

## Teacher Quality (Title II)

### The Promise of Qualified Teachers in All Classrooms: Can Anyone Deliver?

No Child Left Behind promises that *all* students will be taught by “highly qualified” teachers by the 2005-2006 school year. But most districts are struggling with massive teacher *shortages*, especially in schools with large numbers of low-income students. There is a real danger that states will respond to the new law by lowering their standards of quality teaching rather than improving working conditions in all schools and providing comprehensive and useful professional development, career ladders and individualized support for teachers. Organizing groups have been a part of efforts in several states to encourage teacher recruitment, high quality teacher training, and new policies that funnel the best teachers into the schools that need them most.



### MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE LAW

Title I, Part A, Section 1119 requires all local school districts to ensure that all teachers in Title I schools hired after the first day of the 2002-03 school year be “highly qualified.” ALL public school teachers must be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year.

The definition of a “highly qualified teacher” (Title IX, part A, Section 23) applies to public school teachers *who teach a core academic subject* (English, reading, math, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history, geography):

- ALL must have a bachelor’s degree and be fully licensed or certified by the state without any of the licensing/certification requirements waived temporarily; AND
- NEW elementary school teachers must pass a state test demonstrating subject knowledge and competency in reading, writing and math;
- NEW middle and secondary school teachers must demonstrate competency in each subject area taught, or complete academic major coursework;
- EXISTING public school teachers must meet the above requirements OR demonstrate competency in all subjects taught. A state evaluation standard is to be used to judge “competency.”

All new paraprofessionals hired in Title I programs must be “highly qualified” effective immediately. Existing paraprofessionals must be “highly qualified” by the beginning of 2005. The definition of “highly qualified” applies *only to paraprofessionals performing instructional support duties*. It is defined as one of the following:

- 2 years of post-secondary education; OR
- Associate’s degree or higher; OR
- Meets a rigorous standard of quality, has knowledge of and ability to instruct in reading, writing and math; AND
- All paraprofessionals must have a HS diploma or GED.

School districts *must use at least 5%* of their Title I funds to help teachers and paraprofessionals meet the new requirements.

Title II of No Child Left Behind (“Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals”) supports a wide range of efforts to recruit and develop good teachers. Title II funds may be used for a broad range of activities to enhance teacher and principal quality. Eligible local activities include:

- Reforming teacher/principal licensure and creating alternative routes to licensure;
- Recruitment and retention of teachers/principals (this provision includes an emphasis on recruiting teachers from highly qualified paraprofessionals, minorities, and others underrepresented in the teaching field);
- Development of merit-based performance systems;
- Professional development [there’s strong language on what constitutes good professional development in Title IX, Part A, Section 9101 (34)];



### QUESTIONS TO ASK LOCALLY

- What percentage of teachers in your school/district is highly qualified? Are highly qualified and experienced teachers distributed evenly between high-income and low-income schools?

# NO CHILD Left Behind continued

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- How will your district help teachers and paraprofessionals become “highly qualified?”
- Is the district creating opportunities for paraprofessionals, minorities and others underrepresented in the teaching field?
- What strategies is your district using to move qualified teachers into hard-to-staff schools?
- How is the local teachers union tackling this issue? Are there ways to work together to ensure high quality teachers in low-income schools?



## ORGANIZING OPPORTUNITIES

There are a range of actions organizing groups can take to demand information, resources, and a seat at the table in making decisions about how to improve teacher quality in a local school.

- Demand a report card from your school district or school and use the information on teacher quality to organize for specific solutions.
- Demand to see the school district’s plan for achieving the goal of 100% qualified teachers and paraprofessionals; demand input into developing, refining or implementing the plan.
- Demand that the feeder system for teachers and/or paraprofessionals incorporate opportunities for parents to pursue one of these careers. The law clearly supports bringing underrepresented groups into the teaching field.
- Demand that school district earmark funding (or more funding) for teacher quality and/or paraprofessional development.

Education experts argue that districts should set aside at least 5-7% of their budget for professional development.

- Work with the local teachers union to come up with creative solutions for putting qualified teachers in the neediest schools.
- Work with the local community college to design a professional development program for new and existing paraprofessionals. Get the school district to offer stipends.



## RESOURCES

The Center for Community Change’s *Education Organizing*, Issue #4, January 2001 is devoted to the topic of teacher quality. It includes an overview of the issue, organizing campaigns, and examples of two quality professional development programs. Also includes a bibliography on teacher quality. Available on the web at [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org).

**The Education Commission of the States** has prepared a detailed No Child Left Behind Policy Brief on Teaching Quality. Its website includes sections devoted to teacher quality and also tracks state legislation. Go to <http://www.ecs.org> or call (303) 296-8332.

The full text of the **No Child Left Behind Act** is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/>

In addition, the Department of Education has developed a **Desktop Reference** to NCLB that can be useful. The Reference is available in PDF format at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference.html>