

How should state policymakers ensure that there is
a highly qualified and highly effective teacher in
every public school classroom?

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Introduction

Being a highly qualified and highly effective teacher are two completely different, yet certainly related, qualities of being a teacher. Since these features are closely related, a working definition of each will be given for purposes of reading through this document:

- **Highly Qualified Teacher:** A teacher who has met all requirements to hold or maintain a teaching license
- **Highly Effective Teacher:** A teacher who possesses and employs the qualities and behaviors that research has shown necessary in order to support student achievement

From a basic policy perspective, a teacher can be highly qualified without being highly effective, and a teacher could be highly effective without being highly qualified. From a purely practical perspective, it would appear that a highly effective teacher is more important than a highly qualified teacher; however, it is desirable that a teacher be both. Our perspective is that as a general understanding, one becomes “highly qualified” once one completes initial teacher preparation and continues to be highly qualified through on-going professional development. One demonstrates various levels of being “highly effective” in supporting student achievement once engaged in work with actual children in the schools, beginning during the student teaching experience and continuing through tenured employment in our schools. In this discussion, we will present three overarching recommendations that describe how policymakers can:

- Enhance the quality of emerging teachers
- Enhance the effectiveness of practicing teachers
- Promote research and recruitment of a diverse teaching workforce

Recommendation #1: Enhance the Quality of Emerging Teachers

The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) recent 2013 report, *The Changing Teacher Preparation Profession* presents a summary of the U.S. teacher preparation landscape. The report’s findings related to improving the student teacher experience indicated the following: new teachers continue to be prepared in institutions of higher education, clinical preparation is part of all teacher preparation programs, and teacher preparation programs are implementing performance-based exit measures for their student teachers. Because clinical preparation is a staple of teacher preparation programs, the teacher preparation programs that are focused more on the work of the classroom, and that allow student teachers to engage in the actual practices involved in teaching, tend to produce first-year teachers who are more likely to remain in the profession than those from less clinically-based programs (Jacobs, 2013). Concerns about the length of the student teaching experience, the systems used for student teacher evaluation, and the support for cooperating teachers who work with these emerging teachers has led to the following recommendations to Pennsylvania policymakers empowered to effect change.

First, the student teaching experience length should be extended from 12 weeks to a full 36-week academic year. An extended length and depth of the student teaching experience will allow emerging teachers the opportunity to 1) practice teaching with expert and targeted feedback, 2) to build habits associated with professional dispositions, and 3) to deepen their understanding of content knowledge and child development which was studied in the college classroom but which comes to life within a specific school environment. In *Outliers: The Story of Success*, author Malcolm Gladwell suggests that ten thousand hours is the magic number of practice hours needed to become a true expert in any field.

Currently in the state of Pennsylvania, emerging teachers considered “highly-qualified” are those who have completed a student teaching experience in their final year of college preparation, a period of practice defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education Chapter 49-2 requirements as 12 weeks of full time involvement in a K-12 setting. For teacher candidates earning two certifications (for example, Pre-K—4 and Special Education), only 6 weeks of student teaching in each area are required. In addition, Chapter 49-2 requires pre-service teachers to have 190 field placement hours before the student teaching experience. Although these requirements strengthen the clinical experience for future teachers, there is still room for improvement.

Assuming a six-hour day of teaching for twelve weeks, when added to the 190 hours of pre-student teaching, emerging teachers have only 550 hours of opportunity to practice teaching, receive feedback on their teaching, develop professional disposition habits, and apply knowledge learned in earlier college coursework. If 10,000 hours is what is needed to become an expert in a field, then first year teachers are far from ready! In fact, the 2013 AACTE report echoes that concern in its finding that upwards of 20% of new teachers leave the teaching profession within the first three years, and cite a feeling of being “underprepared” as their number one reason.

Because of this dramatically inadequate length of time, and depending on which 12-weeks of time during an academic year a pre-service student participates in student-teaching, we find that they experience limited opportunities to observe highly effective teachers beyond their immediate placement. In addition, they may fail to experience opportunities to observe events that occur only once or twice a year, but are critical in the life of a practicing teacher (e.g. IEP meetings, parent-teacher conferences, standardized testing, first weeks of establishing classroom climate for learning and developing student behavior plans, building-wide professional development days, curriculum development).

Second, the evaluation of emerging teachers should include the development of e-portfolios, introduced at the beginning of the student teaching experience and continued through the first year of teaching employment, with prescribed content, observations, and periods of review and feedback. Student teacher/first year teacher e-portfolios will make consistent the documentation of effective teaching expected of all Pennsylvania teachers, and will incentivize teacher education institutions to maintain contact and support of their graduates as expected in Chapter 49-2. Because teacher preparation programs are expanding their graduation requirements to include authentic assessments of how candidates generate and evaluate student learning, we recommend that pre-service teachers develop an e-portfolio, as both a formative performance assessment, and also to demonstrate that they are truly eligible for initial certification. By using the e-portfolio performance assessment, pre-service candidates would further their essential knowledge and skills. Moreover, these data would provide pre-service teachers with numerous opportunities to reflect on how well they are teaching and how well their students are learning. Based on a few supervisory observations, student teachers are graded as Pass/Fail along the PDE 430 rubric, a system that fails to recognize the developmental nature of an emerging teacher who engages in, and grows from, critical self-reflection. In addition, if teaching portfolios are initiated during the student teaching period, they may or may not include artifacts and

reflections about student achievement, since the format for such portfolios is left largely to the individual teacher preparation program to define. In short, the current student teaching experience does not provide sufficient guidance for the quality and consistency of that experience.

Finally, the legislature and public school employers should provide financial and temporal incentives for Highly Effective Teachers serving as cooperating teachers and mentors, including but not limited to tax credits (e.g. unreimbursed employee business expenses), stipends, tuition reimbursement, travel to professional development, support for National Board certification, and release time for collaboration with novice teachers. Teachers recruited to co-operate with the student teaching experience and to mentor first year teachers often receive minimal compensation, recognition, or time release to truly engage in the deep support these novice teachers need as they work to become highly qualified teachers. Collaboration, observation, professional development, and e-portfolio management involving the student teacher/first year teacher can be a very labor-intensive effort. As a result, few tenured teachers are eager to take on the responsibility and intensive relationship involved in the student teaching experience.

Recommendation #2: Enhance the Effectiveness of Practicing Teachers

In June, 2012, PA legislators signed into law, Act 82, now known as the Educator Effectiveness System. This law attempts to ensure that highly effective teachers are in every classroom in every school district in the state of PA. The law changes the current evaluation system of identifying teachers as satisfactory or unsatisfactory and creates, instead, four levels of performance. These levels of performance have been identified as failing, needs improvement, proficient and distinguished. Fifty percent (50%) of a teacher's evaluation will be gleaned from direct classroom observation and evidence collection by a certified administrator. Evidence of such performance must be gathered in four domains: 1) planning and preparation, 2) classroom environment, 3) instruction and 4) professional responsibilities. Furthermore, this legislation ties teacher evaluation to multiple measures of student achievement. The remaining 50% of a teacher's evaluation is broken down into two distinct areas of student performance. The first measure aligns building specific data such as state assessment data, graduation rates, promotion rates, attendance rates, advanced placement course participation, and preliminary and scholastic aptitude test data to a teacher's evaluation. The final measure is tied to teacher specific and elective data such as student performance and growth on state assessment tests, progress towards meeting the goals of students with special needs, and locally developed rubrics, district assessments, other nationally recognized standardized tests, industry certification examinations, student projects and student portfolios. Beginning in 2013-2014, all temporary professional and professional employees with direct responsibility for classroom instruction will be evaluated using this new educator effectiveness system. Student achievement data will be phased in with various components beginning in 2013-2014 and final achievement data completing the 100% rating by 2015-2016.

No one can disagree that teachers must be held accountable for some level of student achievement. Nor can anyone disagree that a new evaluation system in public education was long overdue and in much need of reform. However, this legislation fails to take into account three key components that will ensure that highly effective teachers are in every classroom and that poor performing teachers are removed from the profession. Therefore, the following modifications to this new legislation should be considered to ensure highly effective teachers are in every public school classroom.

First, mandate a best-practices supervisory model aligned directly to the Educator Effectiveness System. Supervision is a process by which certified administrators assess a teacher's performance to determine its effectiveness and ultimately, its impact on student learning. Evaluation simply determines whether a teacher maintains employment. Across the United States, 99% of teachers are rated each year as satisfactory. This is a result of inadequate and ineffective supervision by certified administrators. A mandated supervisory model is necessary to ensure that adequate evidence of a teacher's classroom and instructional performance is documented and, those deemed to be unsatisfactory, are dismissed from the profession. Since the 2010-2011 school year, the PA Department of Education (PDE) has extensively piloted a best-practices supervisory model based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. More than 24,000 teachers and 2000 administrators were trained across the state and have voluntarily piloted this supervisory model. Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching was chosen by PDE after extensive research undertaken by the University of Pittsburgh. It provides all educators with a defensible definition of quality teaching and was used in the development of the educator effectiveness system and resulting legislation. A teacher evaluation system without an appropriate supervisory model will be ineffective and will not adequately ensure that highly effective teachers are in every classroom. Five hundred school districts with potentially 500 different models of supervision has resulted in little to no change in teacher performance or student achievement to date. Few, if any, teachers are dismissed each year for poor performance. Without a mandated supervisory process, Act 82 will do little to ensure that quality instruction occurs in every classroom.

Second, mandate a biannual inter-rater reliability requirement for all administrators responsible for evaluating teachers under the Educator Effectiveness System. With high-stakes teacher evaluations at the forefront of public education, it is imperative that the evidence collection regarding teachers' performance be conducted consistently and objectively across all classrooms and all school districts. This requires that certified administrators responsible for teacher observations be required to participate in a biannual inter-rater reliability assessment. It also requires that certified administrators who cannot pass this assessment be stopped from performing classroom observations and evaluations until appropriate professional development can be provided. Throughout the 2012-2013 school year, PDE has piloted an inter-rater reliability system in which volunteer administrators are assessed against a master evaluator. This inter-rater reliability system is directly aligned to Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. An inter-rater reliability system ensures fidelity and reliability regardless of the administrator assigned to each teacher. It also ensures that only the most competent administrators are evaluating teacher performance.

Finally, mandate an additional level of performance entitled "progressing" to the Educator Effectiveness System. All professions identify a time period in which new employees work under a provisional or an apprenticeship period. In teaching, this provisional period lasts for three years, at the end of which, a teacher is granted tenure. The new Educator Effectiveness System identifies two positive levels of performance: "distinguished" and "proficient" and two negative levels of performance: "needs improvement" and "failing". Teachers under this new evaluation system who are rated as "needs improvement" for the first time are determined to be "satisfactory" teachers. A second "needs improvement" in a 10 year period will be deemed "failing". The Digest of Educational Statistics in 2007-2008, the last year for which statistics are available, found that 12.5% of Pennsylvania teachers have less than three years experiences. In addition, 33.3% have between 3 and 9 years of experience. Teachers new to the profession are evaluated twice each year during this untenured time period. Most young teachers have much to learn and could be rated as "needs improvement" not because of poor instructional performance but simply because of a limited repertoire of skills and inexperience. A number of potentially strong and highly effective teachers may be removed or will exit the profession

under this new evaluation system. A fifth level of performance identified as “progressing” would take into account the learning and growth required of any employee in a new profession. A rating of “progressing” will ensure that continued learning and growth is required of these young teachers.

Recommendation #3: Promote Research and Recruitment of a Diverse Teaching Workforce

Pennsylvania state policy governing certification for highly effective and highly qualified teachers lacks a future orientation. As a result of concern about the characteristics needed for the future workforce of teachers in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania policymakers should establish a commission designed to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy designed to recruit and retain highly effective and highly qualified future teachers. Therefore, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) should consider developing and implementing programs designed to recruit and retain teachers with the skills, attributes, and other characteristics required to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse body of public school students. One useful technique the department should consider to aid in this effort is trend monitoring, which is described by the Institute of Alternative Futures as “the first step in thinking about the future.” There are three trends the department should consider within the context of recruiting and retaining teachers; 1) current population growth rates in the state; 2) current graduation rates among rapidly growing population groups; and 3) current trends in the international environment that reveal an increase in global literacy rates and social media use.

First, the Pennsylvania Department of Education should carefully analyze teacher demographics in school districts with Hispanic and African American graduation rates in relation to stated NCLB standards, to determine any salient factors contributing to differences. Current demographic trends in Pennsylvania reveal that African American and Hispanic population growth rates are rapidly increasing. Specifically, Hispanic and African American populations in the state increased from 390k to 720k, and 2 million to 2.5 million respectively between 2000 and 2010. This dynamic, combined with comparatively low graduation rates among these two groups, emerge as important factors for policy makers to pay attention to and analyze. In 2010-11, PDE reported 77% of Hispanic, and 84% African American public school students graduating from High School with their cohort. In both cases, this is considerably lower than the cumulative 91% graduation rate for all students. The same report revealed that reading and math proficiency levels associated with these groups of students are well below state averages. The combination of these two trends does not bode well for the state’s future because the vast majority of societal issues—ranging from unemployment, to crime and incarceration — are directly linked to low high school graduation rates. The current cost in dollars and other resources related to programs implemented in response to these types of societal concerns—such as the maintenance of prisons—further highlights the importance of influencing and reversing the aforementioned trends. For the state of Pennsylvania, this circumstance equates to a strategic choice over the allocation of resources in a fiscally constrained era.

Hispanic and African American graduation rates directly linked to Local Educational Agencies (i.e. school districts) in the state provide useful information for policy makers concerned with envisioning future teachers. Based on the directed NCLB Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), 85% mandated standard for student graduation in all population groups, LEAs in the state reported the following as part of the State Report Card for 2010-2011 available on the PDE website:

- 71 LEAS reported rates for Hispanics and African Americans below 75%
- 32 LEAS reported graduation rates equal to or above 85% among at least one of the two high interests groups (Hispanic or African American)
- 104 LEAS reported graduation rates above 85% for Hispanics and African Americans

- The remaining LEAs had Hispanic and African American graduation rates between 75% and 85% or contained negligible percentages of these populations groups

Among LEAs, the Abington and Aliquippa school districts stand out as high achieving school districts with impressive graduation rates for Hispanics and African Americans, particularly given the relatively large Hispanic and African Americans in these districts. This data is useful for the department of education, and can serve as a forcing function in envisioning the type of teacher capable of addressing the needs of future students by determining the salient differences between the types of teachers in low performing LEAs in comparison to high performing LEAs, analyzing differences in curriculum designed to achieve the same state standards, and assessing differences in teacher intern programs that these teacher's certify through.

Second, and equally important, is the need to develop outreach programs that attract, inform, and influence individuals from broad groups of potential candidates to enter the educational career field. Input from groups representing diverse students, leaders from human relations and other career areas, and high performing teaching intern candidates can best envision the type of skill sets students entering into the 21st century global environment need to compete in the global environment. In April 2012, a European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), study revealed increases in global literacy and social media use. These trends provide insight into the types of individuals the department must attract, inform and influence into becoming teachers, and further assist in aligning recruiting and retention strategies to the future. Teacher preparation institutions can work collaboratively with PDE to develop such a comprehensive recruitment planning effort, but leveraging individuals from other professions with experience in implementing recruiting programs will insure minimal biases that can unintentionally create organizational blind spots.

Summary

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and Pennsylvania legislators can influence the number of highly-qualified, highly-effective teachers in the Commonwealth by considering amendments to both Chapter 49-2 and Act 82, and by enhancing the student teaching requirements, by mandating consistency in teacher evaluation, and by making a systematic plan for inspiring and recruiting future teachers that are needed in our state. By considering these recommendations, Pennsylvania policymakers will ensure our schools employ the highly-qualified, highly-effective teachers that every child deserves.

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