



GEARING UP

*Creating a Systemic Approach
to Teacher Effectiveness*

**Summary and
Recommendations**

NASBE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

GEARING UP:

Creating a Systemic Approach to Teacher Effectiveness

Summary and Recommendations



The Report of the NASBE Study Group on Teacher
Preparation, Retention, Evaluation, and Compensation

2011

The NASBE Study Group on Teacher Preparation, Retention, Evaluation, and Compensation

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Presentations to the Study Group

January 2011

Panel Sessions:

Developing the Highly Qualified Teacher—Voices from the Classroom.
Presented by the Washington Teacher Ambassador Fellows from the U.S. Department of Education:

Gillian Cohen-Boyer
Laurie Calvert
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Leah Raphael
Linda Yaron

Building Teacher Capacity: Preparation, Certification, and Recruitment:

Betty Hobbs, Arlington County (Virginia) Public Schools
Peter McWalters, Consultant, Council of Chief State School Officers
Donna Wiseman, University of Maryland at College Park

Presentations:

Billy K. Cannaday Jr.,
University of Virginia and
Member of Virginia State
Board of Education
Brad Jupp, U.S. Department of
Education

March 2011

Panel Session:

Student Achievement and Teacher Evaluation: Perspective from a Race to the Top Winning State:

Lillian Lowery, Delaware
Commissioner of Education
Teri Quinn Grey, President,
Delaware State Board of
Education
Terry Whittaker, Delaware State
Board of Education

Presentations:

David Green, Center for
Evidence Based Education

Joellen Killion
Learning Forward

May 2011

Shayne Spalten, Denver Public
Schools
Kristan VanHook, National
Institute for Excellence in
Teaching

June 2011

Panel Sessions:

Educator Preparation, Retention, and Evaluation from the Principal's Perspective
Maquita Alexander,
Washington DC
Adrian Manuel, New York
B. Scott Ruehl, Maryland

Developing Effective Teacher Leaders in Schools, as it Relates to Teacher Preparation and Retention

Beatriz Williams, U.S.
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Presentations:

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July 2011

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Summary and Recommendations

In a nation as large and decentralized as the United States, it may not be possible to revamp human resources policies and funding at the national level. A state or a city, however, could bring together these best practices and work with the relevant stakeholders to create a comprehensive system that would ensure every student a good teacher and every school a great leader.

—Vivian Stewart, “Raising Teacher Quality Around the World”¹

The convergence of stagnant growth in student achievement, high turnover in the ranks of teachers (both in terms of new teachers leaving the workforce and the looming retirement of the large generation of baby boom teachers), and state and federal actions to increase the capacity of the current education system have set the stage for changes that are unparalleled in recent education history. At the same time, the implementation of Common Core Standards and new assessments are requiring a revision of current policies and practices to ensure that both veteran and future teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to prepare students for college and the workforce. Research has documented for decades that the current system is no longer producing the results needed for the world of today—and tomorrow. Now more than ever is the time to reflect deeply on our system of teaching and learning and make the changes necessary to ensure that the United States retains its leadership in the global economy.

Recognizing this, the National Association of State Boards of Education’s Board of Directors called for the formation of this Study Group on Teacher Preparation, Retention, Evaluation, and Compensation. The panel was charged with examining what it takes to educate, retain, and evaluate a highly effective teacher workforce in today’s—and tomorrow’s—world.

Early in the study group’s work, the members articulated a number of core beliefs and understandings that became the foundation for their later policy deliberations. These included:

- Teachers are the most important in-school factor for student success.
- Continuous improvement and growth of teachers is vital to a high-quality workforce.
- Ensuring a high-quality teacher workforce is a systems opportunity—there are many components at the state, district, and school levels that must effectively work and interact together to ensure success for individual teachers.
- Practitioners and other stakeholders must be engaged in the process if major changes to the teacher workforce system are to be successful.
- State boards of education are central to the development and improvement of each state’s teacher workforce system.

Based on these core beliefs and the findings from its research, the study group developed the following recommendations for state boards of education and the education community at large to create a systems approach to improving the teacher workforce in the areas of preparing, evaluating, and retaining an effective teacher workforce.

Recommendations on Preparing High-Quality and Effective Teachers

The key to developing high-quality teachers lies in their preparation and training prior to entering the classroom. Research continues to document that teachers who come into the profession well-prepared to teach achieve student success—and they are less likely to leave the profession after their first few years. Unfortunately, the quality of our preparation programs vary significantly, with the result that not all candidates who become teachers are qualified or have the skills necessary to teach in today’s educational environment. This factor contributes heavily to the high attrition rate of young teachers. To address this, the study group heard from national experts and practitioners who spoke to the question, “What must we do to ensure classroom educators have the essential skills and qualities needed to be highly effective teachers?” The following recommendations and guidelines constitute the study group’s answer to this question.

1. Every teacher of record, no matter his or her pathway to the profession, must have significant exposure and clinical experience in the field teaching a diverse set of students.

Clinical experiences are crucial for teacher candidates to develop the skills and practices needed to teach all students. These need to be robust experiences with a high-quality mentor or cooperating teacher. Clinical exposure and experiences need to be integrated into the preparation program from the beginning. This experience can also be used to determine if the teaching profession is the correct field for the candidate.

2. Every teacher of record, no matter his or her pathway to the profession, must pass a rigorous and comprehensive assessment to complete the teacher preparation program.

Performance-based measures are strongly recommended to be included in this evaluation process. Teacher performance assessments are critical for both aspiring teachers and the preparation institution to determine the quality and readiness of candidates. Additionally, teacher preparation institutions can use the data collected from these assessments to evaluate and re-assess their program to best fit the needs of school districts and incoming teachers. Local districts can use the data to ensure the best fit when recruit-

ing and placing individuals into schools. The study group identified the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium as one example of a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation process.

3. State boards of education, in collaboration with teacher preparation institutions and accrediting agencies, should ensure that candidates are entering the workforce with the skills to teach students to be college and career ready.

Specific recommendations include:

- Preparation programs should focus on core pedagogical competencies that include collaboration with colleagues, reflective learning, and use of formative assessment to drive instruction.
- Preparation programs should ensure that incoming teachers have the fundamental skills and understanding to use technology to enhance their instructional and collaborative practice.
- Preparation programs should ensure teacher candidates learn how to collect, interpret, and use data to improve instruction.
- Preparation programs should provide a residency-type experience where the student experience is designed, supported, and monitored by preparation programs in collaboration with districts.
- Preparation programs should ensure teacher candidates have an understanding of the college- and career-ready standards adopted by states.
- Preparation programs should ensure that clinical experience and coursework focus on candidates’ cultural awareness and on students’ social-emotional development.

4. State boards of education, in coordination with teacher licensing boards where they exist, should ensure alignment among teacher/leader preparation programs, certification/licensure requirements, and evaluation standards.

Specific recommendations include:

- States should develop comprehensive induction programs that include a robust mentoring experience, with designed collaborative opportunities between preparation programs and local education agencies.

- States should provide policy incentives and accountability measures to establish a system that includes a continuous feedback loop among the preparation institution, the local education agency, and the graduated teacher candidates.
- State boards of education should ensure there is a system in place to oversee and monitor the quality of teacher preparation programs within the state.

Recommendations on Retaining a High-Quality and Effective Workforce

Successful efforts to improve teacher retention require coordinated work in several areas to assure that our most talented, well-trained, and dedicated teachers remain in the education system. These areas critical to retention include hiring and placement, induction programs, professional and career development, and mentoring. The study group made the following recommendations to support and retain a highly effective teacher workforce.

1. To maximize resources and address the growing attrition rate, state and district education leaders should ensure that all teachers complete a multi-year induction program.

Components of a comprehensive and high-quality induction program include:

- Specific and focused orientation to the district, school, and leadership team;
- A high-quality mentorship system where teachers are paired with effective teachers and they engage in continuous and constructive feedback on a regular basis;
- Established and dedicated time for planning, collaboration, and professional learning opportunities with teachers both in the teacher's school and with other new teachers in the district;
- Multiple formal and informal observations of the teacher during the first two years conducted by school leadership, including principals and other teacher leaders; and
- Partnerships between districts and higher education institutions to ensure strong alignment and consistency between programs in order to meet the needs of each program, district, and candidate.

2. Each state board of education, in collaboration with its chief state school officer, should strongly advocate full funding of induction programs.

While many states are facing significant economic challenges, data and research reveal that induction programs are critical to retaining the workforce. However, induction and professional learning opportunities are among the first items to receive cuts in times of tight budgets. Investing in a comprehensive induction program could cut turnover rates in half, which is a strategic economic investment. At the same time, comprehensive induction programs contribute to the professional learning of teachers, which in turn can positively impact student growth and achievement.

3. State boards of education should encourage districts and their teachers to develop or enhance a system of continuous and robust professional learning.

Specific recommendations include:

- States should provide flexibility and incentives to allow teachers and districts to amend the weekly and yearly school calendars to allow time for professional development and collaboration.
- States and districts should provide flexibility and incentives to allow the use of technology to enhance the ability of teachers to collaborate.
- States should provide incentives and flexibility for districts and teachers to participate in professional learning in the areas of data management, collaboration, blended learning, and the use of technology in the classroom.

4. State boards of education should encourage preparation programs, local education agencies, and state departments of education to establish clearly defined horizontal and vertical teaching and leadership pathways.

Specific recommendations include:

- States should establish separate licensure or endorsement criteria for individuals who wish to be mentor or master teachers.
- Districts can develop differentiated pay scales for mentor or master teachers.
- State boards of education can provide recertification credits or professional development credits for individuals who wish to become mentor or master teachers.

- In collaboration with districts, teachers, and licensing entities, state education leaders should work to establish differentiated career pathways within the profession.

Recommendations on Teacher Evaluations

Teacher evaluation processes have been shown to be inadequate in improving teacher effectiveness, and there is general agreement that more attention must be paid to making assessments meaningful and linked to continuous improvement and current educational reform measures. The study group’s discussion of evaluation issues emphasized the environment in which teacher assessments are conducted and how a school, district, and system culture is instrumental in identifying performance expectations and aligning actual performance measures in a fair and equitable manner. Measurement of student performance is increasingly seen as being a part of measuring teacher impact, but critical questions are being debated about what data to use, how to measure student growth, and how much achievement should “count.” The effectiveness of the individuals conducting the evaluations has raised questions about the training necessary to conduct an effective evaluation and what role districts and principal preparation programs have in providing adequate skills to principals and principal candidates. These factors raise significant questions about the link between evaluations and high-quality professional development.

The following recommendations focus on the development of state policies to assure a stronger connection between teacher growth and effectiveness and teacher evaluation.

1. Evaluation systems should be designed and used for the purpose of improving instructional practice and student learning.

Specific recommendations include:

- Compensation and incentive-based programs should be aligned with teacher expectations and duties and not be based solely on student performance.
- Teacher evaluation criteria should be aligned with an established set of teacher standards. These could include InTASC standards, Model Leader standards, or other standards established in the state.
- State education leaders should create an evaluation system designed to assess teacher growth and professional development.
- State education leaders should provide flexibility and incentives to create a culture of professional growth based on goals and objectives rather than perceived punitive measures to release teachers from their position.

2. The tools and processes of an effective evaluation system should be designed to create a feedback loop between the leadership team and the teachers.

This feedback loop provides continuous, timely, and constructive feedback between the parties with the goal of improving instructional practice and student growth. When teachers do not engage in continuous collaborative practice with their peers and leaders, their effectiveness begins to plateau within a few years. Current structures to the school day and calendar year hinder the use of this collaborative practice and contribute to frustration in the teaching workforce and high attrition rates. To create the feedback loop, state boards of education and district leaders can:

- Provide flexibility and incentives to districts and schools to amend weekly and annual school calendars to imbed collaboration and professional learning opportunities into the day. The professional learning opportunities for individuals are based on the goals established by the teacher and administrative team in teachers’ evaluations.
- Provide flexibility and incentives to districts and schools to enhance the use of technology to provide timely and constructive feedback on the teachers’ instructional practice.
- Provide professional learning opportunities to teachers and leaders on an individual, school, and programmatic level.

3. Evaluation systems should include multiple measures of evidence of a teacher’s effectiveness and instructional practice.

Recommended elements of the evaluation system are as follows:

- Measures of student growth;
- Measures of teachers content knowledge;
- Multiple formal and informal observations;
- Personal and peer assessments/reflection;

- Student evaluations; and
- Teachers' perceptions of working conditions and support.

Assigning a specific percentage for each of the above components was beyond the scope of this study group and is a matter for individual states to determine. However, given the uncertain correlation between student test scores and teachers' overall effectiveness in even the best value-added data, creating an evaluation system in which student growth is a preponderant component of the evaluation can jeopardize the fairness of the evaluation and teachers' trust in the process.

4. Evaluators and those who are being evaluated should participate in substantive, meaningful training and/or certification on the evaluation tools and process.

There are many visions of what "good teaching" looks like, particularly if the evaluation tools do not promote a consistent concept of effective instruction. As a result, it can be difficult to perform an authentic and accurate evaluation of a teacher. To address this, the study group recommends training for both evaluators and the teachers who are being evaluated. Providing comprehensive training on the tools can provide common ground to create consistency in the observation and evaluation remarks. State boards may want to consider establishing a certification system for evaluators, requiring principals or other teacher leaders to obtain a credential prior to conducting formal evaluations.

Recommendations for Further Study

Teacher Compensation: While one charge of the study group was to examine how to effectively compensate the workforce, the committee ultimately concluded that teacher compensation is such a significant and controversial topic that it requires its own in-depth analysis. Therefore, given the important

role compensation plays in recruiting and retaining an effective workforce, the committee recommends establishing a separate study group or taskforce to examine this topic by itself.

Principal and Administrative Leadership:

Throughout the study group's research, the members recognized the inherent role that teacher and principal leadership play in establishing safe and innovative environments for teachers to instruct and students to thrive. Given the significant value of leadership in retaining and evaluating the education workforce, the study group recommends further policy-oriented research into what it takes to develop high-quality, effective leaders.

Strategic Abandonment of Policies and Procedures:

The study group members recognized that it is important to identify the policies, procedures, and documentation requirements that are no longer needed or can be accomplished in a more efficient way—and then remove or change them in order to give teachers more time to cover material in depth. The study group recommends further analysis of current policies, procedures, and practices by states and districts to strategically remove those that no longer serve their intended purpose or serve as a barrier to effective instruction.

Conclusion

The study group members hope that the discussions and recommendations contained in this report provide state education leaders with relevant research and guidance to enhance the current innovative work ongoing in states, as well as provide models for creating a systems approach to developing and retaining a highly effective workforce. The ultimate goal is that every teacher, no matter his or her pathway to the profession, be highly qualified and prepared to teach effectively today in an environment where being a good teacher means continually learning and growing for tomorrow.