

Results in Brief: State Efforts to Promote Equitable Access to Effective Teachers

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In recent years, federal education programs and policies have increasingly focused on teacher quality as a means for closing achievement gaps, in part by directing states to measure teacher qualifications and performance and to promote equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools within a district. Federal policy now encourages annual evaluation of teachers using measures of both student achievement growth and teacher practice among at least three performance levels, in contrast to two-level rating systems in which “satisfactory” ratings are often provided to nearly all teachers. This report provides a broad overview of state efforts, as of the 2011–12 school year, to monitor equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools; develop and adopt multiple measures of teacher performance to rate teachers among at least three performance levels; and implement targeted strategies for promoting equitable access to qualified and effective teachers. This report uses the following definitions: 1) *measures of teacher qualifications* include “highly qualified teacher” (HQT) status, as defined in the 2001 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*, as well as years of teaching experience; 2) *measures of teacher performance* include measures of student achievement growth and/or teacher practice; and 3) *multiple measures of teacher performance* refer to measures of both student achievement growth and teacher practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What measures did states use to monitor equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools?
2. To what extent were states developing or using multiple measures of teacher performance to rate teachers among at least three performance levels?
3. What strategies did states use to promote equitable access to qualified and effective teachers in schools serving high proportions of poor and/or minority students?

STUDY DESIGN

This report is based on telephone interviews with officials in state education agencies (SEAs) in all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Study staff also reviewed extant sources including state plans for promoting equitable access to qualified and effective teachers, Consolidated State Performance Reports, reports from federal monitoring visits, and information on state websites.

Interviews with state officials took place between August 2011 and January 2012. These interviews covered state efforts that were underway during that school year only, and prior to state implementation of the fall 2011 *ESEA* Flexibility initiative. The study did not assess the effectiveness or quality of the state efforts described by the respondents, nor did it collect data on planned or anticipated activities for future years. The recent state equity plans submitted in 2015 under the “Excellent Educators for All” initiative – and the policies they reflect – are also beyond the scope of this report.

Highlights

- In 2011–12, states most commonly monitored equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools using measures of teacher qualifications.
- Four states reported using measures of teacher performance — student achievement growth and/or measures of teacher practice — to monitor equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools, and nine states used teacher performance measures to monitor the quality of the teacher workforce overall.
- In two of the four states that reported using teacher performance measures to monitor equitable access among schools, officials reported seeing larger inequities than were previously detected using measures of teacher qualifications alone.
- Six states reported that they had adopted multiple measures of teacher performance and were using them to rate teachers among at least three performance levels in 2011–12, and 38 states indicated that they were in the process of developing such measures.
- Offering monetary incentives was the most common strategy that states reported using in disadvantaged schools to promote equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools (24 states).
- Other state-reported strategies that were directed specifically at disadvantaged schools for promoting equitable access were specialized professional development (14 states) and teacher recruitment and preparation programs (14 states).

MONITORING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALIFIED AND EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AMONG SCHOOLS

State plans required under *ESEA* Section 1111(b)(8)(C) must include a description of the steps that the state will take to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. In its implementation of this provision of the law, the Department asked each state to include a written “equity plan” as part of the state’s 2006 revised state plan.

In 2011–12, states most commonly monitored equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools using measures of teacher qualifications, and a few states reported using measures of teacher performance for this purpose.

- All states monitored equitable access to qualified and effective teachers who were designated as highly qualified under *ESEA*. Twenty-two states reported monitoring equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools using a measure of teacher experience.
- Four states reported using at least one performance measure to monitor equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools; two of these states were using multiple measures of teacher performance for this purpose.

Officials from two of the four states using at least one teacher performance measure to monitor equitable access to qualified and effective teachers among schools reported seeing larger inequities in access among schools based on those measures than were previously detected using measures of teacher qualifications alone.

Officials from 37 states reported their state had updated its equity plan at least once since the plan was first approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

DEVELOPING MULTIPLE MEASURES OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Six states reported that they had adopted multiple measures of teacher performance to rate teachers among at least three performance levels, and 38 states indicated that they were in the process of developing such measures.

- Reasons provided by these officials included a desire to improve on existing practices for assessing teacher quality (38 states), align state-level policies for evaluating teachers with federal program guidance (19 states), or make their state more competitive for a federal grant (19 states).
- Officials from nine of the 19 states that indicated a desire to align state practice with federal programs also

indicated a desire to make their state more competitive for a federal competitive grant.

In eight states, respondents reported no efforts in 2011–12 to develop and adopt measures of teacher performance based on student achievement growth.

- Reasons provided by these officials included state laws prohibiting the use of such measures (two states); a history of strong local control over teacher evaluation systems (one state); lack of a data system that linked student data with teacher data (one state); a desire to further explore the validity of summative teacher performance measures (two states); or a decision to focus state activities in 2011–12 on developing measures of teacher practice (two states).
- Among the eight states that were not developing measures of teacher performance based on student achievement growth, officials from four states reported that their state had, however, adopted or was piloting measures of teacher performance based on teacher practice.

STATE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALIFIED AND EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Overall, 30 states reported using at least one of three strategies to promote equitable access in high-need schools: monetary incentives, professional development, or recruitment and preparation programs.

Twenty-four states reported using monetary incentives to promote equitable access to qualified and effective teachers in schools serving high proportions of poor and/or minority students.

- Thirteen of these states offered monetary incentives to teachers who met specific qualifications (e.g., National Board Certification, certification in a specific subject area, number of endorsements, or years of experience).
- Seven offered incentives to teachers rated effective on the basis of teacher performance and four used a combination of teacher performance and teacher qualification measures.

Twenty states reported using other strategies for promoting equitable access, including specialized professional development (14 states) and/or teacher recruitment and preparation programs (14 states).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The complete report is available online at www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html.