

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
POLICY AND PROGRAM STUDIES SERVICE
REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

**State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act
Volume VIII—Teacher Quality Under NCLB: Final Report**

Background

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* aims to ensure that every child is taught by a teacher with strong content knowledge by requiring teachers to be “highly qualified,” which the law defines as having: (1) a bachelor’s degree; (2) full state certification; and (3) demonstrated competency, as defined by the state, in each core academic subject that they teach. *NCLB* emphasizes professional development as a key strategy for improving teachers’ skills and effectiveness and also increases the minimum qualification requirements for Title I–funded paraprofessionals who provide instructional support.

This report describes the progress that states, districts, and schools have made in implementing *NCLB*’s teacher quality, professional development and paraprofessional provisions based on data collected during the 2004–05 and 2006–07 school years through two federally funded studies—the Study of State Implementation of Accountability and Teacher Quality Under *NCLB* (SSI-*NCLB*) and the National Longitudinal Study of *NCLB* (NLS-*NCLB*). The SSI-*NCLB* interviewed state education agency staff and analyzed data from Consolidated State Performance Reports and other extant data sources in all states. The companion NLS-*NCLB* study surveyed districts, principals, teachers, and Title I paraprofessionals in a nationally representative sample of 300 districts and 1,483 schools.

Key findings of the report include:

- By 2006–07, the vast majority of teachers met their states’ requirements to be considered highly qualified under *NCLB*. However, state requirements for the demonstration of content-knowledge expertise varied greatly, both in the passing scores that new teachers had to meet to demonstrate content knowledge on assessments and in the extent to which state “HOUSSE” policies gave existing teachers credit for years of prior teaching experience or emphasized more direct measures of content knowledge and teaching performance.
- Special education teachers and middle school teachers were more likely to report that they were not highly qualified during the 2006–07 school year than were general education teachers, elementary or high school teachers.
- Teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools were more likely to report that they were not highly qualified. Moreover, even among teachers who were considered highly qualified, teachers in high-poverty schools had less experience and were less likely to have a degree in the subject they taught.
- Although nearly all teachers reported taking part in content-focused professional development related to teaching reading or mathematics during the 2005–06 school year and summer, a relatively small proportion participated in such learning opportunities for an extended period of time. For example, only 13 percent of elementary teachers participated for more than 24 hours in professional development focused on the in-depth study of topics in reading; only 6 percent received more than 24 hours of professional development on the in-depth study of topics in mathematics.

- Sixty-one percent of paraprofessionals reported that they met at least once per week with a teacher to discuss classroom activities. However, 19 percent of paraprofessionals reported that they spent half of their time or more working with students in a classroom without a teacher present in 2006–07.

More detailed findings for key topic areas are briefly summarized below.

State Requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers

By 2007, all states required tests of teacher content knowledge in order for new teachers to be certified to teach and to be highly qualified, but there was tremendous variation in the required passing scores for prospective teachers. For example, among states using the Praxis II Middle School Mathematics Test, the minimum passing score ranged from 139 in South Dakota to 163 in Virginia (out of a maximum score of 200).

In 2006–07, 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had created high, objective, uniform state standards of evaluation (HOUSSE) policies to recognize the content expertise of current teachers, but there was variation in the extent to which the HOUSSE policies recognized prior teaching experience or placed more emphasis on more direct measures of teacher content knowledge and teacher effectiveness. (Note that some states were starting to phase out their use of HOUSSE by 2006–07.) For example, HOUSSE provisions in 19 states allowed teachers to earn up to half of their credits toward a highly qualified status simply based on the number of years that they had been teaching their subjects. In contrast, five states allowed teachers to provide evidence of improved student achievement as part of the process of earning a highly qualified status under HOUSSE.

Status of Highly Qualified Teachers Under *NCLB*

By 2006–07, the large majority of teachers across the country had been designated as “highly qualified” under *NCLB*. According to state-reported data for 50 states and the District of Columbia, 94 percent of elementary and secondary classes were taught by highly qualified teachers in 2006–07. Between 2004–05 and 2006–07 the percentage of teachers who reported being not highly qualified decreased from 4 percent to 2 percent; the percentage of teachers who reported they were considered highly qualified under *NCLB* increased from 74 percent to 84 percent. The percentage of teachers who did not know their status decreased from 23 percent to 14 percent.

The percentage of special education teachers who reported they were highly qualified increased from 52 percent in 2004–05 to 72 percent in 2006–07. Special education teachers in elementary schools (83 percent) were more likely to report they were highly qualified under *NCLB* than special education teachers in middle schools and high schools (71 and 56 percent, respectively).

Traditionally disadvantaged schools had higher percentages of teachers who were not considered highly qualified than did other schools in 2006–07. Only one percent of teachers in low-poverty schools reported that they were not highly qualified, compared with 5 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools. Likewise, only one percent of teachers in low-minority schools reported that they were not highly qualified, compared with 4 percent of teachers in high-minority schools.

Highly qualified teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools were more likely to be new to the profession, and highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools were less likely to have a degree in their field than were highly qualified teachers in low-poverty schools. For example, 40

percent of highly qualified secondary teachers in high-poverty schools had a degree in their field, compared with 59 percent of such teachers in low-poverty schools.

Although few teachers were designated as not highly qualified under *NCLB*, principal reports suggest an increase in the transfer or dismissal of such teachers. Although only about 20 percent of principals reported in 2006–07 that they arranged for the transfer or dismissal of teachers who were not highly qualified under *NCLB*, this was a notable increase from 2004–05 when only 12 percent of principals reported taking these actions.

Recruitment and Retention of Highly Qualified Teachers

About half of all districts reported difficulty attracting highly qualified teachers in mathematics, science, and special education in 2006–07. Over 90 percent of high-minority districts reported difficulty attracting highly qualified applicants in science and mathematics in 2006–07.

In 2006–07, nearly all states reported using financial incentives to recruit teachers, and many of these incentives featured mechanisms to retain teachers as well. The most common type of financial incentive that states offered in 2006–07 was tuition assistance—including scholarships, tuition waivers, and loan forgiveness programs—to help cover the cost of teachers' pre-service college coursework.

Professional Development

At the elementary level, teachers reported more hours of professional development in reading than in mathematics. Elementary teachers were also more likely to report more hours of in-service training in reading than in the other core academic subjects. Over the course of the 2005–06 school year and summer, elementary teachers averaged 11.7 hours on the in-depth study of topics in the subject of reading and only 5.9 hours on the in-depth study of topics in mathematics. They averaged 5.9 hours on professional development focused on all other academic subject areas.

Although at least three-quarters of teachers reported that they participated in some professional development that focused on instructional strategies for teaching reading or mathematics, relatively few participated for an extended period of time. For example, 79 percent of elementary teachers participated in at least one hour of professional development focused on instructional strategies for teaching mathematics during the 2005–06 school year and summer, but only 44 percent participated for six or more hours and only 11 percent participated for more than 24 hours.

Teachers were less likely to report that they participated in professional development focused on the in-depth study of reading and mathematics than in training on instructional strategies.

Only 14 percent of elementary teachers and 16 percent of secondary English teachers participated in in-depth study of topics in reading or English for more than 24 hours during the 2005–06 school year and summer; fewer than half participated for six or more hours. In contrast, 26 percent of elementary teachers and secondary English teachers participated in professional development focused on instructional strategies for reading and mathematics for more than 24 hours during the 2005–06 school year and summer.

Elementary teachers in schools identified for improvement, high-poverty schools, and high-minority schools were more likely to report participating in professional development in instructional strategies for teaching reading and mathematics that lasted more than 24 hours than elementary teachers in other schools. Among elementary teachers, a greater percentage of

teachers in schools identified for improvement under *NCLB* reported that they participated in 24 hours or more of professional development in instructional strategies for teaching reading than teachers in non-identified schools in 2005–06 (40 percent compared with 24 percent). The same was true for mathematics (18 percent compared with 11 percent).

***NCLB* Requirements for Paraprofessionals**

Approximately 86 percent of Title I instructional paraprofessionals were deemed to be qualified under *NCLB* according to state-reported data for 2005–06.¹ Two-thirds of Title I instructional paraprofessionals reported on a survey that they met the *NCLB* qualification requirements in 2006–07 (67 percent), similar to the percentage in 2004–05 (63 percent). Most of the remaining paraprofessionals (29 percent in 2006–07) reported that they did not know their qualification status under *NCLB* or did not provide a response. Most paraprofessionals who did not know or report their status were likely to be qualified, based on other information they provided about their qualifications and training. In 2006–07, approximately 94 percent of all paraprofessionals reported holding a qualification that would meet the *NCLB* criteria (an associate degree, two or more years of college, or passing an assessment).

Although most Title I instructional paraprofessionals reported working closely with a supervising teacher, some indicated that they worked with students on their own without a teacher present. Slightly over 60 percent of Title I instructional aides reported that they met informally with a teacher to discuss classroom activities and instruction at least one per week. However, 19 percent of paraprofessionals reported that they spent half of their time or more working with students in a classroom without a teacher present.

Copies of this report are available at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html. Copies of other reports in the series based on the *SSI-NCLB* and *NLS-NCLB* studies are also available at this website.

¹ The 86 percent is an unweighted average based on percentages submitted by 48 states and the District of Columbia on the Consolidated State Performance Report.