

Playing Fair:

The Need for Teacher Equity in Low-Income Schools

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The Problem

- › Teachers with the least experience teach our most at-risk children in our poorest schools. This puts low-income students at a disadvantage.

- › Teacher experience is at least a partial predictor of success in the classroom and one of the approximations for teacher quality widely available today (Darling-Hammond, 2000).
 - › *Teachers become more effective as they gain experience, particularly after the first few years Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2001).*
 - › *Experienced teachers tend to have better classroom management skills and a stronger command of curricular materials (Darling-Hammond, 2000).*
 - › *Novice teachers tend to struggle during their initial years (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigor, 2001).*

Wait a minute! That doesn't seem fair. What's causing this to happen?

- › Intra-district school finance inequity—spending disparities between schools within a single school district.
- › What is the major driver of school finance inequities? Teacher salaries.
 - » *Pay is based on years of experience and credentials.*
 - » *Teacher salaries account for the majority of school district expenses.*
 - » *Veteran teachers have transfer priority.*
- › More experienced/expensive teachers are inequitably distributed in low-poverty, low-minority schools.

How do experienced teachers disproportionately end up
in lower-poverty schools?

Doesn't federal law require resources within
a district, including instructional staff, to be equitably
distributed across Title I and non-Title I schools?

Comparability

- › Requires school districts to provide at *least* the same level of services to Title I schools as non-Title I schools using state and local funds. Only once this requirement has been met can the receive federal Title I dollars.

- › Comparability can be demonstrated one of two ways:
 - › Filing a *written assurance* of comparability and maintaining documentation that the district has implemented a district-wide salary schedule and policies that ensure equitable resources across schools;

OR

- › Comparing actual resources across schools in one of three areas and demonstrating that each Title I school's value with respect to the chosen area falls within 10% of the non-Title I school average.
 - Student-instructional staff ratios
 - Student-instructional staff salary ratios
 - Total expenditures per pupil

Why isn't comparability working?

- › The Teacher Salary Loophole
 - » *Comparability prohibits the consideration of salary differentials due to years of employment when determining comparability across schools in a district.*

- › Watered-Down Regulations
 - » *Districts can count paraprofessionals as instructional staff even though they are not required to have the same level of skill and knowledge as classroom teachers and are not allowed to provide direct instruction under NCLB.*
 - » *The comparability threshold has expanded to 10% from 5%.*

- › Weak Enforcement
 - » *Guidelines have been few and far between.*
 - » *A 2007 audit by the Department of Education's IG found that school districts do "not always report complete and accurate comparability information" and that some "improperly classify" schools as comparable.*
 - » *The IG also found that the federal protocol for monitoring states' comparability implementation was flawed and insufficient to compel states to correctly and consistently implement the law.*

Is there really a difference?

- › Studies analyzing the actual teacher cost differences have found:
 - » *Of the 50 largest school districts in California, schools in the lowest-poverty, highest-wealth quartile received an average of \$2,576 more per teacher than schools in the highest-poverty quartile (Education Trust-West, 2005).*
 - » *Intra-district spending gaps ranging from \$1,880 per teacher in Houston, Texas, to \$3,837 in Austin, TX (Roza, 2005).*

- › A New America analysis of data from Amarillo, Texas compared the current student-instructor ratio method to a more rigorous method using teacher salary spending per pupil. That analysis found:
 - » *The current student-instructor ratio criterion found 24 of 25 schools to be comparable, while the tightened teacher salary spending per pupil method found only 12 schools comparable with a 90% threshold.*

What Can We Do?

- › Require School Budget Transparency
 - » *Amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to require school districts that receive Title I money to report real dollar spending on teacher and other instructional resources at the school level.*

- › Require school districts to demonstrate comparability in total per-pupil spending by school, taking into account teacher salary differentials based upon experience.
 - » *This requirement should be phased.*
 - » *Forced transfers should not be required. Funds should be leveraged to attract teachers to Title I schools.*

- › Revise the Definition of Instructional Staff
 - » *Limit the definition of instructional staff to certified teachers.*

What Can We Do? (cont.)

- › Amend current law to lower the comparability threshold from 10 to 5 percent and clarify that comparability requirements serve as a floor, not a ceiling, for funding Title I schools.

- › Provide Dedicated Funds To Help Schools Meet Teacher Distribution Requirements
 - » *Require school districts that are out of compliance with Title I comparability requirements to spend at least 45% of their Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant dollars on teacher distribution activities.*
 - » *Broaden the scope of the Teacher Incentive Fund to allow school districts to use these dollars for teacher distribution purposes including base pay increases for teachers who agree to teach in high-poverty or high-minority schools.*

References

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- › Charles T. Clotfelter, Helen F. Ladd, and Jacob L. Vigdor, "Who Teaches Whom? Race and the Distribution of Novice Teachers," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association, Atlanta, Georgia (January 2001)
- › Linda Darling-Hammond, "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8, no.1 (2000), <http://epaa.asn.edu/epaa/v8n1>
- › Marguerite Roza, *Strengthening Title I to Help High-Poverty Schools: How Title I Funds Fit into District Allocation Patterns* (Seattle: University of Washington, Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2005), www.uwnews.org/relatedcontent/2005/August/rc_parentID11695_thisID11712.pdf

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