

The Key to Improving Student Achievement: Ensuring Educator Quality

March 7, 2008

A Dialogue with Local and National
Thought Partners



Status of Teacher Quality Initiatives

- 2008 Education Week “Quality Counts” report gives DC [state] a **D-** on its policies related to the teaching profession.
- National Council on Teacher Quality’s (NCTQ) 2007 yearbook says DC’s certification and licensing policies are “**languishing,**” and that “overall, **[DC] lags behind** other states in the strengths of its teacher policies.”

Status of Teacher Quality Initiatives

- DC had the **lowest rate (53%)** of core classes taught by Highly Qualified Teachers **in the nation** for the 2005-2006 school year.
- DCPS has **numerous critical shortage areas** (including middle school, special education, mathematics, and science) not being filled by current certification routes.

Why Teacher Quality Matters

State Achievement Results from the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS)

- State DC CAS Results – **Reading**

- Reading proficiency percentages increased slightly statewide
- Largest gains were achieved by the DC PCSB schools
- At the elementary level, **none** of the “LEAs” scored above the 2007 AYP target
- At the secondary level, only the DC PCSB schools scored above the AYP target
- About 5% of the students statewide scored at the “advanced” level
- About 20% scored at the “below basic” level

Percentages of Student Scoring at or above the Proficient Level for SY 2006/SY 2007

	2005-2006	2006-2007	Change
Elementary	37.2	38.2	+1.0
Secondary	32.3	34.8	+2.5

- State DC CAS Results – **Mathematics**

- Mathematics proficiency increased significantly statewide, at both levels
- Largest gains were achieved by the DC PCSB schools
- At the elementary level, **none** of the “LEAs” scored above the 2007 AYP target
- At the secondary level, only the DC PCSB schools scored above the AYP target
- About 5% of the students statewide scored at the “advanced” level
- About 30% scored at the “below basic” level

Percentages of Student Scoring at or above the Proficient Level for SY 2006/SY 2007

	2005-2006	2006-2007	Change
Elementary	26.8	30.5	+3.7
Secondary	26.3	32.9	+6.6 ₄

Why Teacher Quality Matters

DC CAS Results – Race and Ethnicity

Reading

- White/non-Hispanic students scored significantly higher than students from the other subgroups at both the elementary and secondary levels
- The Asian/Pacific Islanders students achieved the second highest reading scores at both the elementary and secondary levels
- At the elementary level, less than one-half of the Hispanic students scored at the proficient or above levels (44%) and about one-third of the black/non-Hispanic students scored at the proficient or above levels
- The same general pattern was obtained at the secondary level, except that the percentage of Hispanic students achieving proficiency is lower at the secondary level

	2005-2006 Percentage of Secondary Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level	2006-2007 Percentage of Secondary Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level
Asian/Pacific Islander	56.3	59.9
Black/Non-Hispanic	29.6	32.2
Hispanic	38.6	34.7
White/Non-Hispanic	82.5	92.6

Why Teacher Quality Matters

“... having a top-quartile teacher four years in a row would be enough to close the black-white test score gap.”

Gordon, Kane, Staiger, “Identifying Effective Teachers using Performance on the Job,” April, 2006

Discussion

- Do we have an overall lack of teacher quality in the District of Columbia?
- How do we know?
- Does our current data give us a full picture of our teacher quality?

Consider: Do our highly qualified teacher and teacher certification systems help us to improve teacher quality?

Immediate Challenge

Highly qualified teacher definition

In the current definition, teachers must:

- Possess a Bachelor of Arts degree
 - Demonstrate subject matter proficiency in the subject in which he or she teaches
 - Hold a state license in the subject in which he or she teaches
- This definition is stricter than the U.S. Department of Education’s definition
 - We are unnecessarily keeping some of our teachers from receiving “highly qualified” status without improving teacher quality

Where are we heading?

To revise our Highly Qualified definition so that it is fully aligned with the NCLB definition, and reads as follows:

- 1) Must have Bachelor's degree, **AND**
 - 2) Must have full state certification that has not been waived on a temporary basis, **AND**
 - 3) **Elementary teachers:**
 - pass an elementary content test, **OR**
 - Veteran teachers have the option to achieve HQ status via a HOUSSE process
- Secondary teachers:**
- pass the appropriate content area test, **OR**
 - have a major or its equivalent in the content area, **OR**
 - have an advanced degree in the content area, **OR**
 - have National Board Certification in the content area, **OR**
 - achieve HQ status via the HOUSSE process

Core Issues

Traditional certification paths

- Supply insufficient numbers of teachers, especially in critical shortage areas
- Aren't linked to student performance outcomes in the first few years of teaching

Core Issues

Alternative certification paths

According to NCTQ, “DC does not currently provide a genuine alternate route into the teaching profession... Its alternate routes are too similar to traditional programs.”

- No explicit alternative certification regulations in DC
- In practice, alternative path reverts to traditional, highly limiting subject matter regulations

Core Issues

Alternative certification paths

- No consistent expectations (e.g. GPA) for entry into an alternative program
- Current alternative teacher preparation program requirements range from 18 to 39 credits
- Not linked to student performance outcomes in the first few years of teaching

Core Issues

Accountability model

- No unique identification number assigned to each teacher
- Teacher and student records not linked by course/ subject and state assessment results
- No existing value-added model

What does research tell us?

“The greatest potential for school districts to improve student achievement seems to rest not in regulating minimum qualifications for new teachers but in selectively retaining those teachers who are most effective during their first years of teaching.”

Kane, “Photo Finish,” Education Next, Winter, 2007

Teacher Effectiveness

Meta-analysis shows that certain attributes are tied to teacher effectiveness but other “popular” attributes are not.

Tied to Effectiveness:

- Subject area knowledge
- Teachers’ level of literacy
- Selectivity of college

Not Tied to Effectiveness:

- Master’s degrees
- Experience
- Education courses
- Traditional certification

Teacher Effectiveness

- Even attributes that are correlated have a weak connection. Currently, we do not have a strong way to predict teacher effectiveness in the US.
- However, the gap between effective and ineffective teachers is evident by the second year of teaching.

Gordon, Kane, and Staiger, “Identifying Effective Teachers Based on Performance on the Job.” The Brookings Institution

Discussion

- What is the best way to predict and also to measure teacher effectiveness?
- Are there innovative state strategies the OSSE should consider as it defines its measures and metrics for teacher effectiveness?
- What kinds of credentials or certification requirements interfere with our ability to recruit good teachers? Which of these support or could support our efforts?

Discussion

- How can teacher effectiveness be strengthened through various policy levers—recruitment/retention, professional development, incentives, accountability, evaluation?
- What are the most effective strategies within these levers? What are the state level best practices?
- What systems and conditions need to be in place to support each of these levers?

Core Issues

Administrator Certification

- May be unnecessarily limiting promotion of quality candidates
- Limited program quality control
- No evidence that certification is linked to student performance increases
- Not tied to school performance or another measurement of effectiveness

Discussion

- What role does administrator effectiveness play in teacher effectiveness?
- What is the best way to predict and also to measure administrator effectiveness?
- What kinds of credentials or certification requirements interfere with our ability to recruit good school leaders? Which of these support or could support our efforts? What are the national best practices?

Where are we heading?

- To build a **teacher quality system** that accomplishes the following:
 - sets policy and oversees certification from early childhood to adult education
 - ensures the highest level of candidate competence
 - provides our LEAs (DCPS and charter schools) maximum flexibility in selecting and placing candidates, once competence is demonstrated

Where are we heading?

- To build a **teacher quality system** that accomplishes the following:
 - over time, moves from measuring teacher qualities (inputs) to measuring teacher effectiveness (outputs)
 - ensures consistent, high-quality teacher preparation programs by measuring their relative effectiveness in preparing their graduates to help students learn

Where are we heading?

- To build an **administrator certification system** that accomplishes the following:
 - ensures the highest level of candidate competence
 - ensures consistent, high-quality administrator preparation programs
 - moves from measuring administrator qualities (inputs) to measuring administrator effectiveness (outputs)

Where are we heading?

- To build an **accountability model** that accomplishes the following:
 - Provides unique student and teacher identification numbers
 - Utilizes a value-added model that links student performance to teachers

Next Steps

- Can we wait? If so, how long?
- What are the most effective strategies for engaging stakeholder and broader public support?
- What are the pitfalls within the strategies we discussed?
- Who are the key local and national experts OSSE should engage?

Sources Cited

Full Education Week report at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2008/01/10/index.html>

Full NCTQ report at http://www.nctq.org/stpy/reports/stpy_districtofcolumbia.pdf

Gordon, Kane, Staiger's "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job" at http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/200604hamilton_1.pdf

"Photo Finish" article at www.educationnext.org