

## Measuring Beginning Teacher Quality in Special Education

### A Summary of Research Models

#### IN THIS WATCH

Teacher quality is essential to student achievement— Find out how beginning special education teacher quality can be measured.

There is no single definition or measure of beginning teacher quality in either general or special education. However, as inquiry into teaching and teacher education has grown and matured, a variety of models and measures has emerged that helps us better understand beginning special education teacher quality. The following models and sample measures represent different research genres. In all cases, potential relevance to special education research has been established.

#### Process-Product Measures

In a typical process-product study, teaching interactions are observed and described in a series of low-inference behavioral categories. Code frequencies are aggregated across teachers, then related to student achievement measures.

*Example:* Classroom Observation Keyed for Effectiveness Research (COKER) provides a process for observing the ongoing flow of student-teacher interaction.

*Overall assessment:* Process-product measures are well suited to comparison studies, longitudinal studies of change, and experiments. Strengths include:

- Potential for reliable measurement.
- Relationships between items on the

observation system and key criterion variables can be established.

Users should be aware of the following considerations:

- Conceptions of teacher quality derived from process-product measures are limited to observations of teachers' actions.
- Extensive training for administration and repeated observations over time are required.

#### Checklists

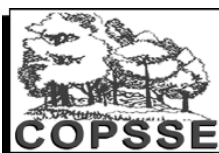
Detailed low-inference checklists have been used to evaluate teaching experience. Trained assessors observe and make judgments about quality.

*Example:* In 1992, Englert, Tarrant, and Mariage developed checklists for evaluating students during field experience. The checklists derived from process-product relationships and concerned classroom management, time management, lesson presentation, and seatwork.

*Overall assessment:* Checklists may be appropriate for use in comparative studies, experiments, and case studies of change. Strengths of checklists include:

- Comprehensiveness of coverage.
- Ability to assess elements of effective

FEBRUARY 2004  
PB-2



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teaching from varied theoretical perspectives.

Users should be aware of the following considerations:

- Sufficient time may not be available to complete checklists accurately and completely.
- Standardized procedures for administration usually are not available.

### Standards

Assessments that are based on standards document the work of teachers. Standards are developed in an iterative process with input from key stakeholders.

*Example:* Two examples of standards for special educators are:

- **Council for Exceptional Children Standards for the Preparation of Special Educators.** Narrative descriptions of 10 content standards are provided.
- **Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards.** Standards are offered for general education and special education teachers.

*Overall assessment:* Assessment processes for standards are being developed. Standards may be most useful in follow-up studies and in interviews used during longitudinal studies of change.

### Large-Scale Surveys

Beginning teacher quality may be represented in survey items. Evidence is generated quickly and relatively inexpensively through large-scale sampling.

*Example:* Examples of large-scale surveys of special educators are:

- **Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS).** The National Center for Educational Statistics has collected information from teachers periodically since 1987 on such things as demographics, practice, attitudes, preparation, and professional development.
- **Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNCE).** The SPeNCE survey asks teachers to share perceptions in the areas of preservice preparation, professional development, and practice.

*Overall assessment:* Representations gleaned from large-scale surveys are used in follow-up research. Users should be aware of the following considerations:

- Conceptions of beginning teacher quality inferred from surveys may be incomplete.
- The self-report format limits the credibility of the information.

### Commercially Available Materials

Teacher educators may turn to commercially available measures for assessing beginning teacher quality.

*Example:* PRAXIS III is the Educational Testing Service's observation system for assessing beginning teachers.

PRAXIS III involves three data collection processes:

- Direct observation of classroom practice.
- Written materials (e.g., lesson plans).
- Interviews before and after the observation.

*Overall assessment:* Observation systems may be used in compara-

tive studies and in longitudinal studies of change. Users should be aware of the following considerations:

- Administration is expensive.
- Administration is labor intensive.

### For More Information

Information reported in this brief was based on the COPSSE research synthesis, **Conceptions of Beginning Teacher Quality: Models for Conducting Research**, by Linda Blanton, Paul T. Sindelar, Vivian Correa, Mike Hardman, John McDonnell, and Karen Kuhel. This document can be found on the COPSSE web site at [www.copsse.org](http://www.copsse.org).

### WATCH THIS...

**B**ecause of different teaching contexts, several areas—serving students with severe disabilities, working in transition programs, and instructing culturally and linguistically diverse learners—warrant special consideration when measuring beginning teacher quality.



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#### About COPSSE

The Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education [cooperative agreement #H325Q000002]. COPSSE research is designed to inform scholars and policymakers about beginning teacher quality, effective initial preparation, and the effects of preparation alternatives. The Center is directed by Drs. Paul Sindelar and Mary Brownell. The policy briefs were produced by Warger, Eavy & Associates.

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