teachers to ensure that all core academic classes are taught by highly qualified teachers.

For several years, the Fremont County, Wyoming, district has encouraged team teaching between special education and general education teachers to facilitate inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms, said Karen Bierhaus. But the current team teaching arrangement has the added benefit of helping with NCLB compliance; special education teachers do not have to be highly qualified in every subject area if the regular classroom teacher remains responsible for the main teaching. The special education teachers provide additional assistance for students with disabilities to help cement the skills that were taught by the regular classroom teacher, Bierhaus noted. Other districts used a similar team teaching approach.

Some of our case study districts mentioned using distance learning arrangements to address the need for highly qualified teachers by sharing resources. For example, Dr. Norm Yoder, superintendent of Heartland Community schools in Nebraska, talked about distance learning arrangements that are coordinated through a consortium of schools in the region. More specifically, he explained, they offer a calculus class at his school through distance learning and in return a teacher in his school teaches a German class through the consortium to two other schools. Superintendent Shelly Aubuchon of the Hermitage R-IV school district in Missouri also mentioned offering interactive television classes in the district.

Other case study districts said they employed retired teachers to meet NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirements. For example, Nevada state law allows retired teachers who are highly qualified in high-need subjects to return to the classroom to teach these subjects without losing their retirement; however, there are limits to how long these teachers can stay in the classroom. The program has helped Clark County, Nevada, fill its huge demand for highly qualified teachers, said Mary Ann Gibbs, district coordinator in human resources. “I see three or four names a week [of retired teachers taking advantage of this option],” she added.

**Impact of NCLB Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements**

The teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act are intended to improve teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom and, in turn, to increase student achievement. Our surveys and case studies explored the impact of the NCLB teacher requirements on teacher effectiveness, student achievement, and other aspects of the teaching profession, including professional development and teacher preparation, working conditions, and systems for collecting data about teachers.
IMPACT ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Some analysts have questioned whether teacher credentialing requirements, such as those embodied in NCLB, have any direct relationship to the quality of instruction. For example, a recent study from the federal National Institute of Child Health and Human Development concluded that the quality of instruction in elementary classrooms is not directly related to whether teachers have met their state’s credentialing requirements (Pianta et al., 2007, p. 1796):

*Classroom dynamics were not related to teachers’ degree status or experience. Teachers met credentialing standards, but their classrooms, even if emotionally positive, were mediocre in terms of quality of instructional support . . . These results are consistent with arguments that a focus on standards-based reform and teacher credentialing may lead to instruction that is overly broad and thin.*

A Congressional Research Service report also questioned whether the NCLB teacher requirements are actually reliable indicators of teacher quality and effectiveness (Riddle, 2006, pp. 19-20):

*The NCLBA’s HQT requirements are closely linked to state teacher certification requirements and, in the case of secondary school teachers, attainment of baccalaureate or higher degrees with a major in the subject(s) taught. While widely accepted as minimum qualifications, these are not the only attributes closely associated with teacher effectiveness in improving student achievement, nor do they address issues of instructional methods used by teachers in the classroom. Further, there is evidence that a very large majority of teachers already met the HQT requirements when the NCLBA was enacted. However, those characteristics often identified in research on teacher effectiveness are much more difficult to measure and evaluate than the current HQT requirements.*

Our surveys and case studies asked states and school districts about the impact of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements on teacher effectiveness. Their responses suggested that the impact has not been major. More than one-third (38%) of state survey respondents and almost three-quarters (74%) of district survey respondents said that these requirements have had minimal or no impact on the effectiveness of the teacher workforce (see figure 3). Other key responses were as follows:

- Only 8% of states and 6% of districts reported that the NCLB teacher quality requirements had improved teacher effectiveness to a great extent.

- About 26% of states and 14% of districts noted a moderate impact.

- A substantial share of states (28%) but a small share of districts (6%) did not know the impact.

Reflecting the views of many case study interviewees on the relationship between the NCLB requirements and teacher effectiveness, Mary Ann Gibbs of Clark County, Nevada, observed that highly qualified teachers and quality teachers are “two different things.” A district survey respondent was even more direct: “Not all highly qualified teachers are highly effective.”
IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A majority of states and districts appeared unconvinced that the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements had produced a notable positive impact on student achievement.

As shown in figure 4, more than half (56%) of the states responding to our survey reported that the NCLB teacher requirements had improved student achievement minimally or not at all. Another 28% of state respondents said they did not know the impact of these requirements on student achievement. In a similar vein, two-thirds of district respondents (66%) said they believed the NCLB teacher quality requirements have improved student achievement minimally or not at all.

Moderately positive views about the impact of the NCLB teacher requirements on student achievement were more prevalent among districts than states, though still in the minority. About 28% of districts, but only 10% of states, reported that these requirements had improved student achievement somewhat. Only 6% of states and 4% of districts noted that the requirements have improved achievement to a great extent.

Figure reads: Eight percent of states and 6% of school districts surveyed reported that the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have increased the effectiveness of the teacher workforce to a great extent.

Note: The apparent difference among districts between the “moderately” and “minimally” responses is not statistically significant.

Source: Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, Item 29; February 2007, District Survey, Item 37 (Table TQ-8C).
Additional comments from survey participants and case study interviewees helped explain why some state and district officials reached certain conclusions about the impact of the NCLB teacher requirements on achievement. As justification for a positive impact, one state official noted that the “results of state assessments in reading/language arts and math show improvement in student achievement.” A district official commented that “NCLB has forced [the district] to focus on each individual student and each teacher’s ability.”

Explaining responses of minimal impact, no impact, or don’t know, some district officials noted that the correlation between the NCLB teacher requirements and student achievement is hard to determine without longitudinal data. Wake County case study interviewees commented that it was too early to go on record because the district does not have data to determine the impact. Paul Zinni from Avon, Massachusetts noted that the district does not have any data, but that he has not observed an impact on student achievement.

Carrie Duits, executive director of student achievement for the Fort Lupton, Colorado, school district, expressed uncertainty about the impact of the teacher quality requirements on student achievement in her district. She gave the example of a high school teacher who is considered very highly qualified in the subject taught but is not producing results with students, while other teachers who do not have extensive coursework in the same subject are demonstrating improvements in their students’ achievement. “So I don’t know that we can say there’s a direct correlation with our statewide testing results and a teacher’s transcript,” said Duits.

Figure 4. Percentage of States and Districts Reporting the Extent to Which NCLB’s Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements Have Improved Student Achievement

Figure reads: Six percent of states and 4% of districts responding to CEP’s survey reported that the NCLB teacher quality requirements have improved student achievement to a great extent.

Note: The apparent difference among districts between the “don’t know” and “great extent” responses is not statistically significant. Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, item 32; February 2007, District Survey, item 39 (table TQ-10B).
One district survey respondent summed up the views of several officials by commenting that it is difficult to attribute student achievement gains to any one thing “given the many changes taking place simultaneously.” Another survey respondent put it this way: “Student achievement has increased for a number of reasons—not just because of teacher quality.”

Expressing the views of several district respondents, one district official noted that the teacher requirements are focused on credentialing, rather than on what is actually happening in the classroom, so the requirements are “not really related to actual student achievement.”

**IMPACT ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

Responses from our state and district surveys suggest that the NCLB teacher requirements have not been a great help to teacher recruitment or retention.

We asked states whether the NCLB teacher requirements have enhanced their teacher recruitment strategies; only two states said the requirements had done so to a great extent. The largest share, 21 states, reported that the requirements have enhanced recruitment minimally, 18 said moderately, and 5 said not at all. The remaining 4 states did not know if the NCLB teacher requirements enhanced recruitment.

We asked school districts about the impact of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements on their ability to both recruit and retain teachers. A majority of districts (60%) indicated that these requirements have had no impact on their recruitment ability, as shown in figure 5. A significant share, 29%, concluded that the NCLB requirements have reduced their ability to recruit teachers. As regards retention, 68% of districts reported no impact of the NCLB teacher requirements on their ability to retain teachers. Very few districts credited the requirements with improving either recruitment (5% of districts) or retention (4%).

**IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

State and district survey respondents and case study interviewees expressed mixed views about whether the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have increased the quantity and improved the quality of professional development for teachers.

Regarding the quantity of professional development, half the responding states reported a meaningful impact; in particular, 24 states (48%) indicated that the NCLB teacher quality requirements have, to a moderate or great extent, resulted in more professional development that is sustained, long-term, and effective (three characteristics often considered essential to good professional development). However, almost as many states, 21 (48%), reported that the teacher quality requirements have had minimal or no impact on the quantity of professional development with these characteristics. Five states (10%) indicated they did not know the impact.

District survey respondents also commented on the impact of NCLB on the quantity of professional development, and their views varied by type of district. Overall, a minority of districts (35%) concluded that the federal teacher requirements have, to a moderate or great extent, resulted in more sustained, long-term, and effective professional development, while a majority (60%) reported minimal or no impact of this type. Urban districts and districts with schools in improvement, however, had more positive responses: 55% of urban districts—compared with 35% of suburban districts and 33% of rural districts—reported a moderate or great impact of the federal teacher requirements on the quantity of effective professional development with the three characteristics. And 55% of districts with at least one school identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB concurred that the law’s teacher
requirements have resulted in more professional development with the key characteristics—many more than the 29% of districts with no schools identified for improvement.

As for the impact of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements on the quality of professional development, the majority of states and districts did not see a significant impact. Two-thirds (66%) of state respondents said that these federal requirements have produced minimal or no improvement in the quality of professional development for teachers. Only two states reported that the requirements have greatly improved the quality of professional development. In one of these states, an official noted that “the state has used NCLB teacher quality requirements as a springboard to develop new professional development standards and require more consistent quality in professional development activities statewide.” In the other state, an official said that professional development has become “more focused on improving student achievement and on preparing teachers with more skills and strategies to close the gap,” and that strategies are “presented with more research and documentation of effectiveness.” Another state official observed that “professional development is more closely focused and tied to student achievement and teacher professional growth needs.”

Table reads: Five percent of districts reported that the NCLB teacher quality requirements have improved the district’s ability to recruit teachers and 4% said the same about the district’s ability to retain teachers.

At the district level, nearly half of the respondents (48%) said that the NCLB teacher requirements have not improved teacher professional development, and another 18% reported a minimal impact. In explaining these responses, some survey participants noted that their districts have been doing professional development and school improvement since before NCLB was enacted. Others remarked that their teachers were already highly qualified, so they have not seen a change in the quality of professional development.

On the more positive side, 24% of districts indicated that the NCLB teacher requirements have improved professional development somewhat, and 8% said they have done so to a great extent. Elaborating on these responses, survey participants noted that professional development has become “more focused” and based on an “examination of data and professional development needs.” One district respondent said, “We were doing professional development before but Title II has given us funds to do things that we have not done in the past . . . We want everyone up to speed on the same information.”

States and districts also considered the extent to which the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have spurred them to make greater use of data to determine professional development needs. A majority of states (68%) agreed that this had occurred to a great or moderate extent. District responses were less positive: 37% reported a moderate or great impact of the NCLB teacher requirements on the use of data to determine professional development needs, while 59% reported minimal or no impact. However, more than half (52%) of districts with at least one school identified for improvement noted a moderate or great impact of NCLB on the use of data to plan professional development.

**IMPACTS OF NCLB REQUIREMENTS ON OTHER ASPECTS OF TEACHING**

Our surveys also asked state and school district officials about the impact of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements on five other outcomes related to teaching: improved systems for collecting data about teachers, targeted distribution of resources to high-need schools, increased consensus about the quality of the teaching force, improved teacher preparation programs, and enhanced teacher working conditions in hard-to-staff schools. Table 5 displays their responses.

As table 5 shows, states and school districts had somewhat different views about the extent to which the NCLB teacher requirements have positively affected these outcomes, although for most outcomes, neither states nor districts rated the impact as very large. Indeed, more than half of the districts surveyed saw no impact of the NCLB teacher requirements on any of these five aspects of teaching.

One positive outcome from the state perspective was in the area of data: 76% of state respondents noted that the NCLB teacher requirements had improved their systems for collecting data about teachers to a great or moderate extent. Another exception from the state perspective was in the distribution of resources: 48% of states concurred that the NCLB requirements had improved the distribution of resources to high-need schools to a great or moderate extent. But districts disagreed; only 10% of districts reported a moderate or great impact on resource distribution to high-need schools, while two-thirds of districts reported no impact. More research is needed to determine why state and district responses differed.

One rationale for the NCLB requirement to report data publicly about highly qualified teachers was to draw more public attention to the quality of teachers in their communities. As shown in table 5, however, the majority of states and districts surveyed said that NCLB had not increased consensus among parents and other key stakeholders about the quality of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>To a Great Extent</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Minimally</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Survey Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved system for collecting data about teachers</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted distribution of resources to high-need schools and districts to improve the quality of teaching</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased consensus among parents, teachers, principals, school administrators, state policymakers, and others about the quality of teachers</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced working conditions for teachers in hard-to-staff schools</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Survey Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved system for collecting data about teachers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased consensus among parents, teachers, principals, school administrators, state policymakers, and others about the quality of teachers</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted distribution of resources to high-need schools and districts to improve the quality of teaching</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better working conditions for teachers in hard-to-staff schools</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reads: Forty percent of states and 11% of districts reported that an improved system for collecting data about teachers was to a great extent an outcome of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements.

Source: *Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, item 29; February 2007, District Survey, item 37 (table TQ-8C).*
teachers to more than a minimal extent. On a related issue, case study interviewees generally said that efforts to make parents and community members aware of the percentage of highly qualified teachers in their district had produced little or no response. “To be honest with you,” said David Howell of the Wake County Public Schools, “in the three years I’ve been working with this, I’ve seen almost no response.”

**Equitable Distribution of Teachers**

In addition to requiring all academic classes to be taught by highly qualified teachers, the No Child Left Behind Act also directs states to ensure that low-income and minority students are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other students. To determine whether states have made a good faith effort to comply, the U.S. Department of Education looked at “the steps states are taking to ensure that highly qualified and experienced teachers are distributed equitably between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers” as one of six criteria used to evaluate states’ teacher quality plans (Spellings, 2005).

The plans submitted by states were criticized by some advocacy groups for insufficiently addressing the NCLB requirement to distribute teachers equitably. These same advocacy groups have also criticized the U.S. Department of Education for providing inadequate guidance and leadership on this provision. In an August 2006 report, for example, researchers from the Education Trust concluded that most states had failed to analyze data properly to determine whether poor children are assigned more than “their fair share of unqualified, inexperienced, and out-of-field teachers” (Education Trust, 2006). In a July 2006 report, the Citizens’ Commission on Civil Rights concluded that states have made very minimal progress in addressing the teacher quality requirements—especially the equitable distribution requirement (McClure et al., 2006). This study further maintained that the Department had initially focused very little attention on the teacher equity provision and recommended that ED enforce this provision more strictly, including imposing sanctions on states if necessary.

To learn more about how states and districts have approached the NCLB equitable distribution provision, we included questions on this issue in our surveys and case study interviews. Our state survey asked about states’ ability to ensure the equitable distribution of experienced, well-qualified teachers between high-poverty and lower-poverty schools, and between high-minority-enrollment and low-minority-enrollment schools. Our district survey and interviews asked about districts’ capacity to determine whether qualified, experienced teachers were equitably distributed between these types of schools.

In addition CEP convened a roundtable meeting of nearly two dozen education organizations to discuss possible changes to the equitable distribution provision. A summary of the meeting and links to the suggestions raised by organizations for NCLB reauthorization are available at www.cep-dc.org.

**CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT**

States had mixed responses about their ability to ensure that experienced, well-qualified teachers are distributed equitably. Districts reported fewer difficulties, in part because many districts have only a few schools in total or do not have concentrations of poor or minority students in certain schools.
States’ Ability to Ensure Equitable Distribution

Twenty-four percent of the 49 states responding to our survey question reported being able to carry out the equitable distribution requirement to a great extent. As shown in Figure 6, 43% reported being somewhat able to do so, and 33% said they were minimally able. No state reported being unable to carry out this requirement at all.

We asked the states that were able to carry out this requirement to a great extent to explain their answers. Five states reported that their data showed no significant variations in the distribution of experienced and qualified teachers statewide, so implementing the equitable distribution requirement was not applicable. Other states relied on state laws, state policies, and state data systems to implement equitable distribution, as the following examples illustrate:

- One state respondent said a new state law requires local school boards to provide salary incentives to promote equitable placement of teachers and also addresses collective bargaining agreements.

- Another state respondent pointed to the state’s “highly sophisticated monitoring system” as a useful tool in tracking the distribution of teachers. In this state, schools and districts in which disproportionately high percentages of low-income or minority children are taught by teachers who are not highly qualified must develop a plan to reduce this percentage using funds from Title II of NCLB or other available sources.

![Figure 6. Percentage of States Reporting the Extent to Which They Have Been Able to Carry Out NCLB’s Equitable Distribution Requirement](image)

Figure reads: Twenty-four percent of responding states reported that they were able to carry out the NCLB equitable distribution requirement to a great extent.

Note: While all 50 states responded to the overall survey, 49 states responded to this question.

District Capacity to Determine Equitable Distribution

The vast majority of districts surveyed (93%) reported having no difficulties in determining whether qualified, experienced teachers were equitably distributed between high-poverty or high-minority schools and other schools in 2005-06. In many cases, survey participants explained that the equitable distribution requirement was not particularly relevant because their district has only one school total or only one school per grade span, or because the population of low-income and minority students was distributed fairly evenly across their schools.

A very small share of districts reported having minor difficulty (3%), some difficulty (1%), or a great deal of difficulty (1%) determining whether qualified, experienced teachers were equitably distributed between high-need and lower-need schools. Some of these districts attributed their difficulties to insufficient personnel or inadequate data systems; vague or changing guidance about what constitutes equitable distribution; and the time it takes to audit teacher files.

PROGRESS TOWARD EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

States reported varying degrees of progress in recent years in equalizing the distribution of experienced, qualified teachers between schools with high proportions of low-income or minority students and those with lower proportions. District survey respondents gave a more optimistic picture—a majority asserted that qualified teachers were already distributed equitably among their schools.

State Progress

Only five states reported that the distribution of experienced, qualified teachers to high-poverty and high-minority schools across the state had become more equitable to a great extent. Nine states answered that they did not know. The rest of the states reported varying degrees of progress in equitably distributing well-qualified teachers among schools:

- Somewhat more equitable in 17 states
- Minimally more equitable in another 17 states
- No more equitable in 2 states

We asked the 22 states that reported some or great progress in distributing experienced, qualified teachers more equitably if this was the result of the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirement. Seven of these states said yes, nine said no, and six did not know.

District Progress

A majority (55%) of districts with more than one school reported that since 2001-02 (the year NCLB was enacted), the distribution of highly qualified, experienced teachers has remained equitable or that no real difference exists in teacher qualifications based on schools’ poverty rates or minority student enrollment. About 4% of districts noted that the distribution of these teachers had become somewhat or minimally more equitable. Just 1% reported that the distribution of teachers had become more equitable to a great extent, and another 1% noted that the distribution had not become more equitable at all since enactment of NCLB. More than one-third of districts (38%) responded that they did not know the extent to which the distribution of such teachers had become more equitable.
It is also striking how many districts—83%, according to a different question from our survey about equitable distribution strategies—maintain that the NCLB teacher distribution requirement is not applicable because the district has only one school total or one school each for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and/or because experienced, qualified teachers are already equitably distributed among their schools. As shown in figure 7, greater proportions of rural districts than urban or suburban districts gave these responses, which is not surprising in light of the small enrollments and limited number of schools in many rural districts.

Case study interviewees described some of the issues their districts face in carrying out the equitable distribution requirement. Debra Baros, assistant superintendent for the Cuero, Texas district, raised a key question—how does one define an inexperienced teacher? If one assumes as Baros does that an inexperienced teacher has been teaching five years or fewer, then these teachers are spread fairly evenly across Cuero schools, she said.

Just because a teacher is inexperienced does not mean that the teacher is not highly qualified, contended Paul Zinni of the Avon, Massachusetts, district. Due to teacher retirements, nearly half of Avon’s teachers are fairly new to teaching, but they still meet the NCLB highly qualified definition.

In Fort Lupton, Colorado, the district’s schools have very similar poverty rates, so the main disparities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers occur between grade spans, according to John Hoag, assistant superintendent of operations and human resources. The elementary schools have a greater share of highly qualified teachers than middle and high schools do (although the elementary teachers tend to be the least experienced). One reason for this

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Figure 7. Percentage of Districts Reporting That They Have One School Total or One School Per Grade Span and/or That Teachers Are Equitably Distributed, by District Type, 2006-07

Figure reads: Ninety-two percent of rural districts reported that the district has only one school total or one school per grade span and/or that experienced, qualified teachers are already equitably distributed among schools.

Source: Center on Education Policy, February 2007, District Survey, item 36 (table TQ-7).
pattern is that some middle and high school teachers teach one period’s class outside their area of endorsement, which automatically makes them not highly qualified under the NCLB definition. In addition, the elementary schools are Title I schools, said Hoag:

*This was something that [the Title I schools] were paying attention to before the other schools. The elementary principals have been well aware of the fact that they needed to get those highly qualified teachers on board . . . and elementary ed[ucation] is not an area of shortage.*

**CHALLENGES TO ENSURING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION**

States mentioned several challenges to their ability to carry out the NCLB equitable distribution requirement, listed in *Table 6*. The following four factors were cited by more than half of the states surveyed as moderate or great challenges: insufficient staff, inadequate federal funds, insufficient guidance from ED, and inability to attract and retain qualified staff.

The states that chose “other” as their response generally cited as challenges a lack of clear and consistent guidance from ED, a tradition of local control that limited their ability to influence district decisions about teacher placement, and barriers presented by collective bargaining laws.

**STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHERS**

States and school districts mentioned several strategies they were using to ensure that low-income or minority children are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children.

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**Table 6. Number of States Reporting Challenges to Their Capacity to Ensure Equitable Distribution of Teachers and Extent of These Challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Challenge to Implementing Requirement</th>
<th>Extent of Challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a Great Extent/ Moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient numbers of staff</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate federal funds</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient guidance from the U.S. Department of Education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to attract and retain qualified staff</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate state funds</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient technological capacity</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reads: Thirty-four states reported that insufficient numbers of staff challenged their capacity to a great extent or moderately to ensure that low-income and minority children are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children.

*Source: Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, item 25A.*
State-Level Strategies
The strategies most often mentioned by states to encourage a more equitable distribution of experienced, qualified teachers in high-need schools were providing extra professional development funds to these schools (25 states), intensifying teacher retention efforts in these schools (21 states), and intensifying teacher recruitment efforts for these schools (19 states). Less common strategies are listed in table 7.

The states that did not institute these strategies at the state level for reasons of governance or other factors sometimes noted that school districts within the states were using the strategies.

District-Level Strategies
Most of the school districts surveyed did not address the question about strategies to distribute teachers more equitably because they had just one or a few schools or because they maintained that their teachers were already equitably distributed. Roughly one in five districts did not address the question about strategies to distribute teachers more equitably.

### Table 7. Number of States Using Various Strategies to Ensure an Equitable Distribution of Teachers in High-Need Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Number of States Using Strategy*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra professional development funds to high-need schools to help teachers meet highly qualified requirements</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensified retention efforts for experienced, qualified teachers to stay in high-need schools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensified recruitment efforts for experienced, qualified teachers to serve in high-need schools</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassignment of staff to ensure equitable distribution</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing bonuses for experienced, qualified teachers to move to high-need schools</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing stipends for experienced, qualified teacher to move to high-need schools</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay-for-performance agreements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher salaries for experienced, qualified teachers to move to high-need schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question is not applicable because experienced, qualified teachers are already equitably distributed among schools in the state</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Strategies listed were not instituted at the state level for reasons such as governance structures or collective bargaining agreements</td>
<td>10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reads: Twenty-five of the 49 states responding to this question reported providing extra professional development funds to high-need schools to help teachers meet highly qualified requirements and improve the distribution of experienced, qualified teachers in these schools.

*States could choose more than one strategy.

†At least 10 states provided explanations that fit this description, but because of the ambiguity of some state responses, it is possible that other states may also fall into this category.

Source: Center on Education Policy, December 2006, State Survey, Item 27.
report undertaking various strategies. The most common ones were providing extra professional development funds to high-poverty or high-minority schools, intensifying recruitment and retention efforts in these schools, and reassigning staff.

More detailed information about effective strategies emerged from case study interviews. The Wake County, North Carolina, district implemented a student assignment plan where officials make an effort to ensure that no school has an enrollment of low-income students that exceeds 40%, said Joan Kister, senior director for recruitment and retention. This plan has had “a positive impact on the distribution of highly qualified and experienced teachers,” according to Kister. Two other district-level administrators in Wake County, Mike Chappell and Maurice Boswell, added that principals in the district work very hard to create an effective instructional team. Not only do prospective teachers go through an initial recruitment and screening by a school principal, said Chappell, but the district’s human resources administrator also looks at the overall demographic makeup of the school and the possible impact of that teacher candidate’s experience and qualifications on student achievement in the school.

As detailed in box B, the Berkeley County School District in South Carolina provided teachers with funding and other kinds of support to help them obtain advanced degrees.

**Box B. Berkeley County, South Carolina, Ensures Equitable Distribution of Qualified and Experienced Teachers by Helping Teachers Earn Advanced Degrees**

A few years before the No Child Left Behind Act took effect, school district officials in Berkeley County, South Carolina took a closer look at the degrees and experience of teachers in the district’s Title I schools. (At that time, Berkeley County—a rural and suburban district north of Charleston—had eight Title I schools, but it now has seven.) By these measures, rural Title I schools had the lowest number of highly qualified staff in the district: 55% of the staff in these schools had less than a master’s degree and 40% had fewer than five years of classroom experience. Teacher turnover in these schools was also high, ranging from 37% to 72% and averaging almost 49% between school years 1997-98 and 1998-99.

To rectify this situation, the district initiated the TASSEL (Teacher Advancement for Student Success through Enhanced Learning) program, according to Dr. Sheldon Etheridge, executive director of federal programs. This program paid for tuition, books, mileage, and fees for teachers who agreed to work toward an advanced degree. In turn, participating teachers signed a contract promising to stay at their school for a certain number of years, depending on when they started or completed the program. The district also provided participants with a laptop and printer to use while they were enrolled in degree classes. The TASSEL program is supported with Title I funding.

The response to TASSEL was very positive, said Etheridge. Within three years, the district had reversed the teacher turnover rate in Title I schools, which now have teachers with higher degree levels and more experience than those in more affluent schools, he added. Through this same program, the district also paid for teachers to earn national board certification; Berkeley County now has several hundred teachers who are nationally board-certified.

The district also offered an extra $5,000 per year to nationally board-certified teachers who teach in rural Title I schools. In addition, the state of South Carolina pays teachers with national board certification an extra $7,500, “so if they’re nationally board-certified and teach at a rural Title I school, they can actually pick up $12,500 more,” Etheridge said.

The TASSEL program fulfills a second goal, that of helping teachers and paraprofessionals to meet the NCLB highly qualified requirements, Etheridge explained. Other programs used by the district to help teachers become highly qualified include a program targeted on special education teachers, an alternative certification program for teachers, and the state HOUSSS provisions.

*Source: Center on Education Policy, case study of Berkeley County School District, November, 2006.*
Criteria for Defining “Highly Qualified” Teachers

As they go about complying with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements, administrators and teachers continue to debate whether the law’s definition of a highly qualified teacher focuses on the right criteria. Recognizing that this is an important issue for NCLB reauthorization, CEP convened a roundtable meeting in November 2006 at which representatives of 23 organizations discussed possible changes to the highly qualified teacher definition. A meeting summary and links to organizations’ proposals can be found at www.cep-dc.org.

Our surveys also asked states and districts whether criteria other than those currently in the NCLB law should be considered in determining whether teachers are highly qualified. Along the same lines, we asked case study interviewees about the kinds of teacher qualifications they thought were important and how these qualifications compared with the NCLB definition of a highly qualified teacher. Below we discuss common themes that emerged from the responses.

CURRENT DEFINITION TOO NARROW

First, many states and districts thought the current definition of highly qualified, which focuses heavily on teachers’ content knowledge about the subjects they teach, is too narrow. As Karen Bierhaus of Fremont County, Wyoming, explained, high-quality teachers are “not just the highly qualified with the stamp on the certificate but also teachers that exhibit the characteristics that the school district is looking for.” As the remainder of this discussion shows, many survey respondents and case study interviewees had suggestions for expanding the definition or taking it in new directions.

NEED TO CONSIDER CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

Second, several state and district officials observed that the qualifications emphasized by the NCLB definition do not speak directly to teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom. Consequently, some officials recommended adding to or changing the highly qualified definition to include measures of classroom effectiveness.

As one district survey respondent pointed out, the NCLB definition “only measures teacher inputs, not outputs; anything that speaks to teacher effectiveness in the classroom may be a useful addition.” Several state and local officials suggested placing more emphasis on teachers’ performance. Indeed, a large proportion of district respondents cited teacher abilities, skills, effectiveness, and classroom performance as important criteria to consider in determining whether teachers are highly qualified. A state survey respondent similarly pointed to on-the-job-performance as the best measure of teacher quality, while acknowledging that this performance is difficult to measure well. Some district survey respondents suggested using student performance and classroom observations as factors in determining whether teachers were highly qualified. Another state official went a step further, maintaining that “effectiveness, rather than content knowledge, should be the only criteria” in determining whether teachers are highly qualified.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Third, many district survey participants and case study interviewees mentioned personal qualities and attitudes—such as teachers’ rapport with students, ability to work as a team, strong commitment to teaching, and love for children—as important qualifications for highly qualified teachers. “[B]eyond what is on paper, we really look [for] people who can
interact with students, peers, and parents,” said one district respondent. Another district survey respondent described the necessary qualities as follows: “We feel it is equally important to determine if the individual can manage their classroom while developing positive relationships with students and can deliver subject content in an engaging and meaningful way.”

Dr. Jill Shackelford of the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools stressed how important it is in an urban district for teachers to be able to build relationships with students:

*Part of it is credentials, but the other part is you have to be qualified to work with kids, too . . . Not every person that goes through a rubric or has the credentials is really, truly highly qualified to work in our school district . . . They need to build a relationship with kids.*

Some of these personal qualities are intangible, as Superintendent Jon Starkey of Napoleon, North Dakota, acknowledged:

*I hate to paraphrase, but when you see a good teacher, you know he or she is a good teacher. You can just see that there is something about the way they interact with people and the care and attention that they give them.*

**DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENTIATION**

Several interviewees proposed that highly qualified teachers must be able to effectively teach children from diverse backgrounds and with different needs. Joan Kister from Wake County, North Carolina, elaborated on why this skill is so important in a large, heterogeneous district:

*[W]e’re very different from some parts of the country that might have a more homogeneous population of students. You go into any classroom and you might have a child that just moved from Manhattan in New York sitting next to somebody whose family has been growing tobacco in North Carolina for decades. We have students from all kinds of states and nationalities. We have a major university right in downtown Raleigh, N.C. State University, with a lot of international staff. And so we truly have a melting pot, and we need teachers who can relate to and be very accepting of a wide variety of children.*

To teach students from diverse backgrounds effectively, teachers must understand the values and culture of the particular community in which they teach, said Stewart McDonald of Kodiak Island, Alaska. Teachers with this ability can draw from community resources and can better relate to the needs of their students. McDonald provided the following definition of a highly qualified teacher:

*It’s teachers who understand community, what’s relevant to that community, what’s relevant to a future that many of those students and families may not even know is out there . . . Be able to join in with what’s already working well within that community and use what’s there and move forward, rather than just show up and say, “Okay, I’m here to save you and do it this way.”*

Dr Sheldon Etheridge of Berkeley County spoke more generally about the need for teachers who can differentiate instruction to meet students’ individual needs:

*In order to be a good high school math student, you need to be able to find the solution to a problem. In order to be a good high school math teacher, you need to be able to find 30 solutions to a problem because every child in that classroom thinks differently, learns differently, and retains knowledge differently, and you need to be able to reach and communicate with each and every one of them on a different level . . .*
Several district interviewees also cited the teacher’s ability to use data to inform and differentiate instruction as a very important teacher qualification. Teachers “need to be willing to assess the data that comes before them,” said Shelly Aubuchon of the Hermitage R-IV school district in Missouri. “We have to have people who are willing to come back and be reflective about their practice and about what they’ve done and be willing to have discussions with others.”

OTHER QUALITIES

Stewart McDonald of Kodiak Island, Alaska, said the district values a teacher who is well versed in action research and formative assessment. According to McDonald, this means that teachers should understand how to select an appropriate formative assessment for their students, use the assessment frequently, connect the assessment with daily instruction, analyze the assessment results, and then use the findings to select a different “action” or teaching method, if appropriate, to produce better results with these students. He added that the district values a teacher “who knows how to teach students how to measure their own growth every day and continue to answer the questions about their learning through an assess, analyze, and act cycle.” Moreover, McDonald said:

We want somebody who’s going to stay with those students, help those students study their own learning—teach the students how to [understand their own learning]. And you don’t leave until everybody recognizes that they have impact and can change the rate in which they are learning and address it.

Other criteria mentioned by district survey respondents for the definition of a highly qualified teacher include experience (particularly with specific types of students), level of education, and national board certification.

NCLB DEFINITION AND STATE POLICIES

A handful of states highlighted the importance of the HOUSSE provisions, particularly for teachers who come back to the profession. Further, some states contended that the HOUSSE procedures should be made a permanent part of the regulation.

A few other states argued that existing state certification requirements should be enough to meet NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirements. “[T]eacher qualifications should be the business of the state, not the federal government,” noted one survey participant.

Conclusion

Most school districts reported that they are in compliance with the requirement for all of their teachers to be “highly qualified,” although some districts are having problems meeting the requirement for certain types of teachers. Despite this general compliance, educators expressed skepticism that the highly qualified teacher requirements have impacted teacher effectiveness or made much difference in raising student achievement. Many state and district officials felt the NCLB definition of a highly qualified teacher was too narrowly focused on content knowledge and suggested revising the definition to take into account other attributes such as classroom performance and the ability to relate to students.
References


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