Center on Education Policy, 2007

Implementing the No Child Left Behind teacher requirements

Focus

Examines how states and school districts have carried out the NCLB teacher requirements; part of a comprehensive, multiyear study of NCLB implementation.

Methodology

Collected data through an annual survey of 50 states; an annual, nationally representative survey of 349 responding school districts; case study interviews with local administrators in 17 school districts; and two roundtables with education association representatives.

Major Findings

- **Minimal impact on achievement.** Fifty-six percent of states and 66% of districts responding to CEP’s surveys reported that the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have had minimal or no impact on student achievement. (The highly qualified teacher requirements of NCLB essentially require teachers to demonstrate knowledge in the subjects they teach by holding a degree in their subject, completing more coursework, or other means.) Only 6% of states and 4% of districts indicated that the requirements have improved achievement to a great extent.

- **Impact on teacher effectiveness.** The NCLB teacher quality requirements have had minimal or no impact on teacher effectiveness, according to 38% of states and 74% of districts responding to CEP’s surveys. Only 8% of states and 6% of districts said these requirements have improved teacher effectiveness to a great extent.

- **Compliance.** As of late fall and winter of 2006-07, 66% of school districts reported they were in full compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements, and 17% expected to achieve full compliance by the end of that school year. But only three states reported being in full compliance as of fall/winter 2006-07; 14 more states expected to reach full compliance by the end of that school year. However, 22% of states and 6% of districts doubted they would ever meet the requirement for all of their teachers to be highly qualified according to the NCLB definition.

- **Groups presenting challenges.** Eighty-three percent of states and 47% of districts reported having problems complying with the highly qualified requirements for special education teachers. Secondary school science and math were another group of teachers that presented a compliance problem for states and districts.

- **Recruitment strategies.** Induction and mentoring programs and content-driven professional development were the most common recruitment and retention strategies districts reported using to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Other strategies used included enhanced outreach, course tuition assistance, assistance in preparation for state licensure, and certification exams.

- **Equitable distribution.** Only five states reported that the distribution of experienced, well-qualified teachers in high-poverty and high-minority-enrollment schools had become more equitable “to a great extent,” while 17 states said this distribution had become somewhat more equitable, and 17 other states reported minimal change. 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 existed in their district based on their schools’ poverty or minority enrollments. Still, some districts did face challenges in ensuring an equitable distribution of teachers to these schools.

- "Highly qualified” definition. Many state and district officials thought the definition of a highly qualified teacher was too narrowly focused on content knowledge. Many suggested revising the definition to take into account teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom and other qualities essential to a good teacher.

Where to Obtain

http://www.cep-dc.org
Focus

Comprehensive study that describes the federal, state, and local implementation and impact of various provisions of NCLB during school years 2004-05 and 2005-06. Summarized below are the study’s findings about teacher requirements.

Methodology

Collected data through a survey of all 50 states, a nationally representative survey of 299 school districts, case studies of 38 geographically diverse districts and 42 schools, three national forums, and six special analyses of critical issues in implementing NCLB.

Major Findings

- **Teacher qualifications.** At the time of the study in 2005-06, school districts were on their way to meeting the highly qualified teacher requirements of NCLB. Of the districts surveyed, 88% expected to meet the law’s original deadline for all teachers of core academic subjects to be highly qualified by the end of school year 2005-06.

- **Skepticism about effects.** Only 9% of state respondents and 8% of district respondents said they believed the NCLB teacher quality requirements have improved the quality of teaching to a great extent. Roughly a third of both state and district respondents said they believed the requirements have had some impact, but 59% of district respondents said the requirements have had little or no impact.

- **Urban and rural differences.** The proportion of districts that reported being on track to have all of their academic teachers highly qualified by the end of school year 2005-06 was similarly high across urban, suburban, and rural districts. In contrast to previous years’ data, CEP found no significant difference in the percentage of high-minority-enrollment districts and lower-minority-enrollment districts reporting that all their teachers were highly qualified. Still, some urban districts participating in CEP’s case studies said they had trouble hiring and keeping highly qualified teachers.

- **Challenges for certain types of teachers.** Despite overall progress, states and districts reported having difficulty in meeting the highly qualified requirements for some teachers, such as special education teachers, high school math and science teachers, or teachers in rural areas who teach multiple subjects.

- **NCLB paraprofessional requirements.** More than 80% of school districts reported that their Title I paraprofessionals would meet the NCLB qualifications requirements by the end of school year 2005-06. According to CEP’s case studies, most paraprofessionals who were not highly qualified met the criteria by passing a competency test rather than getting a degree.

Where to Obtain

http://www.cep-dc.org
Focus

Comprehensive study that describes the federal, state, and local implementation and impact of various provisions of NCLB during school years 2003-04 and 2004-05. Summarized below are the study’s findings about teacher requirements.

Methodology

Collected data through a survey of 49 states, a nationally representative survey of 314 school districts, case studies of 36 geographically diverse districts and 37 schools, three national forums, and four special analyses of critical issues in implementing NCLB.

Major Findings

- **Highly qualified status and disparities.** At the time of the study in 2004-05, most current teachers already met the NCLB criteria for being “highly qualified,” according to the states and school districts surveyed. School districts with large numbers or percentages of poor and minority students had the largest proportions of teachers who were not highly qualified in NCLB terms.

- **Impediments to full compliance.** States and districts reported problems with ensuring that special education teachers, middle school teachers, and teachers in rural areas met the law’s requirements, even after the U.S. Department of Education granted additional flexibility in these areas in 2003-04. States also reported problems implementing the data systems necessary to track teacher qualifications.

- **Professional development.** NCLB brought greater focus to districts’ professional development efforts—for example, by encouraging the use of literacy “coaches” and school support teams.

- **Paraprofessionals.** At the time of the study in 2004-05, most Title I paraprofessionals were already highly qualified as defined by NCLB, according to the states and school districts surveyed. Districts were using a variety of strategies to help Title I paraprofessionals become highly qualified—from providing study courses aimed at helping paraprofessionals pass competency tests to paying for paraprofessionals to take college courses—but significant challenges remained for some paraprofessionals.

Where to Obtain

http://www.cep-dc.org
Education Trust, 2006

Missing the mark: An Education Trust analysis of teacher-equity plans

Focus

Describes the plans states were required to submit by July 2006 under NCLB to remedy inequities in the assignment of inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers to schools serving poor and minority children.

Methodology

Examined teacher-equity plans from all states and D.C. submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Major Findings

- **Insufficient information.** Most states failed to follow ED instructions and failed to analyze inequities in a way that would tell the public whether children in poverty and children of color were getting a fair share of teaching talent. For example, only 10 states appropriately analyzed whether minority students were taught disproportionately by teachers who were not highly qualified. Only four states looked at whether poor students were taught disproportionately by inexperienced teachers. Just three states looked at all four types of inequities required by ED.

- **Inadequate plans.** Most states failed to propose strong plans for addressing inequities. For example, more than half the states asserted that they would comply with their equity obligations by focusing exclusively on compliance with the NCLB highly qualified teacher provisions, which would ignore inequality in the distribution of inexperienced teachers. Almost no states submitted equity plans that proposed meaningful, measurable goals for achieving fairness in the distribution of teacher talent. Three states had not analyzed their data or come up with any equity plans at all as of July 2006.

- **Flawed data.** Some states used flawed data analysis to conclude that no inequities existed in teacher assignments.

- **State confusion.** States seemed confused about what they were supposed to do to prepare the equity plans. Some of this can be attributed to a lack of attention from ED to the teacher-equity plan provisions of NCLB.

- **Overall conclusion.** “[T]he overwhelming majority of states should be required to start over, with clearer guidance and more assistance from the Department of Education, to get this process moving in the right direction.”

Where to Obtain

Government Accountability Office, 2005

No Child Left Behind Act: Improved accessibility to Education’s information could help states further implement teacher qualification requirements

Focus

Examines the status of state efforts to meet the NCLB teacher qualifications and the use of Title II teacher improvement funds in selected districts. Also looks at how the U.S. Department of Education monitors and assists states in implementing these requirements.

Methodology

Analyzed teacher qualifications data submitted to ED by 47 states, conducted site visits to 6 diverse states, visited 11 high-need school districts across these states, and interviewed national experts and ED officials. The work was conducted in 2004-05.

Major Findings

- **State efforts to comply.** In the 47 states with data, the majority of core academic classes were taught by teachers who met NCLB requirements during school year 2003-04. States had improved their ability to track and report the percentage of core academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers, but the quality and precision of these data were limited. Five of the 6 states visited allowed veteran teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency through HOUSSE (high objective uniform state standard of evaluation). State and district officials anticipated challenges in meeting the highly qualified requirements for teachers of multiple subjects.

- **Uses of Title II funds.** All 11 districts studied used Title II funds for professional development, and most used Title II funds to reduce class size. Some districts reported shifting funds away from class size reduction to initiatives designed to improve teachers’ subject matter knowledge and instructional skills. The majority of districts indicated that NCLB had led to improvements in the kinds of professional development funded with Title II.

- **Targeting of Title II.** All 11 districts reported considering student achievement data and targeting Title II funds to improve instruction in the subjects in which students were lagging behind. In the 11 districts studied, few efforts funded with Title II targeted specific groups of teachers, such as teachers in high-poverty schools.

- **Teacher funds.** Title II funds constituted a small proportion of total funds districts could use for teacher improvement; all districts visited used several other sources to support these programs.

- **ED role.** In monitoring the NCLB teacher requirements, ED found several areas of concern, such as states not ensuring that newly hired teachers met the requirements. ED’s multiple types of assistance included professional development for teachers and technical assistance to state officials. Officials from most states and districts visited said they were unaware of some ED resources about the teacher requirements or had difficulty locating them on ED’s Web site.

Where to Obtain

Focus

Describes how school districts used federal funds for teacher quality activities under Title II, Part A in school year 2007-08.

Methodology

Conducted a survey in 2007-08, stratified by district size and level of poverty, of a nationally representative sample of 800 school districts.

Major Findings

- **More funds for large and low-income districts.** About 97% of all districts received Title II-A funding for school year 2007-08. Large districts (with 10,000 or more students) received 66% of the total Title II-A allocation; small districts (with fewer than 1,000 students) received 5% percent. The highest-poverty districts received 61% of the total allocation; the lowest-poverty districts received 8%.

- **Professional development and class size reduction.** In 2007-08, half (50%) of Title II-A funds was used for professional development activities for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators, and 27% was used to hire highly qualified teachers to reduce class size. These figures represent an increase in funds for professional development (up from 27% in 2002-03) and a decrease for class size reduction (down from 57% in 2002-03). Viewed another way, about 70% of districts used Title II-A funds for teacher professional development, and 50% used the funds for class size reduction.

- **Differences in uses by district poverty.** In 2007-08, the highest-poverty and lowest-poverty districts allocated more Title II-A funds for teacher professional development than for class size reduction, while the opposite was true for districts with medium-low and medium-high poverty.

- **Other uses.** About 4% of Title II-A funds was spent on strategies to help schools recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, principals and specialists, such as scholarships, loan forgiveness, signing bonuses, or differential teacher pay. About 6% was used to promote professional growth and reward quality teaching, such as mentoring, induction, or exemplary teacher programs.

- **Transferability.** About 1% of Title II-A funds was combined with other federal program funds under the Rural Education Achievement Program flexibility provisions of NCLB, and 3% was transferred to another title of ESEA through the NCLB funding transferability provisions. Most commonly, Title II-A funds were transferred to Titles I and V.

- **Highly qualified teachers.** Districts reported that 96% of the 3.2 million teachers who taught in the core academic content areas were highly qualified in 2007-08 according to NCLB requirements.

- **Subjects for professional development.** The majority of Title II-A funds for teacher professional development were allocated to the subject areas of science (50%), math (21%), and reading (16%). About 3% was allocated to other academic
subjects—most often fine arts and foreign languages. About 4% was spent on professional development in other non-academic topics, such as classroom management strategies, use of assessments, and curriculum development.

- **Participation in professional development.** About 95% of teachers in the core academic content areas received professional development in 2007-08.

- **Modes of professional development.** Common modes of professional development included full-day workshops during the school day (more than 4.7 million teachers participated); daily learning team sessions (more than 1.9 million teachers); one-day workshops outside of the school day (more than 1.9 million teachers); and multi-day workshops (more than 1 million teachers).

**Where to Obtain**

Focus

Comprehensive study that describes the progress of states, districts, and schools through school year 2004–05 in implementing key provisions of Title I. Summarized below are the study’s findings about requirements for teachers, paraprofessionals, and professional development.

Methodology

Drew on data from a set of implementation studies by the U.S. Department of Education. Data for these studies came from surveys conducted in a nationally representative sample of school districts, other state and local surveys, state performance reports, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Major Findings

- **Tests for new teachers.** Most states (41) were meeting the requirement to test new teachers’ content knowledge by using the Praxis II subject assessments developed by the Educational Testing Service. States varied considerably in the scores they required teachers to obtain on these exams to be certified to teach or to be deemed highly qualified under NCLB. For example, on the Praxis II Mathematics Content Knowledge assessment, used by 35 states, 10 states set their cut scores below the 25th percentile, while one state set its cut score at the 75th percentile.

- **HOUSSE.** As of November 2006, all states allowed veteran teachers to demonstrate their subject-matter competency through a high objective uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE). The most common type of HOUSSE option allowed teachers to earn points toward highly qualified status retroactively for such things as successful completion of certain college courses or years of teaching experience. Four states allowed teachers to earn some points for evidence of improved student achievement.

- **Highly qualified status.** According to state-reported data for 50 states, 91% of classes were taught by highly qualified teachers in 2004-05. Principal and teacher reports provided somewhat lower estimates of the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers, but this is because a sizeable percentage did not know their highly qualified status. Special education teachers and secondary mathematics teachers were more likely to report that they were not highly qualified under NCLB than were general elementary teachers and secondary English teachers.

- **Unequal distribution of highly qualified teachers.** Students in schools that were identified for NCLB improvement were more likely to be taught by teachers who said they were not highly qualified than were students in non-identified schools. Schools with high concentrations of poor and minority students had more teachers who were not highly qualified than other schools did. In high-poverty schools, for example, 5% of elementary teachers and 12% of secondary English and math teachers reported in 2004-05 that they were not highly qualified under NCLB, compared with 1% in low-poverty elementary schools and 3% in low-poverty secondary schools.

- **Unequal distribution of experienced and out-of-field teachers.** Even among teachers who said they were highly qualified under NCLB, those in high-poverty schools had less experience and were more likely to be teaching out-of-field than
their peers in low-poverty schools. Twelve percent of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools had fewer than three years’ teaching experience, compared with 5% of highly qualified teachers in low-poverty schools. Similarly, 41% of highly qualified secondary English and mathematics teachers in high-poverty schools had a degree in the field they taught, compared with 52% in low-poverty schools.

- **Professional development.** Most teachers reported receiving some professional development in reading and mathematics content and instructional strategies, but less than one-quarter participated in such training for more than 24 hours over the 2003-04 school year and summer. For example, 90% of elementary teachers participated in at least one hour of professional development focused on instructional strategies for teaching reading, but only 20% participated for more than 24 hours over the 2003-04 school year and summer. Teachers in high-poverty schools were more likely to participate in professional development focused on reading and mathematics than were teachers in low-poverty schools. For example, 53% of secondary English teachers in high-poverty schools reported participating in professional development focused on in-depth study of reading or English, compared with 36% of their colleagues in low-poverty schools.

- **Title I paraprofessionals.** According to principal reports, 63% of Title I instructional aides had been determined to meet NCLB qualification requirements as of school year 2004-05. However, 87% of Title I instructional aides indicated that they had at least two years of college (or an associate’s degree) or had passed a paraprofessional assessment. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of Title I instructional aides reported that, of the time that they spent tutoring or working with students in a classroom, a teacher was present only half or less of this time.

- **Decreased reliance on paraprofessionals.** The share of Title I-funded district and school staff who were aides declined from 47% in 1997-98 to 32% in 2004-05, while the share who were teachers rose from 45% to 55%.

**Where to Obtain**


State and local implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. Volume II—Teacher quality under NCLB: interim report

Focus

Describes the progress states, districts, and schools had made implementing the teacher and paraprofessional qualification provisions of NCLB through 2004–05.

Methodology

Analyzed data from state documents; telephone interviews with state officials in 50 states, Puerto Rico, and D.C.; a survey of a nationally representative sample of 300 districts and 1,483 elementary, middle, and high schools within those districts; and surveys of 4,772 elementary teachers, 2,081 secondary English or language arts teachers, 1,938 secondary math teachers, 1,408 special education teachers, 950 Title I paraprofessionals, 1,483 principals, and 300 district administrators.

Main Findings

- **Compliance.** By 2004-05, about three-quarters of teachers reported they were considered highly qualified under NCLB for the classes they taught. Nearly one-quarter did not know their status, and 4% reported they were not highly qualified.

- **State variation.** State policies for meeting the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements varied greatly, both in the passing scores that new teachers had to meet to demonstrate content knowledge on tests and the extent to which state HOUSSE policies gave more weight to teachers’ prior years of experience than to more direct measures of content knowledge and teaching performance.

- **Teachers not highly qualified.** The percentage of teachers who were not highly qualified under NCLB was higher for special education teachers, teachers of English language learners, and middle school teachers, as well as teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools. Teachers in high-poverty schools had less experience and were less likely to have a degree in the subject they taught.

- **Professional development.** Although nearly all teachers reported taking part in content-focused professional development related to teaching reading or mathematics, a relatively small proportion participated in such learning opportunities for an extended period of time.

- **Paraprofessionals.** About two-thirds of instructional paraprofessionals were considered qualified under NCLB, but nearly one-third did not know their status or did not respond to the study questions. Most paraprofessionals reported working under the direct supervision of a teacher, but some Title I instructional paraprofessionals reported working with students on their own without close supervision from a teacher.

Where to Obtain