



# Effective Teaching as a Civil Right

**Closing the Revolving Door:  
Understanding the Nature and Causes of  
Disparities in Access to Effective Teaching**  
*Lisa Quay*

**A Comprehensive Human Capital  
Management Strategy for Teacher  
Effectiveness**  
*Jane Hannaway*

**Delivering on the Promise of  
Public Schooling**  
*Susan Moore Johnson*

**Effective Teaching:  
What Is It and How Is It Measured?**  
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**Teacher Performance in the Context of  
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Can Help Close the Achievement Gap**  
*Linda Darling-Hammond*

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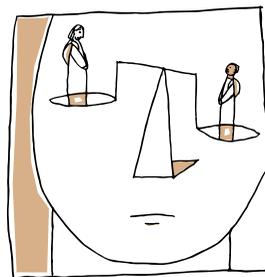
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# What Will It Take to End Inequities in Access to Effective Teaching?

Warren Simmons

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This past March, I participated in the Civil Rights Research Roundtable on Education, one of a series convened by the Warren Institute designed to provide access to the latest research on critical issues in education to civil rights advocacy groups such as the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund, the NAACP, the Urban League, and the National Council of La Raza and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates and Ford foundations.

The Roundtable focused on equitable access to effective teaching and was structured around a series of research presentations on defining, measuring, and analyzing effective teaching, specifically in high-minority, high-poverty schools, and what supports, practices, and policies are needed to end the intractable achievement and opportunity gap between affluent White students and their low-income counterparts of color.

As I listened to the research presentations, it struck me that they were informed by two broad and very different theories of action that were not explicitly identified by the participants.

A number of the researchers – particularly the economists – used a *performance management* lens to describe teacher effectiveness. This lens emphasizes the importance of teachers' educational background (e.g., SAT scores, college class ranking) and performance characteristics (e.g., value-added contributions to student achievement, based on standardized test scores and compensation and evaluation histories) to describe teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, the performance

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management perspective tends to treat effective teaching as an individual endeavor and thus seeks solutions focused on enhancing the identification and distribution of effective teachers in high-minority, high-poverty schools. With this lens, the social, racial, cultural, cognitive, and linguistic histories and characteristics of students, practitioners, and communities are secondary, if not tertiary, considerations to understanding variations in teacher effectiveness. The reasoning of the performance management theory of action suggests that if compensation and evaluation are tied to student achievement data, and schools are given the flexibility and authority to hire, assign, and fire teachers, and districts or systems are freed to reward effective schools and close low-performing schools, then teacher effectiveness will increase, along with student performance.

The other research voice and theory of action present at the meeting grew out of an emphasis on the importance of *instructional capacity building* and the use of practice-centered criteria grounded in research on teaching and learning to define the characteristics of effective teaching. This research underscores the importance of pedagogical content knowledge; classroom management skills; understanding of students' social, cultural, and economic backgrounds; understanding of cognitive and human development; ability to collaborate with peers; and ability to cultivate partnerships with parents and the broader community as critical components of effective teaching.

The instructional capacity-building theory of action would state that if schools and school districts provide supports that build the capacity of teachers to address the elements of effective teaching, then student performance will increase and achievement gaps will narrow.

While these two theories of action are not incompatible, the dominance of the performance management perspective in a meeting of civil rights advocates was striking, as this perspective treats culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and economic circumstances as demographic background features rather than forces

that shape individual and institutional actions differentially. By confining its attention to compensation, evaluation, data, accountability, and proxies for the quality of teacher pre-service preparation (e.g., SAT scores and class rankings), performance management theory appears to maintain that race and culture won't matter and that effective teachers (by their definition) will be equally competent across groups with very different needs and backgrounds. In this view, excessively focusing on these factors is sometimes seen as unacceptably “making excuses” for low performance. One could also argue that the instructional capacity building theory of action, by failing to focus on the ways districts evaluate, compensate, hire, and assign teachers, ignores how system actions and lack of capacity undermine investments in instructional capacity building at the school level.

Rather than view these two theories of action as mutually exclusive options that advocates must choose between, I believe the social justice community would be better served by examining the underlying values, strengths and weaknesses of each theory and how system reform might be advanced by a third, or what Boston College's Andy Hargreaves would argue, a “fourth” way.

When these post-Roundtable thoughts were posted on our website and widely distributed in our web commentary, *AISR Speaks Out*, they generated numerous comments that reflected the polarized discourse about teacher effectiveness that is so prevalent today in the field of education reform. This issue of *Voices in Urban Education*, produced in collaboration with the Warren Institute, is designed to provide a forum to explore the respective differences in values and approaches between the performance management and instructional capacity-building theories of action, along with the implications for equity.

- Lisa Quay describes the race- and income-based disparities in access to effective teaching, the ways these disparities are created and reinforced over time, and the potential for state and federal policy to help end them.
- Jane Hannaway makes the case for a full human capital management strategy to select, train, retain, and reward teachers.
- Susan Moore Johnson outlines the complex components of effective teaching and the importance of the school environment in teaching quality.
- Steve Cantrell and Joe Scantlebury advocate for robust, transparent feedback and evaluation systems that recognize the inevitability of errors but work to reduce them as much as possible.
- Elaine Allensworth argues that better methods of identifying individual teacher performance in schools with weak organizational structures are unlikely to lead to improvement without collaboration and supports for teachers around instruction.
- Linda Darling-Hammond underscores the need to integrate better ways of measuring and recognizing teacher effectiveness with systems that develop greater teacher competence and provide incentives for teaching the highest-need students.

This issue is also enriched by the perspectives of Joseph Bishop of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund; John Deasy, superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District; Anne Hallett of Grow Your Own Illinois; and Hal Smith of the National Urban League.

There is both common ground and disagreement among the authors in these pages. We hope that this *VUE* issue will help balance the debate between proponents of performance management and capacity building perspectives on effective teaching. Ultimately, however, we aim to identify new alternatives for expanding access to opportunity with the goal of

helping education reformers achieve equity and eliminate destructive racial disparities in education. We end the issue with this challenge from Hal Smith of the Urban League:

We are confident that education reformers largely believe that we are all working in the best interest of children and youth. But we are equally confident that the current educational narrative leaves little room for purposefully upending assumptions and expectations about students and communities of color. . . . The Urban League has a number of questions as to the quality and fidelity of reform implementation taking place in schools and districts across the country. What we want to highlight – and avoid – is the ways that reforms simply reinforce or follow paths of historic inequity rather than explicitly confront them and open additional possibilities for urban children and youth.

# Closing the Revolving Door: Understanding the Nature and Causes of Disparities in Access to Effective Teaching

Lisa Quay

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*Significant race- and income-based disparities in access to effective teaching persist and have been continually reinforced over time, but well-crafted state and federal policies could help end them.*

*Note: Excerpted and adapted, with permission, from the research brief Closing the Revolving Door: Understanding the Nature and Causes of Disparities in Access to Effective Teaching, published by the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy, University of California Berkeley School of Law. The full research brief, available at <[www.warreninstitute.org](http://www.warreninstitute.org)>, contains a comprehensive literature review and more detail about the research studies and statistical methods mentioned in this article.*

*Lisa Quay was formerly an education policy associate at the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy, University of California Berkeley School of Law and is now an independent education consultant.*

Over the past three years, a new focus on teachers as the critical unit of change has become a clamor for dramatic movement at all levels of policy, with substantial support by the Obama administration, state governors, and leaders of several major school districts. The current set of policy proposals are focused on universal reforms designed to increase all students' achievement levels in an effort to ensure the nation remains economically competitive internationally.

Much less emphasis has been placed on how these proposed reforms might impact the persistent gap in academic outcomes between low-income students and students of color and their more-privileged peers. If new reforms do not address race- and income-based gaps in achievement and in access to effective teaching, they risk perpetrating or exacerbating historic inequities that stand in stark contradiction to our nation's values of justice, democracy, and opportunity.

This article examines the nature and magnitude of disparities in access, the ways in which these disparities are created and reinforced over time, and the potential for state and federal policy to play a role in providing greater access to effective teaching among students of color and low-income students.

## **What Are the Disparities in Access?**

If there were little variation in teaching effectiveness, it wouldn't matter much whether a student were assigned to Mrs. Gonzales's class or Mr. Anderson's class for third grade – the growth in their academic achievement that year would look similar in either case. Unfortunately, there is a good deal of variation in teaching effectiveness, raising the stakes associated with the assignment of students to teachers, especially for those students who need the most support.

Given this variation, the question arises of whether there is a pattern to the distribution of effective teaching. If there were no systematic disparities in access, there would be no correlation between a student's racial/ethnic or class status and their likelihood of receiving effective (or ineffective) teaching. Unsurprisingly, research suggests this not to be the case. Disparities in access to effective teaching both between *and* within schools systematically disadvantage students of color, low-income students, and those students who are furthest behind academically.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a full statistical explanation and citations regarding variation in teacher effectiveness and disparities in access, see the research brief.

The magnitude of these disparities, however, varies substantially depending on the measure used and the context in which it is applied.

### **Disparities between Schools**

Studies that compare the quality of faculties in schools that have high proportions of students of color or low-income students and those serving more-privileged students find disparities ranging from modest to large that systematically disadvantage students attending schools serving less-privileged populations.

#### **TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS**

Large differences in access disfavor students of color and low-income students across a number of studies that use teacher characteristics and qualifications as proxies for effectiveness in the classroom. These results have been replicated using a variety of measures and in districts and states that represent a wide array of geographic, political, economic, and union environments.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that the inexperience of novice teachers with only one or two years in the classroom has a negative impact on student achievement.<sup>3</sup> Studies find that the faculties of schools serving students of color and low-income students tend to have a greater share of novice teachers than those serving more-privileged students (Clotfelter et al. 2007).

A similar pattern of inequity emerges in the prevalence of teachers who lack prior experience and expertise in their subject area, particularly at the middle and high school levels. Nationwide, nearly a third of the math classes in secondary schools with at

least 75 percent students of color were taught by “out-of-field” teachers, compared with just one-sixth of math classes in schools with 15 percent or less students of color (Education Trust 2007). A study in Illinois adds further evidence of race- and income-based inequities. Ranking schools according to a “teacher quality index” aggregates individual teachers’ characteristics on multiple dimensions. The study revealed that there is a subgroup of “truly disadvantaged” schools with extreme levels of racial isolation and severe poverty that are far more likely to have faculties with low-quality rankings (Presley, White & Gong 2005).<sup>4</sup>

#### **VALUE-ADDED METHODS**

Studies using value-added methods find modest to moderate disparities in access that disadvantage students of color and low-income students, depending on the district, grade, and subject. A recent study compared the average math and reading value-added scores of teachers in high-poverty and lower-poverty elementary schools in North Carolina and Florida. The greatest disparity, found in math value-added in North Carolina, was approximately equivalent to the detriment of having a teacher with only one or two years of experience compared to one with three or more years in the classroom. The researchers also observed that the weakest teachers in the high-poverty schools were considerably less effective than the weakest teachers in the lower-poverty schools, even though the strongest teachers in high-poverty schools appeared as effective as the strongest teachers in lower-poverty schools. This was not due to differences in effectiveness of incoming novice teachers,

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<sup>2</sup> For citations, see the full research brief.

<sup>3</sup> See Rice 2010, for example; more citations are included in the research brief.

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<sup>4</sup> For more detailed statistics and citations, see the full research brief.

however, but rather by the presence of extremely ineffective *experienced* teachers in the high-poverty schools (Sass et al. 2010).

The extent of disparities in access to effective teaching varies a great deal across districts. A recent study of ten districts found large, statistically significant disparities in access that disadvantaged the poorest schools in half of the districts included in the analysis at the middle school level, and one-fourth at the elementary level. In one of the districts, the poorest elementary schools actually had a disproportionately *high* share of the most effective teachers compared to their better-off peer institutions in the district (NCEERA 2011). Research in Fulton County Schools (Georgia) also found significant variation in the prevalence in schools of the district's most effective teachers; however, the disparities did not fall along traditional lines. They found "little difference" in the prevalence of the district's most effective teachers in high- versus low-poverty schools *on average*, but observed a large amount of variation between schools *within* each of the school-poverty quartiles. Looking only at schools in the highest-poverty quartile, 4 percent of the math teachers in one school ranked among the district's most effective teachers, compared to 68 percent in another school in the highest-poverty quartile (CEPR 2011).

#### **PRACTICE-BASED MEASURES**

There is less research using practice-based measures of teaching effectiveness on school-level disparities in access to effective teaching. But a 2010 analysis of data from the District of Columbia Public Schools' IMPACT evaluation system (which included multiple classroom observations for all teachers) revealed large disparities in the prevalence of highly effective teachers that

avored the schools in more-privileged neighborhoods. The best ratio of highly effective teachers to students (one highly effective teacher to every thirty-four students attending schools in the ward) was found in Ward 3, one of the District's wealthiest and most predominantly White wards. In contrast, the worst ratio of highly effective teachers to students (one highly effective teacher to 250 students) was found in Ward 8, one of the wards with the greatest proportion of Black residents and low average household income (Turque 2010).

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Studies that compare the quality of faculties in schools that have high proportions of students of color or low-income students and those serving more-privileged students find disparities that systematically disadvantage students attending schools serving less-privileged populations.

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#### **Disparities within Schools**

While much of the policy discussion to date has focused on these disparities *between* schools, the empirical literature suggests that we must look deeper *within* the school building to uncover the full extent of the disparities in access. Researchers have consistently documented that while it does indeed matter to which school a student is assigned, it matters even more to which classroom(s) they are assigned once placed in that school (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain 2005; Buddin & Zamarro 2009b). One study of elementary schools in Los Angeles found twice as

much variation in teaching effectiveness within schools as between schools (Buddin & Zamarro 2009a).

The limited body of research that explores disparities in teacher/student matching within schools suggests that these matching processes further disadvantage the very students who need the most support – those students who are furthest behind academically. A recently released study by Kalogrides and colleagues (2011) using longitudinal data across elementary, middle, and high schools in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, revealed that within schools, teachers with higher value-added scores and master’s degrees are assigned less-difficult classes – those with students who have higher average prior achievement, fewer prior suspensions, and higher attendance rates, as well as higher-level, advanced courses with older, more mature students. In contrast, teachers who have lower value-added scores, or who are less experienced, Black or Latino, or female are assigned to students with lower prior academic achievement, more prior suspensions, and lower prior attendance rates than their experienced, White, and male colleagues.<sup>5</sup>

Research using data from North Carolina demonstrates that within individual schools, teachers with the lowest licensure test scores are more likely to be assigned to classrooms with above-average proportions of students of color and students whose parents are not college educated. Furthermore, the students in these low-scoring teachers’ classes have lower prior achievement than those enrolled in classes taught by teachers with higher licensure test scores. Similar patterns emerge for

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5 The relationships between experience, race/ethnicity, gender, and class assignments remained even after the researchers controlled for human capital factors (e.g., value-added scores, teacher education level).

teachers with the least experience and those with degrees from the least competitive undergraduate institutions. In contrast, National Board Certified teachers instruct students with higher levels of prior achievement and whose parents are more affluent and more likely to be college educated (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor 2005, 2006).

### ***What Produces the Disparities?***

Recognizing the existence of meaningful disparities in access to effective teaching is a crucial first step, but alone it is not enough to craft thoughtful, evidence-based policies that can reasonably be expected to address the observed disparities. To this end, it is essential that we understand the ways in which these disparities are being produced and reinforced.

### **Movement of Teachers out of Schools**

When given the opportunity to leave their current school assignment, a lengthy body of research demonstrates that teachers of all demographic, educational, and professional profiles tend to leave schools serving higher proportions of students of color, low-income students, and those students who are further behind academically for positions in schools serving more-privileged and higher-performing students. This tendency is particularly true among those teachers with the strongest characteristics and qualifications; these teachers are also more likely to exit the profession altogether.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, research using value-added methods contradicts the belief that high-need schools disproportionately lose their most effective teachers. While these schools experience far greater turnover – or “churn” – on

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6 For a complete list of citations, see the research brief.

average than those serving more-affluent and White students, the value-added literature suggests high-need schools are actually most likely to lose their *least* effective teachers.<sup>7</sup> West and Chingos (2009) found that the four-year retention rates of new teachers in Florida schools in which at least two-thirds of the enrollees were students of color favored the *most* effective teachers – teachers in the top-third of the value-added distribution had retention rates more than ten percentage points higher than those teachers in the bottom third of the distribution.

The West and Chingos study makes clear another more troubling point. Even if these schools manage to hang onto their highest-performing teachers at a higher rate than their lowest-performing teachers, they are nonetheless losing far too many high-performing teachers – teachers who have already proven they are effective in these environments. Indeed, barely one in three of the most effective (top third) Florida teachers remained in their original schools four years after starting when the proportion of students of color in their initial school was at least two-thirds. The researchers observed a similar story in schools serving high proportions of students in poverty and low-performing students.<sup>8</sup> Schools with high-performing students, by contrast, demonstrate more “desirable” patterns of retention and attrition. While these schools retain nearly one in two (45 percent) of their most effective teachers four years in, barely

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7 The majority of these departing teachers tend to stay employed as teachers within the education system, however, whether transferring to schools within their district or transferring districts, giving fuel to the widespread notion of the “dance of the lemons.” For a complete list of citations, see the research brief.

8 Additional analyses were provided by Martin West, February 2011.



one in four (27 percent) of their least effective teachers still remain (West & Chingos 2009).

Across regions and districts, researchers find that teachers are far more likely to leave schools that have poor working and learning conditions because these school environments do not enable and encourage their success as educators.<sup>9</sup> Teachers are especially sensitive to the quality of support provided by administrators, the degree of collegiality and collaboration among their peers, the behavioral and learning climate of their schools, their own autonomy, class sizes, ties to parents and the community, and the quality of facilities and school resources, among others (Brown & Wynn 2009; Berry 2008). And high-needs schools are more likely to suffer from poor working and learning conditions. For example, investigators at the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that most of the differences in attrition rates that disadvantage schools serving low-income Black students in the Chicago Public Schools – some of which tend to lose more than one-fourth of their teachers each year – are due to teachers’ relationships with parents in the elementary grades and teachers’ perceptions

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9 See research brief for full list of citations.

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While there have been a fair amount of programmatic efforts at the school and district levels to alter the conditions that reproduce the inequitable distribution of effective teaching, making the link to state and federal policy has proved difficult.

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of students' behavior at the high school level (West & Chingos 2009).

Feng and Sass (2011) underline the particular sensitivity of teachers to the quality of their colleagues. Teachers whose value-added scores rank them higher than their colleagues are more likely to transfer schools and exit the profession; the greater the gap between their effectiveness and the average of that of their colleagues, the more likely these teachers are to leave their initial school. Furthermore, the increased presence of colleagues with more experience and advanced degrees or professional certification diminished the likelihood that a teacher would leave his or her school.

Administrators play a key mediating role in shaping the working conditions that are central to teachers' decisions to leave or remain in their schools. Unsurprisingly, then, many studies suggest that school leadership is the most important driver of teacher retention and, conversely, attrition (Boyd et al. 2009; Brown & Wynn 2009). In too many cases, administrators are unable to incubate the type of school environments that will retain teachers. This is particularly true in high-need schools. Too often, principals are inadequately trained in the specific skills and competencies required to lead such schools successfully (Berry 2008). Recent research suggests that high-need schools

experience high rates of principal turnover and that these schools have difficulty filling the resulting vacancies, leading them to hire less experienced and less qualified replacements. Predictably, principal departures are tied to higher rates of teacher turnover and lower rates of student performance, with more devastating effects on high-need schools in particular (Béteille, Kalogrides & Loeb 2011).

#### **Filling of Vacancies with Replacements**

The ways in which teachers fill open positions exacerbates the attrition patterns described above. High-need schools are more likely to hire novices, whom a number of studies have shown to be less effective, on average, than their colleagues with a couple more years of experience (Clotfelter et al. 2007; CEPR 2010). In addition to their obvious lack of experience in the classroom, the various programs and pathways designed to recruit and train novice teachers also fail to systematically prepare their teachers to teach successfully in schools serving high concentrations of poor students, students of color, and those students who are behind academically.<sup>10</sup> Research suggests this is true across both "traditional" undergraduate and graduate-level programs and alternative pathways (Boyd et al. 2008).

Furthermore, as research in New York City and Florida found, the

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<sup>10</sup> See research brief for a list of citations.

most effective experienced teachers are drawn to – and hired by – schools with greater shares of higher performing and more privileged students than their less effective colleagues who also departed their initial schools for new positions (Boyd et al. 2008; Feng & Sass 2011). In short, the “rich get richer” and the “poor get poorer.”

### **The Experience of Replacement Teachers in Their New Schools**

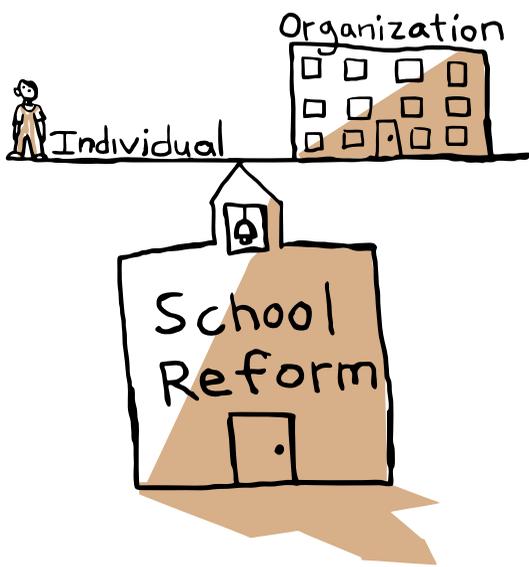
Once they arrive in these high-need schools, new teachers are not set up to succeed in the classroom. As described above, they are often assigned classes of students who are the furthest behind academically. Thus the teachers who need the most assistance are placed with the students who require the most support as well. In many cases, new teachers “receive little to no guidance about what to teach or how to teach it” (Kauffman et al. 2002). To the extent that there are induction programs available, many are in response to state mandates but funded with meager district resources (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson & Hoke 2002). Those that are far more substantial in scope and duration and have been rigorously evaluated have showed delayed impacts on academic achievement in some cases but have had no impact on retention of new teachers (Isenberg et al. 2010).

The recent analysis of data from North Carolina and Florida by Sass and colleagues underscores the challenges faced by new teachers in high-need schools and the importance of peer effects among teachers. While inexperienced teachers appear similarly effective initially in lower- and high-poverty schools, the teachers in high-poverty schools improve at a slower rate over

time than their colleagues in schools serving more privileged students – and these gaps in returns to experience grow with additional years in the classroom. The researchers hypothesize that teachers in these schools may “burn out” at a faster rate, or that this phenomenon reflects teacher peer effects in these schools (Sass et al. 2010). Given all this, it is not surprising that many of these high-need schools experience chronic, high levels of churn that undermine efforts to provide students of color and low-income students with access to the essential resource of effective teaching. When given challenging assignments that they feel unqualified to take on, new teachers are more likely to leave their school or the teaching profession altogether (Donaldson and Johnson 2010). Like most people, teachers want to feel that they can be effective in their work and will seek out those environments that encourage their success.

### ***Recommendations for Federal and State Policy***

The research presented above suggests the challenge for those working at the state and federal levels to increase access to effective teaching among students of color and low-income students is significant. Their task is to craft policies that successfully impact individual and organizational behavior at the district level and, even more importantly, within schools themselves. While there have been a fair amount of programmatic efforts at the school and district levels to alter the conditions that reproduce the inequitable distribution of effective teaching, making the link to state and federal policy has proved difficult. Given the research to date, we recommend three areas where state and federal policy can take action to increase the access of students of color and low-income students to effective teaching.



### Emphasize Solutions at the Organizational Level

Much of the emphasis in the policy community to date has applied an individualistic lens to the issue of providing equitable access to effective teaching – for example, proposing the use of financial incentives to change teacher behavior. Research suggests that teachers do respond to salary differentials in deciding where to teach (Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff 2002). However, the literature on the efficacy of bonuses intended to increase teacher performance and retention in high-need schools does not support the hypothesis that teachers will respond to such incentives as desired in the absence of other supports (Springer et al. 2010).

Evidence cited in this article, the research brief, and elsewhere (see, for example, Bryk et al. 2009) makes clear that a strong, intentional emphasis on the organizational context of schools is essential to both influencing teachers' decisions where to teach and improving their success in the classroom. Furthermore, as Bryk and colleagues demonstrate in their recent book on school

improvement in Chicago, such an organizational perspective is necessary to realize the potential of the presence of a high-quality staff (Bryk et al. 2009). Thus, though admittedly far more difficult than supporting more individual-oriented policies around teacher recruitment, evaluation, pay, tenure, and dismissal, state and federal policy must find ways of effectively supporting such an organizational focus.

Three organizational elements have a notable impact on teaching effectiveness: (a) the role of a teacher's colleagues in mediating her own effectiveness and her decision to remain in or leave her current position; (b) strong school leadership in areas such as establishing a flourishing learning community among teachers and students, setting cultural norms throughout the school, determining the assignment of teachers and students, and building connections with and marshaling resources from the surrounding community; and (c) at the state level, establishing and monitoring standards for working conditions.

### Recognize the Variation across “High-Minority, High-Poverty” Schools

As described above, there is a great deal of variation within the group of schools often classified as “high minority, high poverty.” Specifically, as the research in Illinois cited previously suggests, hyper-segregated, hyper-impoverished schools appear to bear a vastly disproportionate share of the burden in terms of inequitable access to effective teaching. Masked in the large band of schools with high rates of free and reduced price lunch eligibility, such schools are situated in neighborhoods with extraordinarily low average household

incomes, low social capital, and high rates of crime and involvement in foster care, among other characteristics. As seen in the implementation of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, federal and state policies tend to use blunt measures that treat schools serving high proportions of poor students as a homogeneous group in terms of need and response. While this entire body of schools clearly is in need of greater educational resources – including effective teaching – the unique challenges faced by a subset of these schools are not, and will never be, adequately addressed under the current policy framework. Rather, a successful policy response will likely need to distinguish amongst this broader group of schools, targeting resources and specific interventions at these “truly disadvantaged” schools that serve a disproportionate, concentrated body of students with severe challenges outside of school, such as a substantiated history of abuse and involvement with the child welfare system (Bryk et al. 2009). These considerations are particularly relevant in current policy discussions around “turnaround” schools.

### **Build Equity into Reform**

In this time of significant change to our public education system and larger political and policy landscape, it will be essential to insert equity into broader reforms that affect the teaching profession, either by intention or implication. When considering policies targeting everything from pre-service training to pensions, policymakers and advocates will need to carefully analyze these policies’ potential impact on the distribution of effective teaching and proactively use these opportunities to improve equitable access at all levels. As an example, rather than applying a general strategy of pay-for-performance

programs for urban districts, such an equity lens would prioritize merit pay specifically targeted to those educators teaching in classrooms with disproportionate numbers of high-need and low-performing students.

Finally, it is important to remember that achieving an equitable distribution of effective teaching will, at best, perpetuate the underlying achievement gaps that track along racial/ethnic and socio-economic lines. To fully close the gap, we will need more: from an intentionally inequitable distribution of effective teaching that favors those students furthest behind academically to a complementary suite of policies and programmatic interventions designed to ameliorate the broader disparities in our communities.

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# A Comprehensive Human Capital Management Strategy for Teacher Effectiveness

Jane Hannaway

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*A full human capital management strategy is needed to select, train, retain, and reward teachers.*

**T**here is no doubt that teachers and teaching are the most important school-level influences on students' learning. However, to date, school reform measures aimed at improving teaching quality have done no more to consistently improve student performance levels than other reforms. *VUE* executive editor Phil Gloudemans asked organizational sociologist and education researcher Jane Hannaway, director of the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research and a noted expert on educator effectiveness, accountability, and federal and state reforms, about her ideas on teacher effectiveness.

*What is the best way to achieve equitable access to high-quality instruction?*

JANE HANNAWAY: We need to think about a full human capital management strategy. This would begin with selection. The entry bar into teaching is currently low, considerably lower than that of many other countries where it often occurs at the point of highly selective entry into a teacher training program. The next step is the training itself. Teacher training is highly decentralized in the United States with different teacher training institutions doing very different things. Some programs may do a much better job than others, and we have very little understanding of the training dimensions that make a difference. Even with the same training, evidence shows that there is still considerable variation in the effectiveness of teachers. This calls for a second point of selection – tenure. Here evidence on actual effectiveness can be

taken into account to determine who is retained. Rewards for the high performers can be used to ensure good rates of retention of strong teachers. Using the full set of human capital management instruments would greatly help ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction.

*Value-added models have become increasingly popular as a way to evaluate, reward, and dismiss teachers. Some researchers argue that these models are not precise enough for high-stakes decisions. What are your views?*

JANE HANNAWAY: Every researcher I know who has conducted research using value-added understands its limitations and its virtues. The fact is that it is the best measure we currently have to predict future teacher performance. It does not make sense not to include

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We have preliminary evidence that it is the most experienced teachers in high-poverty schools who are the least effective. It is unclear whether this is due to the way teachers are sorted into and sort themselves into schools or whether it is due to burnout.

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this information when making personnel decisions about needed training and retention. At the same time, there is common agreement that it should not be used alone to make high-stakes decisions. Value-added should be used in conjunction with other information – for example, principal ratings or expert classroom observations – to help ensure that good teachers are not penalized by the limitations of value-added measures.

*What features of the present labor regulations governing the teaching profession would you modify?*

JANE HANNAWAY: Teacher pay is currently heavily based on experience and degrees. The evidence is clear that experience affects teacher performance, but only for the first few years. The evidence is also clear that degrees do not affect teacher performance, with some exceptions, such as the amount of math training by math teachers.

*Some districts reward teachers with tenure after just two years of service, which you've characterized as premature. What would be a better approach to teacher tenure?*

JANE HANNAWAY: After only two years, we do not have sufficient information to make reliable value-added estimates of teacher effectiveness. In addition, teachers are still moving up their learning curve in terms of how to teach. In short, we have exceedingly little information with which to make a lifetime commitment to a teaching job. I would like to see decisions about tenure made after, say, five years. With regard to the value of tenure, I think it is still something we need to investigate. It could be a very important job consideration for teachers. If it affects retention rates for good teachers, we should keep it.

*What supports do teachers and students in high-minority, high-poverty schools need in order to improve the working and learning environments there?*

JANE HANNAWAY: This is an area where we need further research. For example, an argument could be made that school districts (or states) should pro-

vide incentives for strong teachers to move to schools where they are most needed. Incentives could be in different forms – for example, pay-based, smaller classes, more instructional support, etc. But this assumes that teachers effective in one setting (say, a school serving advantaged students) are similarly effective in another setting (say, a school serving disadvantaged students). We have preliminary evidence that a teacher's value-added is portable – it goes with the teacher even in different settings – but more work is needed to confirm these findings. We also have preliminary evidence that it is the most experienced teachers in high-poverty schools who are the least effective. It is unclear whether this is due to the way teachers are sorted into and sort themselves into schools or whether it is due to burnout. If the latter, high-poverty schools may need to have established mechanisms that transfer teachers after some period of time to settings that are less demanding.

*Are the performance management and instructional capacity-building perspectives mutually exclusive in their implications for policy and practice?*

JANE HANNAWAY: They should go hand-in-hand. But we need to recognize that teaching is highly complex and demanding work. It calls on high levels of both cognitive and interpersonal skills, often in unpredictable ways. With good pre-service experience and focused support on the job, not all teachers may be able to perform at high levels, despite their best efforts. And it is often only clear who can do it after they have actually taught for some

period of time. We should celebrate and reward those who are successful. The bottom line is the students. We need a fully developed and fair strategy to select, train, retain, and reward teachers. No one element of the strategy is sufficient.

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*Note:*

The National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) has a number of working papers on these topics at <[www.caldercenter.org/publications.cfm](http://www.caldercenter.org/publications.cfm)>.

# Delivering on the Promise of Public Schooling

Susan Moore Johnson

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*Those seeking to improve teaching effectiveness must recognize that the components of effective teaching are complex and depend on school environment as well as individual teacher characteristics.*

Evidence abounds that public education in the United States has not yet become the great equalizer many had hoped it would be. The Black-White achievement gap persists within districts and schools. Students in high-poverty districts lag behind their peers in affluent districts. And results from the international PISA examinations (OECD 2010) show that the United States has a far lower proportion of “resilient” students – those who succeed at school despite a disadvantaged background – than most other developed countries. In part, these inequities result from forces beyond the control of the public schools, such as racially segregated housing or school funding based on the local property tax. Still, public schools in the United States can and should do much more to ensure success for all students.

For many years, those intent on equalizing the opportunities and success of underserved students focused on the inequitable distribution of resources, such as libraries, textbooks, or science equipment, to communities and to individual schools. They introduced federally and state-funded programs, such as Title I, to provide specialized instructional opportunities for low-income students. Although such initia-

tives all depended on teachers for their delivery, reformers did little to distinguish among those teachers. Anyone with the right license was assumed capable of doing the job.

Within the past decade, however, policymakers and practitioners increasingly have focused on individual teachers as resources, recognizing that some are more effective than others in equalizing both opportunity and success for disadvantaged students (e.g., Boyd et al. 2008). At the recent Warren Institute Civil Rights Research Roundtable on Education, in which I participated along with others writing in this issue of *VUE*, Andy Baxter of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools posed a question that reflected this new perspective: “How is measuring the distribution of effective teachers to schools different from measuring the distribution of computers to schools?”

Parents and teachers have long known that some teachers are more effective than others – not simply by a bit, but by a lot. Within any school, savvy parents use their personal influence to see that their children are assigned to certain teachers, but not others. Teachers, themselves, are well aware that many of their colleagues serve students effectively, while others

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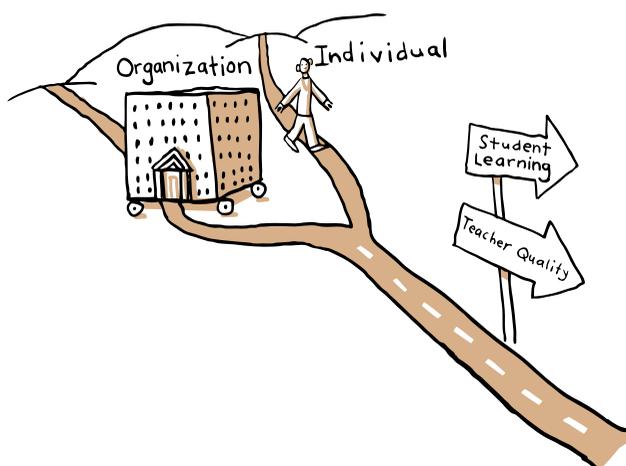
contribute little to students' learning and a few may even cause harm. Yet it was not until about 2000 that scholars clearly established that teachers are the single most important school-level factor in students' achievement, as measured by standardized tests and that within schools, there is wide variation from classroom to classroom in teachers' effectiveness (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain 2005; Rowan, Correnti & Miller 2002; McCaffrey et al. 2003).

Jane Hannaway and her colleagues at the Urban Institute (Sass et al. 2010) found this variation to be especially great within schools serving the students with greatest need. She reported at the Roundtable that although the most effective teachers in high-poverty schools compare favorably with the most effective teachers in low-poverty schools, there is a wider range of effectiveness in high-poverty schools. Similarly, Tim Daly of The New Teacher Project reported on research by the Tennessee Department of Education (2007) showing that poor and minority students are less likely to get the most effective teachers and more likely to get the least effective teachers.

In our work at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers,<sup>1</sup> we have found that many teachers choose schools that serve minority and high-poverty student populations and that they stay in those schools when they function effectively. In discussing teacher mobility and effectiveness at the Roundtable, Marty West of the Harvard Graduate School of Education noted the importance of improving teacher retention at high-poverty/minority schools, not as an end in itself, but as a strategy to improve teacher effectiveness. It makes no sense to assign successful teachers to dysfunc-

tional schools – poorly led, unsafe, isolating environments for teachers and students alike – in the hope that skilled individuals will overcome serious organizational limitations. Students and teachers alike deserve to have schools that encourage and support focused teaching and learning.

Although it is now well established that teachers differ in their effectiveness, it is not yet clear what explains those differences. Until that is well understood, efforts to equalize opportunity and ensure success for all students will depend on policymakers' best guesses about what works rather than on solid evidence. The answer may lie in what teachers, themselves, bring to their teaching – prior coursework and degrees, special certification, or years of experience. Alternatively, differences in pedagogy may distinguish between successful and unsuccessful teachers. Or the context of the school may increase or diminish teachers' effectiveness. The presentations and discussion at the Roundtable suggest that all three play a role and that progress in achieving equity will depend on understanding how each works and how they interact.



<sup>1</sup> See <[www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt)>.

## ***Teachers' Qualifications***

Efforts to identify what, if any, role certain teachers' qualifications – their teacher preparation (or lack of it), holding a master's degree, or years of experience teaching – play in their success have, as yet, yielded mixed findings. This has led some reformers to conclude that there are no important differences in the effects of pedagogical training or prior experience for teachers – that anyone with subject-specific coursework and personal commitment can succeed. However, it seems clear that the final word on this line of research is not yet in. At the Roundtable, Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University reported on research showing that various preparation programs have differential effects on teachers' success. Also, Helen Ladd of Duke University reported on analyses of North Carolina data (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor 2006) showing that, in fact, differences in certain qualifications – licensure test scores, graduation from a competitive college, years of experience, and certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards – actually do matter and that their effects are relatively large. Notably, Ladd and her colleagues found that “poor and minority students tend to have teachers with weaker qualifications than White or more affluent students.”

## ***Pedagogy***

The research showing that disadvantaged students are disproportionately assigned to ineffective teachers is convincing, but it tells us nothing about the kind of instructional practices students experience with either effective or ineffective teachers. We do not yet know what some teachers do to achieve greater success than others. At the Roundtable, Steve Cantrell reported

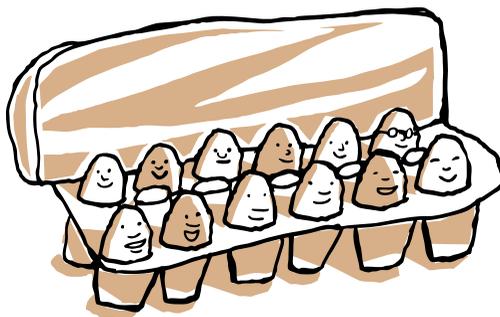
on the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in which researchers are examining videos of teachers' math and literacy classes to identify and describe the instructional practices of teachers whose students make large achievement gains and those whose students do not.

These and similar studies eventually will inform and guide a wide range of policies, programs, and practices. However, lacking clear evidence about what pedagogies are most effective, some local districts are relying on value-added scores – statistical estimates of individual teachers' contributions to student achievement – as proxies for measures of teaching quality. With such estimates, they can redistribute teachers evenhandedly within and across schools. For example, Andy Baxter reported that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has adopted policies designed to ensure that every school has some highly effective teachers and that within schools, every student has access to those teachers. Elementary principals in the district now are required to assign students who have been taught by a less-effective teacher one year to the classroom of a more-effective teacher the next. However, in his presentation, Baxter raised an important question: “Are top teachers ‘top’ for all students?” Although there is no clear research to answer this question, routine school practice would suggest that the answer is “probably not.” In current and future research, it will be important to learn whether particular pedagogies are more or less effective with certain sub-groups of students. If districts and schools decide to reassign teachers in order to achieve equity, they must ensure that the students who are meant to benefit from such trades actually do.

## Context

Even if researchers agree about the combination of characteristics and practices that make some teachers more effective than others, it is increasingly clear that teachers who succeed in one setting may not succeed in another. All schools are not equal in the context they provide for teaching and learning. Jane Hannaway reported that North Carolina and Florida students in high-poverty schools achieve far less than students in low-poverty schools. However, she and her colleagues also found that the differences were not sufficiently explained by teacher characteristics or value-added scores. There were small differences in the average teacher value-added scores between high- and low-poverty schools, although variation was larger within high-poverty schools, which overall had the weakest teachers. The researchers conjectured that high-poverty schools might be less successful in attracting and retaining more-effective teachers. However, high rates of mobility among teachers in high-poverty schools did not sufficiently explain their students' lower levels of success, leaving Hannaway to observe that equalizing teachers' experience across schools "may not do much" to ensure that students in high-poverty schools are effectively taught. This work suggests that school context matters and that, therefore, reformers who seek to increase opportunity and resilience among disadvantaged students would do well to think beyond the individual teacher and address the differences in schools as places for teaching and learning.

However well-intentioned, swap-out strategies, which replace weak teachers with effective ones (whether directly by assignment or indirectly by



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It is increasingly clear that teachers who succeed in one setting may not succeed in another. All schools are not equal in the context they provide for teaching and learning

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incentives) are unlikely, in themselves, to equalize opportunity for students, largely because they reinforce the centuries-old "egg-crate" model of schooling, in which the school functions as an aggregate of units, rather than as an interdependent organization. Within any school, there are always some teachers who are more effective than others, whether as a result of preparation, subject knowledge, experience, or pedagogical skill. In an egg-crate school, students may or may not benefit from the excellent pedagogy of the school's best teachers, depending on who their assigned teacher is at any time. Although students move through the egg-crate school from grade to grade and classroom to classroom, their teachers may know little about what they experience in other grades and classes. Egg-crate schools are not designed to ensure that teachers learn from one another by sharing

their best practices. Nor are teachers in such schools likely to hold one another accountable for the quality of services to students.

Elaine Allensworth reported on her work with colleagues at the Chicago Consortium of School Research (2010) about the effect of school context on teachers' mobility. They found that, overall, schools with chronically high teacher turnover tend to serve more disadvantaged and African American students than schools with low teacher turnover. However, based on surveys of teachers, they also learned that schools with greater staffing stability are more interdependent organizations. These

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To reassign effective teachers to high-need schools will not succeed, unless the schools themselves function well. If effective teachers are not valued and supported in their work, they are unlikely to stay.

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schools have strong leaders, and the teachers work together in professional communities. The schools also have high levels of parental involvement and are safe spaces, with few disciplinary problems.

Allensworth's conclusion that "teachers leave schools where they feel ineffective" is consistent with our earlier work at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, where we found that new teachers' career decisions – whether to stay in their school, transfer to another, or leave teaching altogether – were largely determined by whether they thought they could achieve a "sense of success" in their

work (Johnson & Birkeland 2003).

The school was the center of their experience, and whether they stayed or left depended on a set of related organizational factors – their relationships with colleagues, whether their teaching assignment was appropriate and manageable, whether the school provided a supportive environment for teaching and learning, and whether the principal managed the school fairly and effectively. This line of research suggests that if schools serving high-poverty students are to recruit and retain effective teachers, they must become places where excellent instruction is not only possible but likely. To reassign effective teachers to high-need schools will not succeed, unless the schools themselves function well. If effective teachers are not valued and supported in their work, they are unlikely to stay, creating persistent, problematic instability.

Ladd (2011) finds that North Carolina teachers' perceptions of their working conditions predict both their planned and actual movement away from their school; those who are dissatisfied report that they intend to leave, and they do. The character of their school strongly influences not only teachers' current performance but also their decisions about whether to stay or go. Thus, policies designed to make all schools places where teachers can be effective may well have greater payoff than any scheme to reassign them.

At the Roundtable, I reported on our recent research at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, exploring teachers' views of their school as a work environment. Using statewide survey data, we examined the relationship between Massachusetts teachers' satisfaction with their working conditions and students' academic growth (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, forthcoming).

## PERSPECTIVES: Teaching Effectiveness Strategies and Latino Children

*Joseph Bishop is director of education at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund.*

Equitable learning systems to support high-quality instruction cannot be haphazardly thrown together with the hope of improving student learning. Local, state, and federal efforts to improve teacher quality – a critical piece of learning systems – have been random and inconsistent at best. For example, state and federal investments in public education and the teaching profession in the 1960s and 1970s stopped in the 1980s, just as schools were starting to show progress in low-income communities (Darling-Hammond 2010). A general lack of patience and commitment to educational equity on a policy and political level has put us in this position.

### **What Is Teacher Effectiveness?**

We need to think of teaching effectiveness as a spectrum: recruiting a diverse pool of the most talented teachers to work in low-income communities, preparing teachers using rigorous standards in a residency setting, and providing support for teachers once they enter the classroom. Each component of the effectiveness spectrum matters; we can't focus on one piece without the others and expect student learning to take place.

Factors such as school

finance challenges and lack of incentives to teach in high-need communities can lead to an inequitable distribution of high-quality teachers. However, a highly qualified teacher does not necessarily ensure student learning without the proper positive conditions to promote student success, including clear alignment between higher education institutions and feeder K–12 systems, outstanding principals and administrators, parental and family engagement strategies, and healthy students.

Teachers who are effective in one context may not be in another. Latino students, for instance, need instructors with the knowledge, skills, and cultural competence to ensure their success. For English language learners, teachers, administrators, and staff need to have the language development expertise to support students in their native language and assist students in the acquisition of both academic content and English in the process. Educators also need to have the training to meaningfully engage parents and families, including non-native-English-speaking parents. These strategies all need to be integrated as part of teacher preparation programs for all credentialed teachers and should be required as part of teacher performance assessments. The same requirements should be applied to educational leaders, as well, with regard to preparation and performance assessments.

### **What's Missing from the Current Debates on Teacher Effectiveness?**

Performance management and instructional capacity-building strategies will need to coexist as part of current discourse on teacher effectiveness and public education. Discussion on teacher effectiveness and improving public education will likely continue to focus heavily on performance management, a reflection of interest from policymakers and their constituents who want to know the impact of their investment in schools. However, instructional capacity building and developing human capital in schools is the only possible way to produce the type of student learning outcomes that performance management aims to achieve.

Current public debates on teacher effectiveness are disconnected from the global citizens we are hoping will graduate from our high schools and colleges. All students need to have not only core content knowledge, but also twenty-first-century skills and knowledge. This will determine their ability to think critically, defend arguments both orally and in writing, and interact with peers in a multilingual, multi-literate, multicultural, global society. Teachers need to have the preparation and multifaceted levels of expertise to support the development of students with all that is required of today's students

*(continued on page 26)*

## Teaching Effectiveness Strategies and Latino Children *(continued from page 25)*

in a global economy. Yet current conversations on teacher effectiveness are being restricted by an overemphasis on test scores, encouraging the isolation of students, teachers, and learning and making students with the greatest need a huge liability for schools.

Participants in the dialogue on teacher effectiveness need to remember who will be most directly impacted by their discussions. For the short term, it

may be teachers and their professional accomplishments. But for the long term, it will be the minds and lives of students who will be affected most. Students of color and low-income students are soon to represent the majority of the student population, and U.S. Census data suggest that is already the case in most communities. Discussions related to student success must acknowledge the realities of who the students are that

we serve and what role teacher effectiveness can play to support their achievement.

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We found that teachers who view their school organizations favorably report being more satisfied and less likely to plan to transfer or leave teaching than their peers in schools with less favorable conditions, even after controlling for student demographics and other school and teacher characteristics. We also found that schools with better work environments for teachers achieved greater growth in student learning. Teachers reported being affected by a range of working conditions. However, those that they said mattered most were the ones that shape the social context of teaching and learning: school culture, the principal's leadership, and the relationships with their colleagues. We are currently conducting case studies in order to understand how these social factors play out in six urban schools, all serving high-poverty, high-minority student populations.

### ***Moving Ahead***

There is much debate and rhetoric these days about the rights of students and the obligations of teachers. Proponents of the swap-out strategy for redistributing effective teachers suggest that teachers' preferences should matter little in their assignment. However, research about school context suggests that if schools serving high-poverty students are to improve substantially, teachers cannot be treated as if they are itinerant workers or replaceable parts. Instead, these schools must be organized so that the strengths of some serve the needs of others. Only in this way can efforts to improve the quality of teachers and teaching advance.

One approach to improving instruction and student learning is to create dense networks of information and exchange among teachers. Recently, researchers Jackson and Bruegmann (2009) found that students have larger achievement gains in math and reading, both initially and over time, when their teacher works with more effective colleagues at the same

grade level. Further, they found that these “positive peer learning effects” were especially strong for less-experienced teachers. Notably, Sass et al. (2010) found that new teachers in high-poverty schools improve over time more slowly than they do in low-poverty schools. Many factors may explain this, but one is likely to be the isolation of teachers in schools that experience repeated turnover. Therefore, it makes sense for policymakers to devote resources to structures that maximize positive peer effects through collaborative work structures, such as common planning time. Rather than seeking to improve a school classroom by classroom, reformers might better invest in strategies to improve the growth of teachers across the school.

Recognizing the importance of the school context means that districts also must assign their best principals to the most challenging schools, create opportunities and incentives for teamwork within schools, provide sufficient resources for teaching and learning, and ensure that schools serving students with the greatest needs are safe, orderly, and responsive to the concerns of parents. Instituting reform policies that would increase the proportion of effective teachers within schools, without attending to the overall quality of the school as a context for those teachers’ work, is shortsighted and likely will be ineffective. By implementing a comprehensive and coherent approach, U.S. schools can begin to deliver on their promise of equity, opportunity, and success for all students.

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# Effective Teaching: What Is It and How Is It Measured?

Steve Cantrell and Joe Scantlebury

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*Robust, transparent feedback and evaluation systems are needed that recognize the inevitability of classification errors but work to reduce them as much as possible.*

**A**t the heart of the student achievement gap lies a credibility gap. Our school systems are based on a premise we all know not to be true: that students are equally well served by whoever teaches their classes. The consequences – to students and to teachers – are great. The good news is that this open secret is no longer so; teachers and school leaders are talking about it and grappling with it. Few teachers now assert that teaching cannot be measured (Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2010). Design teams made up of courageous educators in numerous districts are engaged in the hard work of honestly rethinking their support and evaluation systems for teachers.

But amid this promise, there is also peril. If we're not careful about how we go about this work, we could replace one credibility gap with another. If teachers have reason not to trust the systems put into place to support and evaluate them, then these systems cannot achieve their aims of improving teaching effectiveness. If so, we will have lost a rare opportunity.

As states and school districts adopt systems to measure effective teaching, there is a growing concern about accuracy. Nobody wants a system that routinely misclassifies teachers. Some even

assert that teaching cannot be measured: that teaching is an art, not a science, and dedicated teachers should not be subject to additional accountability pressures. But how do we balance those concerns with the needs of students? We cannot pretend that students are equally well served by whoever teaches them. Forgetting to balance students' concerns with those of teachers has dire consequences – ones that accrue disproportionately to young people already struggling to succeed.

Having the courage to walk this fault line between potentially misclassifying some teachers and not classifying teachers at all requires constant attention to the consequences for both teachers and students. It's a balancing act, to be sure; but if we cannot avoid error, we should err in favor of students. When building robust feedback and evaluation systems, perhaps it is best for us to admit that error is always present and be transparent about where it exists. In this way we build trust and limit misuse of feedback and evaluation systems.

## ***Consequences for Students***

Findings from the teacher effectiveness literature reinforce what education professionals and those who have spent significant time in schools know well: the

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assignment of a student to a teacher's classroom is not a trivial exercise, but rather an act of great consequence.

This research literature can be reduced to three basic findings. Student performance differs across different classrooms, indicating that the quality of teaching matters (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain 2005). Evidence from random assignment studies suggests that these differences are attributable to teachers, rather than to the student composition of the class (Kane & Staiger 2008). These differences are greater *within* schools than across schools, indicating that it is not enough to provide feedback and accountability at the school level (Nye, Konstantopoulos & Hedges 2004). Moreover, the performance differences are large. By some estimates, having a top quartile teacher versus a bottom quartile teacher yields performance gains equivalent to closing a quarter of the Black-White achievement gap (Gordon, Kane & Staiger 2006). In the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project,<sup>1</sup> these differences in student performance between those taught by top and bottom quartile teachers ranged from one-third to over a full year of learning gains. These are not minor differences.

Yet most school systems do little, if anything, to ensure that students have an equal chance to receive the best available instruction or to prevent students from being assigned to the least effective teachers for year after year. In many school systems, the status symbols and contractual arrangements work together to decrease the likelihood that students who struggle the most receive the most effective instruc-

tion. Too often, teacher status is determined by their students' performance level. Teachers of Advanced Placement, honors, or gifted students are accorded higher status than their peers whose students struggle in school. New teachers, who are demonstrably less effective than their more experienced peers, are not only given the last choice of assignment, but often have to teach multiple classes, each requiring separate preparation. These organizational features increase the difficulty of closing the achievement gap. In addition, the absence of robust measures of teaching effectiveness allows too many schools and districts to ignore these systemic inequities. While students, their parents and caregivers may not fully appreciate the magnitude of these systemic inequities, the impact on their lives is unmistakable.

Anecdotes are numerous of individual teachers who made a personal difference in a student's life. We are all familiar with these accounts. If we are regular readers of this journal, we can likely share stories of our own. Concluding that individual interventions



<sup>1</sup> For more information on MET, see <[www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states/Pages/measures-of-effective-teaching-fact-sheet.aspx](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states/Pages/measures-of-effective-teaching-fact-sheet.aspx)>.

and instructional heroism is all that students and families can reasonably expect elevates these status privileges, contractual arrangements, and managerial omissions in ways that undermine the high aspirations of students, their families, and educators. Moreover, the absence of any clear or legislated right of students to an effective teacher creates no conflict of laws or balance of rights. Students have no enforceable right to an effective teacher, and thus they bear the burden of our systemic inequities.

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## Students have no enforceable right to an effective teacher, and thus they bear the burden of our systemic inequities.

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### *Consequences for Teachers*

The most recent analyses fault teacher evaluation systems for their inability to differentiate among teachers (Weisberg et al. 2009). The typical system has two or three performance levels, yet assigns the lowest rating to less than one percent of all teachers. Teachers report that the evaluation process is often perfunctory. School leaders often receive minimal guidance and even less training on managing and executing teacher evaluation. When teachers have a positive experience with evaluation, it appears to be based on idiosyncratic factors, highly dependent upon the skills of the evaluator.

As a result, these weak feedback and evaluation systems are largely irrelevant to how schools conduct business. Seldom do feedback and evaluation systems inform consequential staffing and central office decisions. Even if those in charge know better, most school systems are organized as if differences among teachers were nonexistent. And

when differences are apparent to teachers and patterns appear to disparately impact entire communities, school and district leaders seldom have the political courage or incentives to call the question about instructional practices. The measures in use seldom inform teacher assignment, professional development offerings, or promotion decisions.

The dire consequence for teachers is no feedback. Too many teachers are left alone to self-assess their competence and self-prescribe improvement. The difficulty of this bootstrapping effort is exacerbated by the relative isolation within which most teachers practice. The metaphor of the “egg-crate” school remains apt (Lortie 1975). Without accurate indicators and without meaningful exposure to other teachers’ practice, self-improvement efforts are far from guaranteed to succeed. This is not mere conjecture: the data on returns to teacher experience shows little to no improvement beyond a teacher’s fourth year of practice (Boyd et al. 2007). As Deborah Ball, dean of the University of Michigan School of Education (2011), said, “An enormous faith is placed on ‘learning from experience,’ despite substantial empirical evidence that experience is an unreliable ‘teacher’” (p. 4).

The lack of any clear performance signal has other negative consequences for teachers, including uncertainty about whether they have satisfactorily accomplished their mission, a general disconnect between effort and reward, and growing unease with the system’s failure to address teaching ineffectiveness (Rochkind et al. 2007). The lack of performance signals fails to encourage the right teachers to stay in the profession and the wrong ones to leave. While we certainly agree with Linda Darling-Hammond that “you can’t fire your way to Finland” (UCLA/IDEA 2011),

we also believe that teachers come to the profession to do good and have hope that given stronger feedback, those few teachers who cannot succeed will leave teaching and find better ways to deploy their talents.

### ***Increasing Trust***

Without trust, there cannot be feedback but only judgment. Only trustworthy information will be useful to teachers seeking to improve. Validity and reliability are the research standards for information quality and are useful ways to think about building trust in the information provided by feedback and evaluation systems. The Foundation's work with our MET partners has led us to focus on four "trustworthiness tests" – face validity, coherence, scoring reliability, and predictive validity.

*Face validity* is simply the "sniff" test. When teachers encounter the system for feedback and evaluation they want to see indicators that reflect competencies they value. To pass this test, teachers must believe that the system is directed toward aspects of teaching and learning that they believe make a difference to students. If the competencies required by the system could be met without fundamentally meeting the needs of students – "professional appearance" comes to mind – then teachers could attend to the competencies required by the system without influencing their ability to enhance student learning.

*Coherence* refers to the interconnections among parts of the system. If the feedback and evaluation system is unrelated or only loosely connected to other parts of the system that impact teaching and learning, such as professional development, curriculum and instruction, or mentoring, then opportunities for leveraging synergies across these areas are lost and the possibility increases for conflicting goals

and confusion regarding outcomes. Importantly, the feedback and evaluation system should reflect the theory of instruction espoused by the district lest the disconnect between the two promotes confusion.

*Scoring reliability* – unreliability in scoring is the aspect of feedback and evaluation systems that may most undermine trust. Few school systems, however, routinely track or report rater reliability. For teachers (and their unions), it is patently unfair for their rating to be dependent upon the ability of the rater rather than the quality of the lesson. Our teacher advisory panel, our union partners, and the district administrators working closely with us all agree that uneven rater reliability is prevalent. In response to this need, we have plans to disseminate the training and monitoring methods used by the MET project researchers to ensure reliability.

*Predictive validity* indicates whether the system has the right focus. It refers to the association between competencies measured by the feedback and evaluation systems and the desired outcomes. If there is little or no association between the actions being tracked and the outcomes of value, then the system is broken. If this connection does not exist, then it is hard to support the claim that doing what the system requires will lead to the desired outcomes, such as increased student learning.

The MET project is an exercise in building trustworthy feedback and evaluation systems. It is not and never has been an attempt to build "the one best system." Instead, it serves to test the idea of a multi-faceted feedback and evaluation system by combining promising, yet emerging, indicators of teaching and learning. As MET serves to test an increasingly popular idea – multiple measures – it fully recognizes

## PERSPECTIVES: The Superintendent's View

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*What is the best way to address the objective of equitable access to high-quality instruction?*

To raise the performance levels of non-White, low-income students, parents in those communities need to be given viable educational options. Their children must no longer be forced to attend chronically underperforming schools. If another operator comes forward with a better plan to educate students in a low-income community, then it should be given the opportunity to do so. Only in this way can we begin to break the cycle of education failure that plagues too many of our students.

*From the administrators' point of view, are the performance management and instructional capacity-building strategies mutually exclusive? What else needs to be part of the discussion?*

Administrators and other practitioners must work closely with teachers to explain the meaning of teacher recommendations, particularly those that are based on new data and research. Teachers need to understand both strengths and weaknesses suggested by the data. In addition, teachers need to be made aware that Value Added and Academic Growth Over Time, among other measurements, are intended not to threaten their jobs, but to give them – plus parents and administrators – a better guide as to how they are doing their jobs.

We [also] focus on instructional capacity building strategies to improve student outcomes. Consequently, these strategies go hand in hand with performance management. The purpose of performance-based management is to ensure that an organization achieves its goals. As the superintendent, it is my responsibility to facilitate human performance that leads to improved student achievement. Performance management allows us to use data to determine in which instructional strategies to invest. As we continue to push for using data to foster accountability, we need to also use data to ensure that we truly become a learning organization.

that the promise of multiple measures is not that there are more measures, but that these measures represent different facets of teaching and learning that individually and collectively support student learning gains on outcome measures such as state performance assessments.

### ***Reducing Error and Building Credibility***

There is a connection between reducing error, or misclassification, and increasing use. Teachers will use feedback only when they believe it will improve their practice. Otherwise, they will seek ways to game the system. Passing the “trustworthiness” tests

goes a long way toward reducing error. Feedback is more likely to be used when the system is aligned with what teachers view as best practices; the parts of the system connect logically; scoring processes are reliable; and the indicators do, in fact, indicate what helps students learn better.

There are other types of error that similarly limit or distort the use of a feedback and evaluation system. Agreement around outcomes tops the list. When what is measured is disconnected from what is valued, efforts to increase scores on the measure will be met with little enthusiasm and even resistance. State assessments are routinely condemned as insufficient

(or even unfair) measures of school outcomes. There is reason for optimism on this front, as the consortia tasked with developing assessments aligned to the Common Core Standards will likely improve the substance and status of state tests. Still, it would be too easy to use the need to improve tests as a reason to avoid accountability and feedback – if the outcome is important to student success, measure it.

Attribution is a thorny problem that, left unresolved, also will undermine the feedback and evaluation system. At the most basic level, there is the administrative challenge of ensuring that the data systems link the right students to the right teachers. This sounds deceptively simple, yet it is quite common for the teacher of record to be different from the teacher who provided the instruction. In many elementary schools, students are re-grouped for math and/or English language arts. While the school may know perfectly well which students are taught by which teachers and for what duration, the central office records may not be accurate. It is easy to see the damage to the system's credibility should a teacher receive feedback (or be rewarded or sanctioned) based on students taught by another teacher.

Related to the attribution problem is where to place accountability. Accountability for effective teaching cannot sit solely upon the shoulders of teachers. If supports are deployed, as a school system seeks to close the gap between the most and least effective teachers, then the effectiveness of these supports should be subject to the same rigorous feedback and evaluation processes. If a particular professional development or curricular intervention does not improve performance for those who have received it, then the system cannot claim to have supported teacher

development. Similarly, if the working conditions at a school do not increase the likelihood that those teachers who struggle are supported by their more successful colleagues, then the administration of that school is failing to support teacher growth and needs assistance. The fact that measures are precise at the teacher level does not limit their use to that level.

Finally, we return to misclassification. So far, researchers have not been able to explain what appears to be an anomaly in the empirical findings – persistent and consequential differences in student performance for top and bottom quartile teachers alongside apparently unstable teacher rankings. It appears inconsistent to hold both findings as true. If teachers are routinely misclassified, why, when compared to similar groups of students, do the students of previously identified top and bottom quartile teachers persistently outperform (for top quartile teachers) or underperform (for bottom quartile teachers) their peers?

We can only speculate why misclassification exists: it could be that a majority of teachers provide similar instruction and only the top and bottom 15 percent meaningfully differ from the average; or even the top and bottom 5 percent or 10 percent. We don't know. It matters because many of the state and district evaluation systems assume that it is possible to accurately assign teachers to one of three or four rating categories.

To build trust means not eliminating error, but committing to reduce it. We can reduce the error of misclassification if we focus on where we think we have the best information. If not, again, we could replace one credibility gap with another – pretending that teachers fall neatly into four or more



categories of effectiveness – when we do not know how many categories exist or whether our measures are good enough to make such fine distinctions.<sup>2</sup>

The MET project will explore this anomaly in an upcoming report based on over 12,000 lessons captured on video. The analysis of teacher practice will provide an estimate of observable differences among teachers and provide some evidence to suggest how large the “messy middle” of teacher practice is.

<sup>2</sup> One path forward is to increase our understanding of the true performance distribution – it’s not likely normal. The size of the middle part of the distribution matters. A purely hypothetical example will help illustrate the point. Assume that 70 percent of teachers constitute a middle where it is difficult to find observable differences in teaching practice. In this case, the underlying distribution of teacher practice would be 15 percent observably weaker than average, 70 percent average, and 15 percent observably stronger than average. If the categories used to differentiate teaching quality do not reflect the underlying distribution, but used quartiles instead, the misclassification rate is by definition at least 40 percent at both the highest and lowest quartiles. Moreover, since these teachers’ practice is indistinguishable from average practice, those misclassified at either the top or bottom quartile could be categorized in the opposite quartile the following year. While 40 percent would indicate an unacceptable level of misclassification, if the remaining 60 percent of teachers in each of these quartiles were identified correctly (the real top and bottom performers), large performance differences between students of top and bottom quartile teachers would persist from year to year.

## **Implications for Civil Rights**

Most Americans share the value that all students deserve an equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education. We understand that individual student effort and motivation, coupled with family and community support and expectations, may play a part in the success of an individual student. We also understand that even without those supports, students can graduate ready for college and careers, if they have teachers dedicated to this mission. Thus, an equal opportunity to a high-quality education should, at minimum, afford every child a chance to be taught by the best teachers that a school system has to offer. If for some reason whole groups of students were denied this chance, or if the opportunity to be taught by a great teacher were nothing more than chance, we would collectively demand that such a system be changed.

The scenario is not hypothetical. We know that many students are routinely provided with the least effective instruction. This directly impacts and perpetuates the so-called academic achievement gap – a gap that W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) wrote about eloquently in *The Souls of Black Folk*. In this seminal work, DuBois described education’s potential to lift a people newly emancipated and striving to overcome the pernicious effects of Jim Crow laws and stark racism. He observed that education was essential both for sustenance and citizenship and hoped that “Education [would] set this tangle straight” (p. 91). He charged educators at the turn of the last century to embrace that mission and unflaggingly prepare the next generation.

Du Bois would be pleased to know that such educators exist among the current generation. As we work in partnership with teachers to determine

what it means to be effective, we are increasingly aware that current teachers are not monolithic in their views, or blind to the deleterious impact on students of teacher assignment, distribution, evaluation, and support practices that relegate the neediest students to instructional settings with the least potential for success. These teachers, conscious of the classroom and life challenges that students face, seek ways to support and spread great teaching practices, improve instruction, and fairly transition out of the profession colleagues for whom it is not a good fit. We support and seek to inform their efforts. Together, we are clear that closing achievement gaps will not happen by chance or by avoiding serious conversations about what we owe students, whose uncoded rights do not include the right to an effective teacher.

While it may not be a right, fairness dictates that school systems at the very least know which of its students receive instruction from the least effective teachers and take measures to ensure that this doesn't happen to particular students year after year. In the longer run, closing the teaching effectiveness gap – and thereby reducing the consequences accompanying assignment to the least effective teachers – is perhaps the single most important step we can take toward closing the achievement gap. This requires measures that we can trust, so that systems know which teachers are most in need of support and which students, having suffered inadequate instruction, require special handling to ensure that this does not happen in consecutive years. Most importantly, these measures should provide trustworthy feedback. For it is through feedback that we get to Finland. The path to improvement cannot possibly lead through ignorance.

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# Teacher Performance in the Context of Truly Disadvantaged Schools in Chicago

Elaine Allensworth

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*Better methods of identifying individual teacher performance in schools with weak organizational structures are unlikely to lead to improvement without collaboration and supports for teachers around instruction.*

Imagine trying to be an effective teacher at a school where the average student misses two months of class time out of nine months of the school year – a common situation in urban high schools. Further, imagine that your fellow teachers and school leaders refuse to work together to prevent students from skipping class or support struggling students in a coordinated way. You may stay, but probably not for long, and not if you have other options. Teachers tend to leave schools where they feel ineffective. At the same time, it's harder to be effective in schools with the lowest levels of student performance, schools that are most in need of effective teaching.

There is a pressing need to improve the quality of instruction in urban schools to reduce long-standing inequities in educational performance by race and economic status. The current policy context acknowledges the importance of teaching quality for student achievement, but the most popular policy strategies for improving teaching focus on individual teachers, using incentives to attract and reward strong teachers and developing methods to identify and remove those who are weak. As I discuss in this article, our work at the Consortium on Chicago

School Research shows that the context in which the teacher works sets the stage for them to be effective and want to stay in their school. It does little good to put highly qualified teachers in a weak school if they are unlikely to stay there, or if they are not able to put their skills to good use because of larger problems in that school environment. There is a role for examining individual teachers' performance, and for using performance management to build the professional capacity of a school, but it is unlikely to be effective if it narrowly focuses on individual teachers. Without broader work on the school as an organization, schools serving the most disadvantaged students will face high rates of teacher turnover and little chance of sustained instructional improvement.

## **Teacher Mobility**

Some teacher mobility is normal, but too much instability in the teaching staff can be problematic, particularly if it is chronic. On average, about 85 percent of teachers in the nation remain teaching in their school from one year to the next (Keigher & Cross 2010). In Chicago, an urban school district that predominantly serves low-income

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African American and Latino students, about 80 percent of teachers remain teaching in their school each year. On the surface, that may sound fine. But one-year stability rates hide a sobering statistic: within five years, the typical Chicago school loses more than half its teachers (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009).

Teachers are particularly unlikely to remain teaching at schools with low levels of student achievement and high concentrations of poor and minority students.<sup>1</sup> In Chicago, about 100 schools lose about a third of their teaching staff every year.<sup>2</sup> These are schools with very low levels of achievement, where more than 90 percent of students qualify for free/reduced priced lunch and the student body is more than 85 percent African American, or mixed African American and Latino.

High turnover rates produce a range of organizational problems for schools, such as discontinuity in professional development, shortages in key subjects, and loss of teacher leadership. Principals and school staff must devote extensive time annually to recruiting new teachers, taking attention away from other vital school improvement activities

such as implementing and sustaining new initiatives. Teacher instability can thwart efforts to create a professional learning community among teachers and make it difficult to develop sustained partnerships with parents and the local community. Moreover, schools with high turnover are more likely to have inexperienced, less effective teachers (Kane, Rockoff & Staiger 2006; Clotefelter et al. 2006; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin 2004).

### **Work Environment**

While teachers are more likely to leave more-disadvantaged schools, not all low-income African American schools have high rates of teacher mobility. It is the working conditions in schools that explain why teachers leave, and why teachers are more likely to leave schools with low levels of student achievement that serve racial-ethnic minority students (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009).

In our study on teacher mobility in Chicago, *The Schools Teachers Leave* (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009), we found that the quality of the work environment was strongly predictive of whether teachers remained in their school. One key element in teacher retention is teachers' perceptions of their colleagues as collaborators. Teachers are more likely to stay in a school if they see themselves as a part of a team that is working together toward making their school better, supported by school leadership; they are likely to leave schools where colleagues are resistant to schoolwide initiatives, where teachers' efforts stop at their own classroom door (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009). Teachers are also more likely to stay in schools where they feel they have influence over their work environment and they trust their principal as

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<sup>1</sup> A 2007 study in Illinois showed that novice teachers were systematically less likely to remain if they took a job in a school that had low levels of student achievement; they were less likely to remain teaching long-term in schools with high percentages of low-income or minority students (DeAngelis & Presley 2007). Studies in New York and Texas found that student achievement levels were the most important predictor of turnover (Boyd et al. 2007; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin 2004), while a study in Georgia found that preferences for teaching in low-minority schools accounted for nearly all of the differences in turnover among schools (Scafidi, Sjoquist & Stinebrickner 2007). Likewise, the study of Florida teachers by West and Chingos (2009) suggests that teachers tend to move into higher-performing schools with more-advantaged students.

<sup>2</sup> On average, these schools lose 31 percent of their teachers each year (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009).

an instructional leader (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009).

These are the same elements of schools that are most predictive of improvements in student learning; schools that show the largest improvements in student learning over time are those where teachers work collectively on improving instruction, and where school leadership is inclusive and focused on instruction (Bryk et al. 2010). Thus, schools that lack the most important elements for improving instruction also lack key conditions that make teachers want to stay.

Two further working conditions account for most of the differences in teacher mobility rates by school racial composition. One is teachers' relationships with parents. Especially in elementary schools, teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they feel that parents support their work as partners in educating students (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009). The second, which is particularly critical in high schools, is the learning climate at the school (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009). Teachers are more likely to stay at schools where students feel safe, and where students report that their classroom peers engage in appropriate academic behavior. Teachers tend to leave schools where students frequently face disciplinary problems and many students feel unsafe in school. There are classrooms throughout Chicago with exemplary teaching and orderly classrooms, but in the lowest-performing schools in the district, there are many classrooms in chaos. It is difficult to imagine how a teacher would return day after day to a work environment that is so disruptive almost no learning can occur.

Research in places outside of Chicago has likewise found that working conditions seem to affect whether teachers remain teaching in their school. As Susan Moore Johnson notes, novice teachers are more likely to stay in their school when they are engaged in a collaborative way with more experienced colleagues (Johnson 2009). A 2008–2009 follow-up study to the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) found that teachers who changed schools tended to report better working conditions in their new school than their old school: more support from administrators, more opportunities for working with colleagues, better availability of resources and materials, and more influence over workplace policies and practices (Keigher & Cross 2010). Other studies have found that strong principal leadership reduced turnover (Clotfelter et al. 2006, Grissom 2008).

### ***School and Classroom Context***

In 2010, my colleagues and I documented the findings from a large study in Chicago that examined the ways in which school practices and school and community conditions promote or inhibit improvements in mathematics and reading learning (Bryk et al. 2010). We found that schools that are effective in improving student learning tend to have strong organizational structures across five areas: leadership, professional capacity, partnerships with parents and community, learning climate, and instruction. When examining professional capacity in the school, we found that the individual qualifications of teachers were not nearly as important as the ways in which teachers worked together. When tied to strong instructional practices, the extent to which teachers took collective responsibility for the school and formed a pro-

professional community were the most important elements for improving learning gains. Schools with strong collaboration were more effective as a whole than schools with strong individuals and little collaboration.

While a strong professional community seemed to lead teachers to be more effective than they would be on their own, a poor learning climate limited even the most qualified teachers from being effective. Another study in Chicago found that the association between teacher qualifications and learning gains depended completely on the school context (DeAngelis & Presley 2011). In general, learning gains were higher the more that the teaching staff had high levels of human capital – higher ACT scores, more teachers who passed the basic skills test on the first try, and full certification. But there was no association between teacher quality and learning gains at schools with poor learning climates – students at these schools were unlikely to show substantial gains regardless of the quality of the teaching staff.



**School Climate**

It is difficult to enact high-quality instruction in a disorderly, unsafe environment. But developing a safe, orderly climate is more challenging when a school serves disadvantaged student populations. Schools tend to be safer when their students come from communities with less poverty and crime, and especially where there are social resources in the community (Steinberg, Allensworth & Johnson 2011). In Chicago, the schools serving students from neighborhoods with the highest

**PERSPECTIVES: Community-Based Solutions to Teaching Effectiveness**

*Anne Hallett is director of Grow Your Own Illinois.*

In late June 2011, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an editorial about assessing teachers and supporting high standards for determining “who does and doesn’t have the right stuff to be a professional educator.” Everyone wants the most effective teachers in classrooms, especially classrooms attended by the lowest-

income students, who need the best public education has to offer – but often get the worst. The *Tribune* editorial made me ask: what is “the right stuff” and how do we know if a professional educator-to-be has it?

Research tells us a great deal about the right stuff needed to teach what Sonia Nieto (2005) calls the “new majority” of public school students – students of color who are poor and

from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Effective teachers who increase achievement for these and other students (Darling-Hammond & Sykes 2003; Payne 2008):

- know the content they are teaching;
- have pedagogical skills and ability to teach in multiple ways;

*(continued on page 40)*

## Community-Based Solutions to Teaching Effectiveness *(continued from page 39)*

- know how to motivate, engage, and assess diverse students;
- nurture strong relationships with parents and community members;
- teach in culturally compatible and responsive ways;
- have experience.

In Illinois, every potential teacher has to pass the Basic Skills test, an entrance exam into the College of Education. This test does not assess any of the characteristics above – nor does it correlate with effective teaching. In September 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education raised the passing scores on this test significantly higher than the scores recommended by an expert panel they had assembled. The results? Devastating. Using the state's own, perhaps optimistic, data, nine months of test results show that with over 11,500 test takers, only 37 percent are passing. Among Caucasians, fewer than half (43 percent) are passing; among African Americans, 13 percent are passing; among Latinos, 19 percent are passing. Even though teacher candidates will have to pass multiple other tests before they can become teachers, this test is now denying almost all people of color entry into colleges of education in Illinois.

Illinois shares with other states a very serious problem in preparing and retaining minority teachers. In the past decade, minority students in Illinois have increased dramatically to 40 percent, while minority

teachers have decreased to 13 percent! The national figures, recently quoted by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan are: students of color, 40 percent; teachers of color, 16 percent. If we believe teachers of color are important to the success of students of color, let alone to equity and social justice, serious commitment and intentional strategies are needed (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor 2007).

Chicago community organizations created one such strategy, Grow Your Own (GYO) Teachers, to provide a pipeline of highly effective teachers of color, who live in the low-income neighborhoods where they will teach and, once prepared, stay in teaching. GYO invests in non-traditional candidates: 85 percent are people of color who work in or volunteer in their schools. GYO is state law and is state funded. There are some 350 candidates, with average GPAs of 3.1, and almost fifty graduates, with another fifty projected to graduate by the end of next year. Almost half are preparing for hard-to-fill positions, such as bilingual and special education. Early assessment data bears out that GYO candidates combine their community connections and assets with solid preparation and become excellent teachers. They know content and how to engage students. And they understand the culture, language, and communities of the students and their families because they live there, too.

If we care about diversity in the teaching force – and if

we are serious about resolving the challenge of recruiting and retaining effective teachers in low-income neighborhoods of color<sup>1</sup> – we need strategies such as GYO that support and encourage potential teachers of color to learn their craft, prepare themselves to be highly effective, and then prove they have the right stuff as teachers.

<sup>1</sup> See McAlister, Mediratta & Shah 2009.

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crime rates and the fewest social resources predominantly serve African American students; thus, there are many high-poverty African American schools with substantial problems with safety and order (Steinberg, Allensworth & Johnson 2011).

Further research that we conducted in Chicago (Steinberg, Allensworth & Johnson 2011), showed that crime and poverty are related to school safety largely because students living in high-poverty, high-crime neighborhoods are more likely than children from other areas to enter school with histories of low academic achievement (Steinberg, Allensworth & Johnson 2011). Schools that enroll more students who have struggled in school in the past are more likely to have problems with safety and order. Students with low levels of achievement are less likely than high-achieving students to be engaged academically and more likely to feel frustrated by their performance. This, in turn, makes lower-achieving students more likely to act out and less likely to respond to academic punishments.

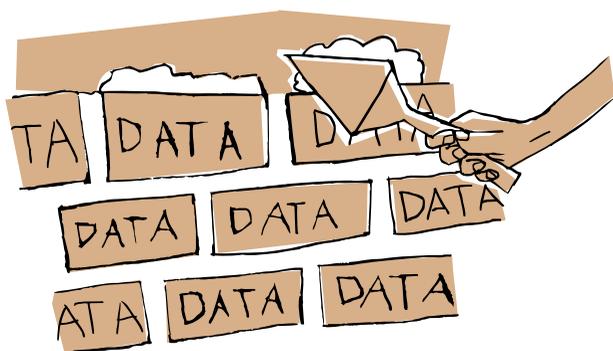
It is much more difficult for schools to develop strong climates for instruction, and good partnerships with parents, when they serve communities that are highly disadvantaged. The most disadvantaged schools in Chicago serve families that live in neighborhoods where male unemployment rates are over 60 percent, there is one crime reported for every 2.4 people, and there is little participation in community organizations or religious institutions. In many of these schools a quarter or more of students have substantiated histories of abuse or neglect (Bryk et al. 2010). Schools that serve highly disadvantaged populations find it difficult to develop the climate, the collaborative relationships with families, and professional

communities that make it easy for teachers to be effective. Teachers' comfort in reaching out to families, and their knowledge of how to do so, is made more difficult by cultural and economic differences between them. It is also harder to have coherent and consistent attendance and discipline policies when serving a student body with high rates of residential and school mobility, and more problems with attendance. At the same time, our research shows that schools serving highly disadvantaged students that do manage to develop strong organizational supports for teaching are just as likely to show learning improvements and to hold on to their teaching staff, as are schools serving more advantaged student populations (Bryk et al. 2010; Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo 2009).

### ***The Focus on Individual Teachers***

Strategies around teaching that focus on the qualities and performance of individual teachers assume that instructional quality is inherent in the teacher. If teachers are working in the same context this might be true, but teachers face very different working conditions in different schools. Teacher evaluation systems that judge teachers without regard for context further disincentivize teaching in the hardest environments.

Some value-added models consider peer effects or student composition. However, many do not. They often compare students with similar prior performance to each other – this shows which schools and teachers produce the highest learning gains. But they do not adjust for the fact that it is harder to create a strong environment in some contexts than in others. Teacher evaluations based on observations are not any more fair for teachers in the most



difficult contexts – commonly used protocols make no adjustments for the types of students being served. Yet, we know that instructional quality is determined not only by the skills teachers bring to the classroom, but by the interaction of those skills with the students being served and the larger school context.<sup>3</sup> If we base incentives and employment decisions entirely on performance, without regard for context, we risk increasing turnover rates in schools that already have little stability.

At the same time, it is not fair to students to lower expectations for instructional quality, especially for those with low levels of achievement who most need high-quality instruction. There is a role for using information on individual teachers to improve the overall instructional quality in a school. Teacher qualifications do matter; at a basic level, if teachers don't have the content knowledge and pedagogical skills, they can't be successful. In Chicago, where the district has set a goal of students reaching a score of 20 on the ACT, there are high schools where the average ACT of teachers is 17 (DeAngelis & Presley 2007). It is hard

<sup>3</sup> Ball and Cohen (1999), for example, note that it is not just the teacher that determines the quality of instruction in a classroom, but the interaction of the teacher and the students together around the material technologies.

to imagine that these schools will be able to bring students to reach achievement levels that the teachers themselves did not meet.

More importantly, indicators of instructional quality from value-added scores or classroom observations can be used to focus teachers' and school leaders' collaborative work on the real instructional problems that exist in their school. Especially in schools serving students with weak skills and large social problems, it is often hard for teachers and school leaders to acknowledge when their students are not being served well. It is easy to blame low levels of learning on students' prior preparation and the more difficult context. Data on value-added and instructional quality can be a strong motivator when comparisons are made within the same context. It is hard to ignore problems when a school or classroom looks poor relative to others serving similar or less-advantaged students. Data on classrooms and student performance can be used to structure professional development and build a professional community in the school, focused on the instruction and learning that is actually occurring in the building.

### **Conclusion**

It seems unlikely that much will be gained from better methods of identifying teacher performance in schools with weak organizational supports. Telling a teacher that she needs to improve is sufficient only for those teachers who are not already trying to be effective. Besides having the motivation to change, teachers need to know what to do. That is why it is so critical to have systems that support teachers around instruction and why collabora-

tion can provide insight into methods for better practice. Likewise, if a teacher is in a school with a poor climate for instruction where she feels she cannot be effective, pointing out that she is ineffective may do little except make her more frustrated. Strategies that focus on individual teachers can only go so far by themselves.

More critical than identifying those few especially effective or ineffective teachers is to develop collaborative relationships among teachers, school leaders, and families so that schools are not reliant on a few good teachers. Without improving the school context so that it is a good working environment, teachers who could have been effective will leave. Many schools are stuck in a cycle of teacher loss that is hard to break – teachers leave because of poor school climate and low achievement, but these are hard to improve when there is constant turnover. Unless this cycle is broken, students who have historically underperformed will continue to do so. Schools that struggle with low achievement, especially those serving the most impoverished communities, face extraordinary challenges in developing strong organizations that can maintain a strong teaching staff. But building those organizational supports is what is needed to provide a high-quality instructional environment for all students and improve equity in educational outcomes.

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# Effective Teaching as a Civil Right: How Building Instructional Capacity Can Help Close the Achievement Gap

Linda Darling-Hammond

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*Better ways of measuring and recognizing teacher effectiveness must be integrated with systems that develop greater teacher competence and provide incentives for teaching the highest-need students.*

**D**espite growing evidence that expert teachers are critical to educational achievement, well-prepared and effective teachers are the most unequally distributed educational resource in the United States. Since federal supports for urban school funding and teacher training were dramatically reduced in the 1980s, teacher shortages in schools serving low-income students have increased. Since then, it has been increasingly common for students in poor rural and urban schools to experience a revolving door of inexperienced and underprepared teachers.

Current policy discussions focus on two distinct approaches to developing a more effective teaching force. One approach, articulated more than a decade ago by the conservative Fordham Foundation (1999), argues that teacher qualifications do not matter; the idea is to let anyone into teaching and then see how it works out. The approach puts little stock in efforts to support teachers' learning through pre- or in-service development and seeks to improve teaching by attaching hiring, promotion, and pay decisions to test scores, on the assumption that teachers will try harder if they know that outcomes count. Like "Theory X" in the business literature, this view

assumes that knowledge and skills are not a problem, and that individuals are primarily motivated by rewards and sanctions attached to performance measures. Proponents of this view argue that policies should remove "barriers" to entry, such as teacher education and certification, and personnel decisions should be made based on student test scores.

A second approach, articulated initially by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), argues that teacher knowledge and skills are closely related to teachers' and schools' capacity to support student learning and that the inequitable distribution of teacher qualifications is a serious problem in U.S. education. Schoolwide capacity building – building collective capacity, developing a more coherent curriculum, and providing schoolwide strategies for student support – is emphasized along with individual capacity building. Like "Theory Y" in the business literature, this approach assumes that most people want to be competent and are motivated by seeing that their work makes a difference. Proponents of this view argue for policies that strengthen teachers' instructional knowledge and skill, equalize resources to school districts, and pro-

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vide incentives for investments in teaching capacity – including approaches to teacher evaluation and development that give teachers feedback about practice and reward them for improving their skills and sharing expertise.

This article describes why I think test-based incentives are inadequate to support teaching quality and educational equity, and why I believe a capacity-building approach is critically important to promote effective teaching in all communities, particularly those where it is currently most lacking.

### ***Components of Effective Instruction***

To build a useful policy system that encourages excellent instruction and strong student learning, it is important to consider both *teacher* quality – so that the system recruits the right people and prepares them effectively – and *teaching* quality – so that the most effective practices are encouraged and the most supportive conditions are provided.

#### **Effective Teachers**

*Teacher* quality might be thought of as the bundle of personal traits, skills, behaviors, and understandings an individual brings to teaching. Research has found that more-effective teachers generally possess high verbal ability; strong content and pedagogical knowledge; an understanding of learners and learning; an ability to design useful curriculum, engaging learning tasks, and informative assessments; and an ability and willingness to reflect on and improve their own practice.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last decade, these capacities have increasingly been built into licensing and certification requirements,

which include preparation in content and teaching skills, as well as basic skills and subject matter tests. Certified teachers have been found to be significantly more effective than uncertified teachers for elementary students, especially African American and Latino students (Easton-Brooks & Davis 2009; Darling-Hammond et al. 2005); secondary students (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor 2007; Goldhaber & Brewer 2000; Monk 1994); and special education students, in both mainstreamed and special education settings (Feng & Sass 2009). In special education, as in other fields, certified teachers are twice as likely to stay in the profession, which enhances their overall effectiveness still further (Boe, Cook & Sunderland 2006).

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**It has been increasingly common for students in poor rural and urban schools to experience a revolving door of inexperienced and underprepared teachers.**

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In combination, teachers' qualifications can have very large effects. For example, a recent study of high school students in North Carolina found that students' achievement was significantly higher when teachers were certified in their teaching field; were fully prepared upon entry; had higher scores on the teacher licensing test; graduated from a competitive college; had taught for more than two years; or were National Board Certified (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor 2007). Further, the combined influence of having a teacher with *most*

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of studies, see Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Darling-Hammond 2000; and Wilson, Floden & Ferrini-Mundy 2001.

of these qualifications rather than a few of them was larger than the effects of race and parent education combined. A similar study of teachers in New York City also found that teachers' certification status, pathway into teaching, teaching experience, graduation from a competitive college, and math SAT scores were significant predictors of teacher effectiveness in elementary and middle grades mathematics (Boyd, Lankford et al. 2008).

### **Effective Teaching**

*Teaching quality* – that is, strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn – is in part a function of *teacher quality*, but it is also strongly influenced by the context of instruction. A teacher who is effective within her own field of preparation or with affluent students may not be effective in other circumstances. Substantial evidence also points to the importance of class size, specific curriculum supports, the availability of instructional supports such as tutoring, and the use of time as strong predictors of student achievement, along with factors like student attendance.<sup>2</sup>

As Lisa Quay's article in this issue documents, access to good leadership and to good colleagues matters. In fact, collective practice is as important

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Oakes 2003.



as individual skill (Berry, Daughtrey & Wieder 2010; Bryk, Nagaoka & Newmann 2000; Ingersoll & Perda 2009; Wei et al. 2009). In one study, economists found that most value-added gains were attributable to teachers who were more experienced and better qualified, and who stay together as teams within their schools. The researchers found that peer learning among small groups of teachers was the most powerful predictor of improved student achievement over time (Jackson & Bruegmann 2009).

### ***Unequal Access to Effective Teachers and Teaching***

Because of disparities in school funding and revenues, working conditions are poorer and salary levels are lower for teachers in most cities serving large concentrations of low-income students of color and in poor rural areas than they are in wealthier suburbs, creating problems for recruitment and retention. The practice of lowering credentialing standards to fill classrooms in high-minority, low-income schools – a practice that is unheard of in high-achieving nations and in other professions – has become commonplace in many U.S. states, especially in states with large minority and immigrant populations, like California, Florida, New York, and Texas.

Dramatic inequalities in access to certified teachers have been documented in lawsuits challenging school funding in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, and Texas, among other states (Darling-Hammond 2010b). By every measure of qualifications – certification, subject matter background, pedagogical training, selectivity of college attended, test scores, or experience – less qualified teachers are found in schools serving

greater numbers of low-income and minority students (NCES 1997; Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff 2002).

A recent study by Mathematica illustrates what happens when schools become dumping grounds. The study, which compared the effectiveness of teachers from short-term alternative certification (AC) programs to those of other teachers in their schools, found that the AC teachers were only hired in the highest-minority, lowest-income schools in high-minority, low-income districts within states that often prohibited the practice elsewhere. Not surprisingly, students of AC teachers who were still finishing their coursework learned significantly less than students of other teachers (Constantine et al. 2009), and those taught by teachers from the “low-coursework” alternative programs actually *declined* in their reading and math scores by nearly two normal curve equivalent points between fall and spring of the academic year (Darling-Hammond 2009). Teachers from the “high-coursework” programs did somewhat better, and their traditional-route counterparts did better still, indicating that better trained teachers produced better outcomes for students.

Even if those who stay in teaching catch up to their peers later, *students* who have had such teachers when they were novices may never catch up, especially if the students have a parade of such beginners year after year. In reading, for example, the negative effect on upper elementary students taught by underprepared novices has been estimated as the loss of about one-third of a grade level each year (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner 2002; Darling-Hammond et al. 2005). Nonetheless, defendants in school funding lawsuits have gener-

ally argued that qualifications don't matter, and, therefore, disparities in access to trained, certified, and experienced teachers are not a problem and should not require changes to the unequal allocation of resources to rich and poor schools. This argument has also been used to suggest that ESEA's rules to require stronger qualifications for teachers and to distribute them more equitably should be discontinued and replaced by post hoc indicators of teacher effectiveness based largely on student test scores. Proponents of this view appear unconcerned about protections for students who may be taught for years by a revolving door of unqualified and ineffective teachers who enter and leave before their effectiveness can be ascertained.

### ***Recommendations for Developing – and Equitably Distributing – Effective Teachers and Teaching***

States and districts that have consciously built the capacity of teachers in high-need schools have reduced achievement gaps by investing in teacher and principal preparation and development, building more collaborative school organizations, and equalizing salaries and working conditions.<sup>3</sup> While there is growing interest in moving beyond measures of teacher qualifications to evaluate teachers' effectiveness based on test score gains, it is critically important to develop measures of teacher and teaching effectiveness that *support improvement* in individual and collective teaching expertise along with providing accurate pictures of teachers' abilities.

Ultimately, the goal of measuring teacher effectiveness should be to

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<sup>3</sup> For a review, see Darling-Hammond and Sykes 2003.



improve teachers' capacities and the effectiveness of the educational enterprise. Focusing only on evaluating poor teachers out of the profession is unlikely to produce a highly effective teaching force if there are not equally strong efforts to develop a steady supply of effective teachers entering and staying in the profession and becoming more effective over the course of their careers. These recommendations focus on such strategies.

### **Create a Steady Supply of Prepared and Effective New Teachers**

Based on the findings described earlier, smart policy systems would provide incentives to recruit high-ability students into teaching; ensure that they complete high-quality preparation before entry; support rigorous licensing standards; and invest in supports for retaining beginners, including high-quality mentoring. Such incentives could take the form of service scholarships and forgivable loans like the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program that underwrites the costs of college and teacher preparation for high-ability students who commit to teaching for four years; incentives and supports for preparation and men-

toring programs that are engaging and effective in preparing teachers; and investments in rigorous certification standards that are closely related to the knowledge and skills needed to teach effectively.

Pre-service teacher preparation and mentoring enhance teacher effectiveness both by transmitting important knowledge and skills and by enabling teachers to stay in the profession and become more effective with experience. Whereas 49 percent of recent college graduates who enter teaching without certification leave within five years, only 14 percent of fully prepared entrants leave (Henke, Chen & Geis 2000). Teachers who have had no student teaching, and those who lacked coursework in child development, learning, curriculum, and other knowledge essential to teaching, leave at twice the rates of those with more complete preparation (NCTAF 2003; Henke, Chen & Geis 2000).

Providing expert mentors to coach beginners also reduces beginning teacher attrition, with rates of leaving reduced from more than 30 percent of beginners to as low as 5 percent in some districts that have introduced high-quality programs. Well-designed mentoring programs improve retention rates, attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and range of instructional strategies for new teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes 2003). Federal and state incentives should leverage local efforts to create strong mentoring in every school, reducing attrition and increasing competence.

There are, of course, substantial differences in the relative effectiveness of teacher education programs. Consequently, policies to develop stronger teacher effectiveness should leverage programs to adopt the features of the most successful programs and to con-

## PERSPECTIVES: Civil Rights Considerations

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The National Urban League believes that any working definition of “excellence” in educational performance must state clearly that more is expected as an outcome for youth than minimum competency – or a deep exposure to mediocre teaching and content. “Excellence” requires mastery and proficiency – which fully prepares students for the world of college, work, and life. Our vision of equity and excellence at scale is that distributions of performance by different groups of students will no longer neatly follow identifiers such as race, language, socio-economic status, or gender. Furthermore, those distributions would evidence levels of performance high enough that U.S. students could participate on an even footing with the students of other nations.

Our education reform approach is built upon the premise that while any one individual reform or innovation approach holds substantial potential for some students, true promise lies in the untapped potential of using these reforms in informed and deliberate combination to address complex questions. Singular approaches, even those as potentially valuable as those that aim to evaluate narrowly defined individual teacher effectiveness, limit what is possible. Seemingly intractable and complex problems such as

those found in urban schools and communities require multifaceted and thoughtful solutions. There will be no single “silver bullet” approach to education reform and innovation or the improvement of outcomes for urban youth. Our principles hold that a portfolio, or suite, of tools, strategies, and approaches are required to deliver better outcomes for both historically underserved and underperforming students and the schools in which they are educated.

### **Defining “Teacher Effectiveness” More Broadly**

The National Urban League holds that it is critically important to adjust the reform narrative to include more clear and expansive frames. For example, many reformers spend a great deal of time and energy on “teacher effectiveness,” but have limited definitions of effectiveness that exclude all indicators and measures of effectiveness save those that are directly tied to standardized test scores and formal credentialing. Surely when reformers posit teacher effectiveness as a civil right, we mean much more than that. What is largely absent is a more holistic and complex interrogation of effectiveness that might reveal how teacher expectations of their students or content mastery and years of experience as a classroom teacher might impact student performance. Furthermore, one might consider the impact of the quality of setting in which teachers teach – the administration,

leadership, and support – on a teacher’s ability to be effective.

In our view, educational reform strategies such as equitable access to high-quality instruction do not seek *identical* outcomes, but rather *equivalent* (equally empowering) outcomes as desirable and of critical importance. Thus, a high score on a GED is not the same as, nor equitable compared with, a high score on state tests, no matter the quality of instruction in the former. Equity truly exists where all students, irrespective of class, race, income, gender, and other socio-economic factors, have access and gain entry to the high-quality opportunities and settings that make them “ready” to enter and thrive in the most demanding and rewarding educational and professional settings the twenty-first century has to offer.

### **The Equity and Civil Rights Lens**

Establishing a clear set of standards is critical in ensuring that all children within underserved urban communities receive effective instruction – and by that we mean more than just common core state standards. While the introduction and adoption of common core state standards are necessary and important steps, there are two outstanding concerns related to standards that deserve some attention.

The National Urban League is fully supportive of the common core state standards

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## Civil Rights Considerations *(continued from page 49)*

and has championed them as a member of the Campaign for High School Equity nationally and with our affiliates in local communities, through our Equity and Excellence Project. However, we feel that equal attention and analysis should also be applied to obtaining a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of standards of input and process.

What are the standards of resources (human, fiscal, professional development, technology, etc.) necessary to accomplish our aims? What are the standards of pedagogy, of classroom management, of professional learning required to improve educational outcomes for students? If there are legitimate questions about the quality of content and instruction evidenced by the need for common core state standards – and we believe that there are – we also believe that similar legitimate questions exist about standards as they relate to the entire set of educational investments, opportunities, priorities, and processes.

The National Urban League feels this is best answered via a thorough and intentional examination of the underlying theories of action and design principles of education reform. In each community and nationally, what is needed is for education stakeholders and policymakers to clarify their assumptions about the theory of action guiding education reforms such as “effective teaching.” Rather than confine the conversation to fitting necessary change or innovation onto existing and

privileged structures and frameworks, attention should be paid to outlining the kinds of supports and guidance that individual schools, groups of schools, and the communities they serve might actually need to reach the desired and expected outcomes for students. Unfortunately, the larger national discussion too often uncritically and unnecessarily dismisses these questions as a “defense of the status quo” rather than as legitimate concerns in the twenty-first-century pursuit of equity and excellence at scale.

For example, during the Warren Institute’s Civil Rights Research Roundtable on Education of March 2011 on equitable access to effective teaching, I had a discussion with a presenter at my table. He was asked to provide an analysis of teacher effectiveness using an economics lens, and he provided that most capably. However, as we were discussing the implications of his findings and of the presentations that had preceded his, someone asked: what are the goals of education reform centered on teacher effectiveness? He responded that our collective aim was to get the best possible teaching we could at the lowest price we could. This alarmed a few of us, and I asked: shouldn’t we be concerned, instead, with understanding how much it costs to provide a high-quality education to all students and then argue about how best to pay for it, or at least be explicit about why we thought a particular subset of students wasn’t worth the invest-

ment? The group went back and forth over the course of our allotted time, but what was clear was that there were a number of starting points and analytic frames at play in the room. It was also apparent that while we were gathered together to discuss teacher effectiveness, we weren’t there to discuss it comprehensively or from an intentional equity or civil rights lens.

### Unanswered Questions

Policymakers and educational advocacy organizations such as the National Urban League remain concerned about the historic and growing gaps in access to high-quality instruction and content overall – but especially for low-income urban students. While there is growing knowledge about the sources of the gap and its solutions, there is limited consensus about the priorities and strategies in which to invest, and no broad-scale community involvement in setting goals, measuring and reporting progress, and taking substantive steps towards continuous improvement.

The larger Urban League movement believes that it is important to understand how reforms such as teacher effectiveness and access to high-quality instruction and content are communicated by policymakers to the wider community and the extent to which these reforms are seen as appropriate, equitable, and reflective of community concerns. How these reforms play out in matters of race, gender, class, language,

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tinually improve. A study identifying teacher education programs whose graduates produced the strongest gains in student achievement in elementary reading and mathematics in New York City found that the most effective programs had well-supervised student teaching experiences that were well matched to the students that candidates would teach; more coursework in reading and mathematics content and teaching methods; courses that helped candidates acquire specific practices and tools that they would then apply in their student teaching or practicum; the specific curriculum materials they would teach; and a required capstone

project, usually a performance assessment or portfolio of their work done in classrooms with students (Boyd, Grossman et al. 2008).

These reforms depend centrally on creating new models of clinical practice that are tightly integrated with coursework. Many successful schools of education have done this by creating professional development relationships with local schools, working with these sites to train novices in the classrooms of expert teachers. Highly developed models have been found to increase teacher effectiveness and retention, foster instructional improvement, and raise student achievement. Just as the

### **Civil Rights Considerations** *(continued from page 50)*

etc., is critical, especially since there has been so little national or state-level discussion about what specifically happens to those who are currently and historically underserved – not the class of 2024 who will have potentially experienced twelve full years of a reform, but the classes of 2012, 2013, and 2014, who will be caught in the whirlwind of change in strategy, investment, and implementation. Can we articulate to parents what changes *tomorrow* in their child’s classroom as a result of these reforms, as opposed to general language and proclamations about how much better things are going to be in some far-off future when reforms realize their full promise? Are these interventions robust and flexible enough to meet the needs of both current and near-future students?

Furthermore, what is missing is a clear analysis of the implementation process around these reforms. Even now, state legislatures and governors are backing away from fully and equitably implementing common core state standards, for fiscal and philosophical reasons – but the call for improving equitable access to high-quality teaching has not been adjusted to recognize political realities. This does not require a change in principle. But it does require an acknowledgement that reforms are not implemented in a vacuum and strategies often do require adjustment.

We are confident that education reformers largely believe that we are all working in the best interest of children and youth. But we are equally confident that the current educational narrative leaves little room for purposefully

pending assumptions and expectations about students and communities of color through a comprehensive analysis of the formulation of solutions, interventions, approaches, and strategies considered valid and appropriate at this moment. While we have no problem with the underlying concepts behind these reforms and fully recognize their promise, given the history of urban education reform and the current political and economic realities, the Urban League has a number of questions as to the quality and fidelity of reform implementation taking place in schools and districts across the country. What we want to highlight – and avoid – is the ways that reforms simply reinforce or follow paths of historic inequity rather than explicitly confront them and open additional possibilities for urban children and youth.

federal government has funded teaching hospitals that strengthen medical training, investments in professional development schools could dramatically improve teachers' abilities to be effective from their first days in the classroom.

Teacher residencies, like those designed in Chicago, Boston, and Denver, use a similar model. Mid-career recruits are placed as apprentices in the classrooms of highly expert mentor teachers for a year while they complete tightly linked education coursework in partnership with a local university. They receive a stipend during this year and a master's degree and credential at the end of the year. They continue to receive mentoring in the next two years and pledge to spend at least three to four years in city schools. The model has already shown retention rates of over 90 percent in the first five years of teaching and a strong performance by graduates.

Policies that could support the creation of these more effective models of preparation would include challenge grants, like the federal Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership Grants, to launch and expand such programs, especially in high-need communities. States should evaluate all their programs – both traditional and alternative – in terms of teacher retention, evidence of later effectiveness in the classroom, and the graduates' performance on valid teacher performance assessments (see next section). States should incorporate these data into program approval and accreditation decisions in order to expand effective preparation models while eliminating those that are poor performing.

### **Use Teacher Performance Assessments to Measure Competence before Licensing**

Beginning teachers should be licensed based on greater evidence of teacher competence than merely completing a set of courses or surviving a certain length of time in the classroom. Current teacher licensing tests – generally multiple-choice tests of basic skills and subject matter – do not predict teachers' abilities to effectively teach children. Furthermore, in many cases, these tests evaluate teacher knowledge *before* they enter teacher education, and thus have little use for teacher education accountability.

Moving the field forward, several states, including California, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Oregon, have incorporated performance assessments in the licensing process. These measures of performance have been found to be strong levers for improving preparation and mentoring, as well as determining teachers' competence. The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT), for example, requires teachers to document their plans and teaching for a unit of instruction, adapt them for special education students and English language learners, videotape and critique lessons, and collect and evaluate evidence of student learning. As with the National Board assessments, beginning teachers' ratings on these kinds of assessments have been found to predict their students' value-added achievement on state tests (Wilson & Hallum 2006; Newton 2010).

Currently, more than twenty states have joined together to create a common version of an initial performance-based licensing assessment that could be used nationwide to leverage much stronger preparation and licensing. A more advanced version of the assess-

ment could also be used at the point of the professional license (after the three-year probationary period) and used to guide teacher induction and mentoring (Darling-Hammond 2010a).

Federal support for the use of such nationally available performance assessments would not only provide a useful tool for accountability and improvement, but also facilitate teacher mobility across states by creating a portable license. High scorers on this performance assessment could be granted a national license, which would make it easier for states to attract effective teachers to high-need schools. With the addition of incentives for National Board Certification, which has also been found both to measure<sup>4</sup> and improve<sup>5</sup> teachers' effectiveness, these assessments would provide a continuum of opportunities to identify and help stimulate increasing effectiveness across the career.

Some districts have even used schoolwide participation in the National Board Certification process as a turn-around strategy to build teaching capacity, producing success where there once was failure. For example, at Mitchell Elementary School in Phoenix, Arizona, school achievement has dramatically improved, and teacher turnover has decreased as a result of this approach. As the district's associate superintendent Suzanne Zentner noted, "We believe in the National Board Certification process as an approach to ...closing the achievement gap" (Berry, forthcoming).

4 See, for example, Bond et al. 2000; Cavaluzzo 2004; Goldhaber & Anthony 2005; Smith et al. 2005; and Vandevort, Amrein-Beardsley & Berliner 2004.

5 See Sato, Wei & Linda Darling-Hammond 2008; Tracz, Sienty & Mata 1994; and Tracz et al. 1995.

### **Develop Integrated Measures of Teaching Practice and Student Learning to Evaluate Teacher Effectiveness on the Job**

There is no doubt that teacher evaluation systems in the U.S. are broken: teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers agree that most districts fail to either measure teaching well, help teachers improve, or dismiss those who are failing. Most teachers are tenured without a rigorous examination of their competence, and those who are struggling are often left to flounder indefinitely while their students suffer. The vast majority of teachers who are working hard and want to continue to improve get little help to do so.

In a report by the group Accomplished California Teachers, Jane Fung, an award-winning twenty-year veteran of Los Angeles Unified School District, described the experience of many teachers:

I have had administrators who never came into my classroom for formal observations or asked me for anything more than the initial planning/goal sheet. I have had administrators observe a formal lesson and put the feedback sheet in my box without ever having spoken to me about the lesson, and I have had years where I am just asked to sign the end-of-the-year evaluation sheet [without being observed]. (NBRC 2010, p. iv)

Given this sorry situation, some reformers are enthusiastic about measuring teachers' effectiveness based on their students' test score gains using *value-added methods* (VAM), now that such data are becoming more available. After all, if student learning is the primary goal of teaching, it appears straightforward that it ought to be taken into account in determining a teachers' competence. The VAM concept is important,

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The same teacher typically looks more effective on value-added measures when she is teaching more advantaged students – and less effective when she is assigned more students who are low-income, new English learners, or who have special education needs.

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as it reflects a desire to acknowledge teachers' contributions to students' progress, taking into account where students begin. Furthermore, VAM are valuable for studying program effectiveness, and I have cited such studies throughout this article. Ironically, though, relying on such measures is unlikely to improve teachers' skill or capacity and could actually *undermine*, rather than improve, the overall quality of teaching – especially for the highest-need students.

How could this be?

First, *test score gains are not accurate measures of teachers' quality*, even adjusted for other variables or factors. When tied to individual teachers, they are notoriously unstable and prone to wide degrees of error. One study of five districts, for example, found that among top-ranked teachers in one year, only about 30 percent were similarly ranked a year later, while a comparable proportion had moved to the bottom rankings. A similar share of teachers moved from the bottom to the top rankings over the course of a year (Sass 2008).<sup>6</sup>

This instability is largely because VAM ratings are affected by the composition of students in a class – whether they attend school regularly, have stable home lives, and get help from parents or tutors, and what kind of education they have had previously. It is nearly impossible to disentangle the effects of

an individual teacher from these things or the effects of current and former teachers, curriculum materials, class sizes, and school leadership decisions.<sup>7</sup> Out-of-school time matters, too. Summer learning loss, which especially hurts low-income students, accounts for about half the achievement difference between rich and poor students.

It is not surprising, then, that research shows that the same teacher typically looks more effective on value-added measures when she is teaching more advantaged students – and less effective when she is assigned more students who are low-income, new English learners, or who have special education needs (Newton et al., forthcoming). This reality creates disincentives for teachers to take on students who struggle to learn, just as New York State's short-lived accountability scheme that rated cardiac surgeons on their patients' mortality rates caused doctors to turn away patients who were very ill. Some excellent teachers who work with special education students and new English learners will be at risk of being fired, and others will increasingly avoid these students by choosing schools, classes, and fields where they are less likely to encounter them.

For these reasons and more, the country's most prestigious group of researchers, the National Research Council, has stated, "VAM estimates

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<sup>6</sup> See also Newton et al. (forthcoming) for similar findings.

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<sup>7</sup> For reviews, see EPI 2010; Braun 2005; and McCaffrey et al. 2005.

of teacher effectiveness...should not be used to make operational decisions because such estimates are far too unstable to be considered fair or reliable” (NYSUT 2011).

Second, *most U.S. tests are exceptionally narrow*, focused mostly on multiple-choice questions assessing low-level skills in reading and math. Placing high-stakes decisions on these tests has already caused schools to teach less history, science, and the arts and to engage students in less writing, research, and complex problem-solving – the very skills they need to become truly ready for college and careers. As teachers focus more intensely on these tests, we can expect teaching and curriculum to suffer further.

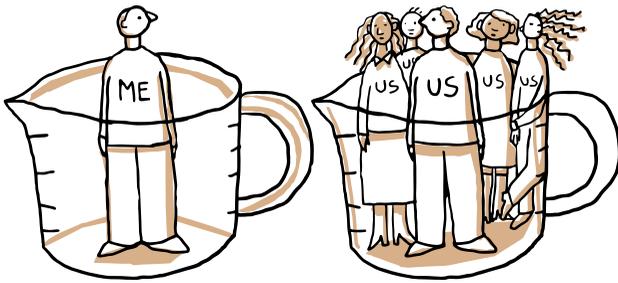
Finally, two major U.S. studies have recently found that *schemes paying teachers based on their students’ test score gains do not raise student achievement overall* – a sign that this strategy does not build teachers’ capacity and effectiveness furthermore (Springer et al. 2010; Fryer 2011). One international study even found a decline in achievement in Portuguese schools that tied teacher pay to student scores (Martins 2009). The researcher suggested that ranking teachers against each other may have reduced the likelihood that teachers would work together and share their expertise. Where this happens, students are the ultimate losers.

Better systems exist – like the rigorous performance assessments used for National Board Certification, which have been found to predict teachers’ effectiveness. These measures look at student learning in context, linking it to what teachers do in teaching specific curriculum. Observations and feedback based on professional standards and administered by trained evaluators

are successfully used in schools that are part of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) and in cities like Denver, Colorado, and Rochester, New York, along with a variety of measures of how teachers contribute to student learning. These standards-based evaluations of teaching practice not only provide more useful evidence about teaching practice, but also help teachers to improve their practice and effectiveness (Milanowski, Kimball & White 2004).

In the TAP system of “instructionally focused accountability,” for example, each teacher is evaluated four to six times a year by master teachers or principals who are trained and certified evaluators using a system that examines designing and planning instruction, the learning environment, classroom instruction, and teachers’ broader responsibilities. The indicators of good teaching are practices that have been found to be associated with desired student outcomes. Like other well-developed career ladder systems, TAP provides ongoing professional development, mentoring, and classroom support to help teachers meet these standards. Teachers in TAP schools report that they value this system of standards-based feedback, combined with collaborative planning time and professional development, and believe it is responsible for improvements in their practice (Solomon et al. 2007).

Along with evaluations of performance, teachers in some districts – like those participating in Arizona’s career ladder program – assemble a portfolio of evidence that includes measures of their practice and of student learning as part of the overall judgment of effectiveness. In addition to analysis of standardized tests, where appropriate, such evidence can be drawn from classroom assessments and documentation,



including pre- and post-test measures of student learning in specific courses or curriculum areas and evidence of student accomplishments in relation to teaching activities. The evidence can be used to demonstrate and explain the progress of students on a wide range of learning outcomes in ways that take students' starting points and characteristics into account. A study of Arizona's career ladder program found that, over time, participating teachers not only became better at creating assessment tools to measure student learning, but also increased their focus on higher-quality content, skills, and instructional strategies (Packard & Dereshiwsky 1991). Thus, the development and use of student learning evidence, in combination with examination of teaching performance, can stimulate improvements in practice.

Given the importance of teachers' collective efforts to improve overall student achievement in a school, the best systems also look at how teachers contribute to the expertise of their colleagues and the improvement of the entire school by sharing practices and materials, coaching peers, and working collegially to help students. The key is that evaluation is linked to improving practice, so that learning always improves.

## ***Integrating Both Measurement and Development of Effective Teaching***

Initiatives to measure and recognize teacher effectiveness have emerged as the press for improved student achievement has been joined to an awareness of the importance of teachers in contributing to student learning. Such initiatives will have the greatest pay-off if they reflect and stimulate the practices known to support student learning and are embedded in systems that also *develop* greater teacher competence through strong preparation and mentoring, coaching in relation to standards, and opportunities for teachers to help their colleagues and their schools improve. Policies that create increasingly valid measures of teacher effectiveness and develop innovative systems for recognizing, developing, and using expert teachers, while providing incentives for them to work with the neediest students, can ultimately help create a more effective teaching profession that serves the nation's children more equitably.

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