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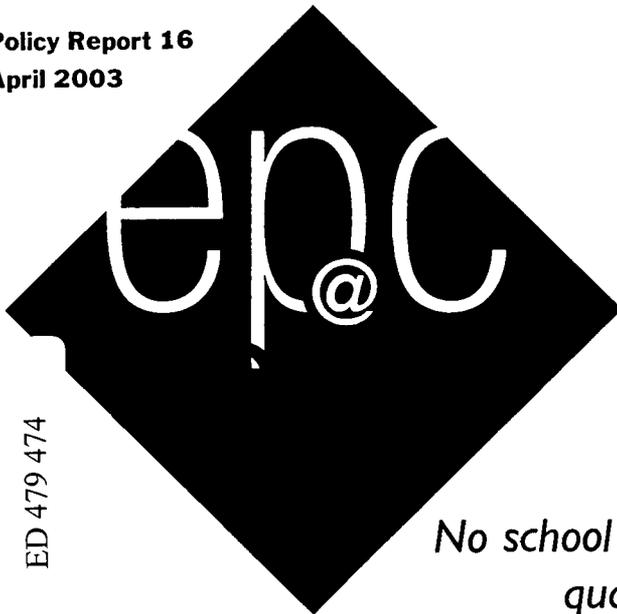
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ABSTRACT

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics are used to look at Michigan's progress in meeting the challenge of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) that teachers be "highly qualified." The data also allow the study of whether all students in Michigan have access to the highly qualified teachers required by the NCLB. Data show that Michigan has a high quality teaching force, but that high quality teachers are not equally available in all schools. In fact, Michigan will fail to meet the NCLB teacher requirements unless steps are taken to increase the number of highly qualified teachers in the state's least advantaged schools. The vast majority of Michigan teachers are certified, with 96.8% possessing one of four types of certificates teachers need to be considered highly qualified. Only 3.2% of Michigan's teachers are uncertified or teaching on emergency waivers. Such teachers are slightly more likely to work in secondary schools. Teachers in urban schools are less likely to be highly qualified in their main teaching assignment than their counterparts in suburban and rural areas. About three times as many urban school teachers do not meet the NCLB certification requirements for their main assignment when compared to suburban or rural teachers. The likelihood that a teacher will be highly qualified decreases dramatically as the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch increases, and students in schools with high eligibility are more than three times as likely to be taught by teachers who are not certified in their main teaching assignment as students in schools with lower free and reduced-price lunch eligibility. Data also show that African American students are less likely to have access to highly qualified teachers than their white counterparts. Some policy suggestions to improve the access of disadvantaged children to highly qualified teachers are outlined, including improving working conditions for teachers and making alternative routes to certification available. (SLD)

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No school left behind? The distribution of teacher quality in Michigan's public schools

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The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that all teachers of core academic subjects be "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. To be considered highly qualified, a teacher must be fully certified in the subject(s) taught, have a bachelor's degree, and demonstrate subject area competence in a manner to be determined by the state.

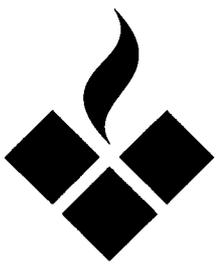
Under NCLB, states are required to ensure that all schools and districts meet the highly qualified teacher requirements. State intervention is required if sufficient progress is not made towards achieving 100 percent compliance by the 2006 deadline. In addition, districts are now required to hire only highly qualified teachers for programs that receive federal Title I funds, or they risk the loss of that funding.

Because of NCLB, addressing the need for highly qualified teachers in every school must be a priority for Michigan policymakers. Up until now, however, few data about Michigan's teachers have been available. New data from the

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) allow us to look at Michigan's progress in meeting the "highly qualified" challenge. The data also allow us to examine whether all students have access to the highly qualified teachers required by NCLB. Since the NCLB definition of "highly qualified" is reasonably consistent with the certification requirements for Michigan teachers, an analysis of teacher certification status can provide policymakers with a good indicator of how close Michigan is to meeting the federal requirements for a "highly qualified" teacher workforce.

The good news is that Michigan has a high quality teaching force; the bad news is that high quality teachers are not equally available in all schools. In fact, Michigan will fail to meet the NCLB teacher requirements unless steps are taken to increase the number of highly qualified teachers in Michigan's least advantaged schools.

Teacher Certification
The vast majority of Michigan's traditional public school teachers are certi-



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fied, with 96.8 percent possessing one of the four types of certificates that teachers need to be considered “highly qualified by NCLB standards. Only 3.2 percent of Michigan’s teachers are uncertified or teaching on emergency waivers. Teachers who are uncertified or teaching on emergency waivers are slightly more likely to work in secondary schools (see Table 1).

academic subjects they teach—simply holding a teaching certificate in any subject is not sufficient.

Roughly 5 percent of Michigan’s teachers are not certified in their main teaching assignment (see Table 2). These teachers spend the majority of their day teaching classes for which they are not certified.

Table 1. Type of Certification Held by Michigan’s Traditional Public School Teachers

	All Traditional Public Schools	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
Certified (Probational, Provisional, Regular, or Advanced Certificate)	96.8	96.9	96.6
Uncertified (Temporary Certificate, Emergency Waiver, or Uncertified)	3.2	3.1	3.4

Four out of five Michigan teachers only teach in one field. When teachers do have a second assignment, almost half of them do not meet the NCLB requirements for “highly qualified” in the second assignment. Non-compliance in secondary assignments is more

Occasionally, budgetary or staffing problems result in schools assigning teachers to teach classes for which they are not certified. For example, a teacher certified in English may be assigned to teach science classes. Sometimes teachers will be assigned only one or two classes for which they are not certified; other times their main assignment (i.e., most of the classes to which they have been assigned) is out-of-field. NCLB requires teachers to be certified in all core

prevalent in secondary schools since these schools are more likely to rely on secondary assignments in order to staff a wider variety and larger number of classes (see Table 3).

Table 2. Percentage of Michigan’s Traditional Public School Teachers Certified in Main Teaching Assignment

	All Schools	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
Certified	95.1	95.2	95.1
Uncertified	4.9	4.8	4.9

Table 3. Percentage of Michigan’s Traditional Public School Teachers Certified in Second Teaching Assignment

	All Schools	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
Certified	11.7	4.8	20.1
Uncertified	8.8	5.5	12.8

Distribution of Michigan's Highly Qualified Teachers

The "highly qualified" provisions of NCLB require not just that states insure that their teachers are highly qualified, but that all students have highly qualified teachers. In order to test whether all students have equal access to highly qualified teachers, we examined the distribution of highly qualified teachers across three school characteristics: school urbanicity, the percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced lunch, and the percentage of African-American students in a school. The results are troubling.

Teachers in urban schools are much less likely to be highly qualified in their main teaching assignment than their counterparts in suburban and rural areas. About three times as many urban school teachers do not meet the NCLB certification requirements for their main assignment when compared to suburban or rural teachers (see Table 4).

Likewise, urban teachers with a secondary assignment are less likely to be certified in their additional field than either rural or suburban teachers. More than half of the second assignment teachers in urban schools (10.8 percent of the 19.1 percent with second assignments) are not highly qualified for their secondary assignments (see Table 5).

The likelihood that a teacher will be highly

qualified decreases dramatically as the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch increases (see Table 6). Students in schools with high eligibility (greater than 70%) are more than three times as likely to be taught by teachers who are not

Table 4. Percentage of Teachers Not Certified in Main Teaching Assignment, by Urbanicity

	Central City	Urban Fringe/ Large Town	Rural/Small Town
Uncertified	9.3	3.4	3.1

Table 5. Percentage of Teachers Certified in Second Teaching Assignment, by Urbanicity

	Central City	Urban Fringe/ Large Town	Rural/Small Town
Certified	8.3	10.9	18.9
Uncertified	10.8	7.7	9.4

certified in their main teaching assignment as students in schools with lower free and reduced lunch eligibility (less than 40%).

High poverty schools (greater than 70 percent eligibility) are more likely to have teachers with second assignments. Over half of these teachers do not meet the NCLB requirements for "highly qualified" in those second assignments (see Table 7).

Table 6. Percentage of Teachers Not Certified in Main Teaching Assignment, by Percentage of School's Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch

	0 - 10%	10.01 - 40.0%	40.01 - 70.0%	> 70.0%
Uncertified	3.6	3.5	7.2	11.7

Table 9. Percentage of Teachers Certified in Second Teaching Assignment by Percentage of African-American Students in a School

	0 - 10.0%	10.01 - 40.0%	40.01 - 70.0%	> 70.0%
Certified	12.9	5.1	9.6	14.3
Uncertified	8.2	7.1	14.3	15.1

the state average. The proportion of under-qualified to highly qualified teachers increases to almost one out of every nine for high poverty schools. The rate is highest in schools with a high percentage of African-American students, where one in seven teachers is underqualified by NCLB standards. These patterns worsen when certification in secondary assignments is examined. Overall, the data show that the access students have to highly qualified teachers is dependent on their race, socioeconomic background and school setting. This is precisely the type of pattern that NCLB seeks to eliminate. States are now required to ensure that the students who are most in need of highly qualified teachers are not the least likely to receive them.

Possible Interventions

The state is required by NCLB to ensure that all students are taught by highly qualified teachers, and policymakers are therefore obliged to reduce the currently inequitable distribution. Possible interventions in hard-to-staff schools include financial incentives, such as higher salaries and loan forgiveness, and non-financial incentives, such as improved working conditions for teachers. The state can provide grants to allow districts to offer targeted salary supplements to qualified teachers in hard-to-staff schools. There are already several federal programs that offer loan forgiveness to teachers in hard-to-staff schools; the state could play a role in dis-

seminating information about these programs and in supplementing them.

The state can also help districts improve the working conditions in hard-to-staff schools. They can provide both technical

support and funding to provide strong mentoring and induction programs in schools that have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers. In addition, the state can provide targeted professional development opportunities to teachers in these schools. Funds for needed infrastructure repairs and improvements can be prioritized so that hard-to-staff schools are able to improve the physical environment in which teachers work.

Finally, the state can make alternative routes to certification available to current teachers who are uncredentialed. This is particularly important in geographic areas with a high concentration of uncertified teachers. These teachers bring experience and practical expertise to their positions. Alternative routes to certification that take advantage of their existing knowledge while providing them with the content and pedagogical knowledge needed for certification will strengthen the quality of Michigan’s existing teaching force.

These ideas are only a starting point for discussion—the state should also engage in conversations with teachers and administrators in these schools about their needs. Michigan is fortunate to have a large pool of high quality, committed teachers. The challenge we now face is to ensure that all children, regardless of background, have access to these excellent teachers.

Table 7. Percentage of Teachers Certified in Second Teaching Assignment, by Percentage of School's Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch

	0 - 10.0%	10.01 - 40.0%	40.01 - 70.0%	> 70.0%
Certified	14.6	12.0	4.4	15.4
Uncertified	7.2	8.3	7.9	16.1

The data also indicate that African-American students are less likely to have access to highly qualified teachers than their white counterparts. The percentage of teachers who do not meet the NCLB highly qualified standard increases dramatically as the percentage of African-American students in a school increases. This relationship is alarming. More than four times as many teachers in schools with a high concentration of African-American students are uncertified or teaching with emergency waivers as compared to teachers in schools with few African-American students (see Table 8).

Table 8. Percentage of Teachers Certified in Main Teaching Assignment by Percentage of African-American Students in a School

	0 - 10.0%	10.01 - 40.0%	40.01 - 70.0%	> 70.0%
Uncertified	3.1	5.5	13.7	14.6

While the relationship between out-of-field teaching in a second assignment and the percentage of African-American students in a school is not as dramatic as for the main assignment, the pattern remains unchanged—African-American students are more likely to have a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified criteria (see Table 9).

Policy Implications

The quality of a child's teacher is the most important determinant of educational success that policy makers control. Recognizing this, NCLB requires that all children be taught by highly qualified teachers

every year and in every core academic subject. The newly released data from NCES allow us to confirm that Michigan has a high percentage of highly qualified teachers. While this is good news for the state generally, there are two reasons for state policymakers to be concerned.

The first reason for concern is that, while most of Michigan's teachers are highly qualified, roughly 5% of Michigan's teachers do not meet the NCLB standards in their main assignment. This means that over 4,600 teachers spend the majority of their day

teaching subjects for which they are uncertified. The situation worsens when teachers with second assignments are examined—almost 9% of teachers are not certified in their second assignments as required by NCLB. If they

were evenly distributed throughout Michigan's 600 school districts, each district would have more than a dozen teachers who do not currently meet federal requirements.

The second reason for concern is that these under-qualified teachers are not evenly distributed across school districts. Instead, they are disproportionately located in urban schools, and in schools with a high percentage of African-American or poor students. Roughly one of every 10 teachers in an urban school does not meet the NCLB requirements for main assignments – twice



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