

## **Growing and Improving the Special Education Teacher Workforce: Balancing Competing Demands**

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## **Guaranteeing an Adequate Supply of Highly Qualified Teachers: Two Blueprints**

### **National Commission on Teaching and America's Future: What Matters Most?**

- A blueprint for providing excellent teachers in all of America's schools.
- At the heart of school improvement lies the recruitment, preparation, and retention of good teachers.
- School improvement must focus on creating conditions that allow teachers to teach well.

### **NCTAF: What Matters Most?**

#### Goals:

- Teachers must have knowledge, skills, & commitment
- Teacher Ed programs must be accredited
- Teachers must have high quality professional development
  - Teachers meet professional standards of practice
- Salaries must be based on knowledge and skills
- Quality teaching must be the central investment of schools

### **NCTAF: What Matters Most?**

#### Strategy for meeting these goals:

- Get serious about standards for both students and teachers
- Upgrade teacher preparation and professional development
- Improve recruitment and put qualified teachers in every classroom
- Encourage and reward teacher knowledge and skills
- Create schools organized for student and teacher success

### **No Child Left Behind**

Requires that all teachers of core subjects

be "highly qualified"

by 2005-06

## No Child Left Behind

Highly Qualified means:

- Full state certification as a teacher or
- Pass state teacher licensing examination

Teachers of Core Academic Subjects

- Pass subject knowledge test or, for middle and secondary school teachers, have majored in the subject area they teach

## No Child Left Behind

What matters most, according to NCLB?

- Preparation in content knowledge

Strategy

- Provide training alternatives
- Streamline preparation
- Develop and apply standards for verbal ability and content

## NCTAF versus NCLB

Similarities

- Concern about staffing in high poverty urban and rural schools
- Emphasis on holding schools responsible for the success of every student
- Insistence on hiring only qualified teachers
- Recognition that teachers are poorly paid

## NCTAF versus NCLB

Differences

- NCTAF emphasis on creating conditions in schools that support teachers' work
- NCTAF emphasis on improving teacher preparation (instead of circumventing or minimizing it)
- NCTAF emphasis on teachers' knowledge and skills (instead of student outcomes)
- NCLB emphasis on strong content preparation
- NCLB emphasis on alternatives to traditional teacher preparation

## NCTAF versus NCLB

Quantity Problem: "an adequate supply"

- NCTAF: Improve the Job of Teaching
  - Professionalize teaching
  - Improve the quality of the workplace
  - Support retention through mentorship and induction
  - Base teachers' salaries on knowledge and skills
- NCLB: Provide More Entry Paths to Teaching
  - Streamline training
  - Provide options to traditional campus-based teacher preparation

## NCTAF versus NCLB

Quality Problem: "... of highly qualified teachers"

- NCTAF: Improve Training
  - Require all teacher education programs to be accredited
  - Improve the quality of teacher education
  - Require teachers to meet rigorous professional standards
  - Encourage continued professional development
- NCLB: Recruit Better Trainees
  - Recruit individuals with high verbal ability
  - Recruit individuals who demonstrate mastery of an academic discipline

## **Alternative Routes to Certification in Special Education**

## **Introduction and Advance Organizer**

- Two metaphors
  - The Iceberg
  - The Condiment

## **What are ARs?**

Different from no certification and license

Different from traditional programs

- Length and structure of program
- Delivery mode
- Candidates

## **The Proliferation of ARs in Special Education**

- Persistent shortages of qualified personnel
- Acute need for minority teachers
- Dissatisfaction with educational establishments hold on entry to the profession

## **General Secondary Content Education: AR Findings**

(Shen 1997; Sindelar & Marks, 1993)

- Judged minimally competent
- ARC judged less competent than “traditionals”
- Reduce shortages in urban areas, but not rural
- Avenue for minority candidates
- No evidence of older candidates with higher educational attainment

## **Special Education**

- Only 7 Data-Based Studies
- Indicators of Effective AR Programs
  - Meaningful IHE/LEA collaboration
  - Adequate program length
  - Variety of learning activities
  - IHE supervision and building-based mentorship

## **Special Education, cont.**

### **AR Unknowns: The Iceberg Below the Surface**

- The shortage of high quality research
- The extent and scope of AR programs
- The lack of explicit standards in AR programs
- The sense of profession and professionalism
- Generalization from general to special education

## **Conclusions, Recommendations, and Next Steps**

- The Murky Landscape of AR
- The Temptation to Cut Corners
- COPSSE Agenda

## **Teacher Shortages: Attrition a Major Barrier to Quality**

## **The Quality versus Quantity Tension**

Chronic shortages make focusing on quality difficult:

- Special education has the greatest teacher shortage (AFT, 1999).
- 98% of nation's school districts report shortages of special educators (ERIC, 2001; Fideler, Foster, & Schwartz, 2000).
- 135,000 more teachers will be needed between 1998 and 2008 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999).
- Shortages are worse in our nation's poorest schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

## **Teacher Attrition: Increasing Demand and Reducing Quality**

- 6.1% of special educators and 5.7% of general educators left the classroom
- 7.4% of special educators transferred to general education  
...whereas only 0.7% of general educators transferred to special education
- Net loss of special educators is 13.5% compared to 6.4% of general educators

## **Factors Contributing to Attrition**

- Certification Status
- Insufficient Preparation
- Poor Salary
- Lack of Administrative Support
- Role Issues
- Negative School Climate
- Experience/Age
- Stress/Dissatisfaction

### Stress/Support

*My class load was 20 [and I had] no help, and no administrative back-up. Every time I would ask for some help I was told I was the one with the special ed degree. I had to keep them in the class because they did not want them sent to the dean. I got no support. I was told I had to use the county adopted books, but I was never given any resources. And the books they chose were far beyond my kids' capabilities. I worked in a VE classroom-EH and LD-and before I left they were sticking in EMH kids. Two subjects per period.*

### Stress/Decision Making

*I guess I was getting burned out, because it seemed other people were making the decisions as far as placements and recommendations for the children, and I was in the classroom working with them and knew what would work best for them. And these people who have never seen them in an educational setting were making the decisions and lots of times you would see kids go from bad to worse. So over the past 12 years I guess I started getting burned out.*

### Uncertified/Stress

*I am not certified ESE, I had to take classes and stuff but I was put in that position as a temp placement... When I was put in that position the people that I talked to at the county office said go ahead and take it. I kept telling them I was not sure I could do this, I had never done this before. [They said], "Oh no, we are going to help you, give you an aide. Any supplies you may need, we will do anything we can to help you out." Then they put me in there and that was the last I saw or heard of anybody. It was like, "sink or swim sweetheart."*

### Role Overload/Stress

*I was working 60 hours a week and at least probably 45 hours of that was just blasted paperwork and assessment in class or the kids and all the stuff that went with that. And it just got to be too much. I mean, I was trained to teach--not to be a secretary. And so, that's why I got out of it. Pure and simple.*

### Why Are Beginning Teachers More Vulnerable?

- More likely to leave teaching
- Less likely to be fully-certified
- Struggle with demands of teaching
- Greater isolation from colleagues
- Insufficient curricular and technical resources
- Role issues
- Poor school climate
- Lack of professional growth opportunities

### Uncertified/Demands/Isolation

*There were too many preps I had to do. I had no aide. When I accepted the position, I was told I would be co-teaching. It was also my first position teaching. Then after I had the job a week, they pulled me and said, "You're teaching them all, all by yourself!" and I was lost and I just felt like I was unprepared for it. And I had a very big discipline problem. At one time I had up to 15 kids in my class.*

### **Demands/Poor Resources/ Role Issues**

*[Curriculum] is really hard because they don't give me books. I have three preps [science, social studies, and language arts]. The books never came in and the ESE teachers didn't get our books. What we have--the workbooks--are worthless. . . I am figuring out curriculum without a clue. Creating something on my own is too hard.*

### **Collaboration/Role Issues**

#### **Barriers encountered teaching in an inclusive setting:**

*I think the biggest problem for me. . . is not knowing what the teachers are doing and walking in cold and having to scramble up at the last minutes. . . I have no authority to make them do it. Sometimes I did get [cooperation] from them because I was friendly with them. . . But then when I made all these things and I spent hours trying to do cool stuff for the week, then they changed [plans] on me, I was a little angry.*

### **Combating Teacher Attrition**

### **Combating the Factors of Teacher Attrition**

- Formal support
  - Fostering teacher learning
- Informal support
  - Creating a positive work climate

### **Fostering Teacher Learning Across the Career Cycle**

- Quality teacher induction programs
- Quality ongoing professional learning programs

### **Teacher Induction Programs**

#### **Why are they needed?**

- Teachers participating in high quality induction programs are less likely to leave.
- Quality induction programs reflect environments that promote learning communities.

### **Characteristics of Quality Induction Programs**

- Clear goals and purpose
- Culture of shared professional development
- De-emphasized evaluation
- Rich content responsibility
- Continuum of
  - Instructional content
  - Pedagogical content
  - Personalized content promoting reflection
- Fiscal and political support

### **Effective Features of the Mentoring Component in Special Education**

- Frequent contact between mentor and mentee
- Non-evaluative role of the mentor
- Formal and informal support (meetings in the hallways)

### **Effective Features of the Mentoring Component in Special Education**

- Mentors specific to special educators
- Content
  - Importance of emotional support
  - Materials/resources
  - System information (district & special education)

### **Design Considerations for Special Education Induction Programs**

- Individual concerns
- Demands of the teaching context

### **Quality Ongoing Professional Learning**

#### Why is it needed?

- Teachers with opportunities to continuously develop their knowledge, skills and dispositions are less likely to leave
- Participation in quality professional development results in changes in teacher practice and increases student achievement

### **Characteristics of Ongoing Professional Learning Programs**

- The nature and goals of learning opportunities are school-based
- Intensive effort occurs overtime with practice and feedback
- Opportunities are linked to clear student performance standards
- Adequate release time
- Funding for professional learning opportunities

## Informal Support Systems

- Attrition factors
  - Certification status
  - Salary
  - Experience/ Age
- Lack of administrative support
- Role issues
- Negative school climate
- Stress/Dissatisfaction

## The Role of a Competent Administrator- A Starting Point

*A general knowledge of disabilities in children, school law, general education, vocational education, curriculum and instruction, effective intervention, budgeting, conflict resolution, due process, professional development, personnel and program evaluation and supervision, administrative duties, service delivery models, management/coordination of teacher assistance teams and the IEP process, and family issues around disabilities.*

## A View from the Field: Administrative Support for Special Education Teachers

- *Creating a Positive School Climate*  
*"Keeping the main thing the main thing"*
- *Valuing teachers as professionals*  
*"I just need a say"*
- *Creating a broad base of teacher support*  
*"I just want to teach"*

## Website Resources

- *No Child Left Behind*  
[www.nclb.org](http://www.nclb.org)
- *Southeast Center for Teacher Quality*  
[www.teachingquality.org](http://www.teachingquality.org)
- *Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy*  
<http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail>
- *National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special education*  
[www.special-ed-careers.org](http://www.special-ed-careers.org)
- *Recruiting New Teachers*  
[www.rnt.org](http://www.rnt.org)