

What Every Governor Needs to Know: The “Top Ten” on Teacher and Teaching Quality

Given the new research, the public opinion polls, and actions of many policymakers, it is safe to say that we have a clear consensus on the need to invest much more in teachers and teaching if we are going to dramatically improve public schooling in America. Below is a list of the most important messages on teacher and teaching quality revealing important research findings, critical issues, and promising trends.

1. **Research over the last decade has consistently shown the primary importance of a teacher’s knowledge and skill in predicting students’ achievement**¹ — e.g., teacher quality is a better investment than many other options, including class size reduction.²
2. **The essential characteristics of effective teachers include subject matter (“what you know”) and specific teaching skills (“how you teach that knowledge to a group of diverse learners”).** The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards uses an exemplary process to measure both knowledge *and* skills. Most states have some policy recognizing Board certification, but few fully utilize these accomplished teachers.
3. **Our nation’s most disadvantaged students are more likely to be taught by teachers who are not even minimally qualified** — e.g., those with a standard license that reflects possession of basic content knowledge and teaching skills. Low-performing, often high-poverty, schools cannot retain a critical mass of veteran, well prepared teachers, leaving children in these schools to face a revolving door of substandard, inexperienced teachers.³
4. **The nation faces serious teacher shortages that can be alleviated in part by raising and targeting salaries, lowering new teacher turnover (by investing in quality induction programs), and creating specialized recruitment programs.** For example, while thirty-five states cite special education as a top shortage area, just four have incentive programs working specifically to attract teachers of disabled children.⁴
5. **Higher teacher pay is important for teacher recruitment, but little evidence exists that signing bonuses alone will motivate teachers to go teach in our nation’s hardest-to-staff schools.** Better working conditions, effective principal leadership, and special preparation for working with challenging students are key ingredients in a more comprehensive and effective recipe for staffing our toughest schools.⁵
6. **Alternative routes designed to attract “mid-career” teachers are a promising source of new teachers, but research has shown that they are more likely to stay if they have better training before they enter classrooms and more support on the job.**⁶
7. **Current basic skills and subject matter tests for new teachers are insufficient to assess whether or not someone is highly qualified.** To assess beginning teachers, states use over 600 different teacher tests, which are designed at best to measure a minimum level of basic skills and content knowledge.⁷ The best new teacher accountability systems contain more than just a single test. Connecticut has a model program in which novice teachers must pass a set of basic, content, and teaching performance assessments. The state’s teacher tests, which mirror somewhat how new architects are assessed and licensed, cost the state

about \$300 per candidate but are seen as a cost-effective tool given the state's lower new teacher turnover rate and higher student achievement.⁸

8. **Well-crafted induction programs can improve teaching quality, help staunch the flow of novice teachers from the profession, and, in doing so, decrease the overall cost of recruiting, preparing, and developing teachers.**⁹ New teachers who participate in an induction program are two times more likely to remain in teaching.¹⁰ Texas' annual teacher turnover of 15.5% costs the state anywhere from \$329 million to \$2.1 billion, depending on the cost model used.¹¹
9. **Current teachers have insufficient preparation and professional development in how to use student test data to improve learning, to develop and assess standards-based lessons consistent with more rigorous state accountability systems, and to work effectively with diverse students.** For example, over 40% of our nation's teachers teach children with limited English proficiency (LEP), yet only 12% have had even eight hours of professional development to work with LEP students over the last three years.¹²
10. **State higher education and K-12 agencies do not have the internal capacity to assemble and report accurate data on teacher and teaching quality** — e.g., information on turnover, out-of-field teaching, and access to effective professional development — as defined by the reauthorized ESEA. States need to evaluate what they know about quality teaching and how it is conveyed to policymakers, practitioners and the community at large.

¹ Sanders, W. and Rivers, J.C. (1996, November). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.

² Hedges, L.V. and Greenwald, R. (1996). Have times changed? The relation between school resources and student performance. In G. Burtless (ed.), *Does money matter? The effect of school resources on student achievement and adult success* (pp. 74-92). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

³ Ingersoll, R. (2002). *Out-of-field teaching, educational inequality, and the organization of schools: An exploratory analysis*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington; Jerald, C. (2002). *All talk, no action: Putting an end to out-of-field teaching*. Washington: The Education Trust.

⁴ Prince, Cynthia. (2002, June). *Higher pay in hard-to-staff schools: The case for financial incentives*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

⁵ Hanushek, E., Kain, J., and Rivkin, S. (2001). *Eight facts about teacher pay and teacher retention in Texas public schools*. Working paper 8599 for the National Bureau of Economic Research (www.nber.org/papers/w8599). Cambridge, MA: NBER; North Carolina Association of Educators. (1999). *Getting it right: Improving the ABC's of North Carolina*, a statewide survey of 14,657 teachers.

⁶ Andrew, M. (1990). The differences between graduates of four-year and five-year teacher preparation programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 41, 45-51; Andrew, M. and Schwab, R.L. (1995). Has reform in teacher education influenced teacher performance? An outcome assessment of graduates of eleven teacher education programs. *Action in Teacher Education*, 17, 43-53; Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Solving the dilemmas of teacher supply, demand, and standards*. New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future; Darling-Hammond, L., Berry, B., and Thoreson, A. (2001, Spring). Does teacher certification matter? Evaluating the evidence. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(1), 57-77; Gomez, D. L. and Grobe, R. P. (1990, April). *Three years of alternative certification in Dallas: Where are we?* Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA.

⁷ National Research Council. (2001). *Testing teacher candidates: The role of licensure tests in improving teacher quality*. Committee on Assessment and Teacher Quality. Mitchell, K.J., Robinson, D.Z. Plake, B.S., and Knowles, K.T., editors. Board on Testing and Assessment, Center for Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁸ Darling-Hammond, L., Berry, B., and Wilson, S. (2001, February). *A case of successful teaching policy: Connecticut's long-term efforts to improve teaching and learning*. University of Washington: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

⁹ Humphrey, D. C., Adelman, N., Esch, C., Riehl, L. M., Shields, P. M., & Tiffany, J. (2000, September). *Preparing and supporting new teachers: A literature review*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

¹⁰ National Center for Education Statistics. (2000). *Progress through the teacher pipeline: 1992-93 college graduates and elementary/secondary school teaching as of 1997*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

¹¹ Texas Center for Educational Research. (2000). *The cost of teacher turnover*. Austin, TX: Author.

¹² Gruber, K.J., Wiley, S.D., Broughman, S.P., Strizek, G.A., and Burian-Fitzgerald, M. (2002). *Schools and staffing survey, 1999-2000: Overview of the data for public, private, public charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs elementary and secondary schools*. NCES 2002-313. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.



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