



On July 7, 2014, the U.S. Department of Education announced plans to enforce a provision of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act meant to ensure that every student is taught by a great teacher and attends a school run by great administrators. This provision, often referred to as educator equity or equitable distribution of educators, requires states to submit to the Department plans that include “steps that the State educational agency (SEA) will take to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers” (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(8)(C)). In other words, states must be actively thinking about and working toward ensuring that every student has access to great educators, and that a student’s teacher is not determined by a student’s characteristics, including family income, race and ethnicity, English language learner status, or disability status. States have not submitted plans since 2006, if they ever developed a plan, meaning this has not been a priority for eight years and that most of those plans are likely very much out-of-date.

That states have not submitted new plans for eight years is not for lack of need. The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), a study of every school in the country conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, reveals that:

- Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native students are four times more likely than white students to attend a school where 20 percent or more of teachers are in their first year of teaching, while Hispanic/Latino students are three times more likely than their white peers.
- On average, teachers in high schools with the highest percentage of black and Latino students earned nearly \$2,000 less than their peers in schools in the same district with the lowest percentage of black and Latino students.
- Half a million students attend schools where 60 percent or fewer of teachers hold state certification.
- Black students are over four times more likely than white students to attend a school where 20 percent or more of teachers are not certified, and Latino students are twice as likely.¹

These stats reveal that minority students are at great disadvantage to their peers in terms of who is leading their classrooms and schools. Research reveals that being taught by teachers with more experience and who hold state certification improves student achievement.² It is clear that students with the highest needs, such as English language learners, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities, should not be disproportionately taught by teachers with less experience and who are less likely to hold state certification. Salaries are also important for recruiting the highest quality applicants, so when salaries differ significantly at two schools in the same district, it should be no surprise that the highest quality applicants are most likely to teach where they can earn more money.

The Department’s plan to address these disparities has three provisions:³

- **New State Educator Equity Plans:** This is the core of the proposal, requiring states to submit to the Department new educator equity plans in accordance with the NCLB provision described above by April 2015. The Department will issue guidance in the fall of 2014 to support state efforts at developing and

implementing these plans, and the Department calls on states to consider local stakeholders and data when developing their plans. While this is a promising development because it means states will re-examine their nearly decade old educator equity plans, the Department has not identified an accountability system to ensure that states develop or implement plans on time. Furthermore, the fall 2014 regulations will be important in determining how states will develop their educator equity plans and the ultimate success of those plans. The regulations and resulting state plans should align closely with the NCLB provision and include experience, qualification, and subject matter expertise, as well as efforts to recruit, retain, and develop teachers, and if and how states are held accountable for developing and implementing their plans. Additionally, ongoing transparency and the ability to provide public input during development will be important.

- **Educator Equity Support Network:** The Department will also develop a technical assistance network of national and local stakeholders and experts, expected to launch in 2014 with information, tools, and support for states when developing and implementing educator equity plans. This will provide important assistance to states, and its success is dependent on the involvement of stakeholders and transparency of who is involved and how they are influencing state plans.
- **Data and State Profiles:** Data will be an important aspect of successfully designed and implemented plans and it is important that the Department provide states with detailed data from the CRDC and other sources. While the letter does not list the other specific data sources, important data on the prevalence of students with disabilities, low-income students, English language learners, and students in rural areas being taught by teachers who are still enrolled in alternative certification programs is currently being collected. This dataset should be included in the data given to states while they are developing their educator equity plans as it can play a major role in ensuring that those plans are comprehensive and ultimately successful.

As Secretary Duncan states in his letter to states, this is indeed a complex issue that previous efforts have failed to fully address. It remains to be seen if this new plan will address the issue more comprehensively than previous efforts. A number of questions remain, and \$4 million dedicated to this effort is a small sum for plans expected from all 50 states and D.C. Still, after eight years of inaction on one of the most pressing issues facing students, this is a promising and necessary first step.

¹ Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snapshot: Teacher Equity (2014). U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-teacher-equity-snapshot.pdf>.

² See, for example, Easton-Brooks, D. & Davis, A. (2009). Teacher qualification and the achievement gap in early primary grades. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 17 (15). <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v17n15/>, Clotfelter, C., Ladd, H.F., & Vigdor, J.L. (2007). *Teacher credentials and student achievement in high school: A cross-subject analysis with student fixed effects*. National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w13617>, Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D., Gatlin, S.J., & Heilig, J.V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13 (42). <http://epaa.asu.edu/epa/v13n42/>, and Chingos, M, and Peterson, P. (2010). *It's Easier to Pick a Good Teacher than to Train One: Familiar and New Results on the Correlates of Teacher Effectiveness*. Economics of Education Review. http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/MeritPayPapers/Chingos_Peterson_10-08.pdf.

³ Letter to Chief State School Officers, July 7, 2014 <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/140707.html>.