

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ON TEACHER QUALITY

The research on teacher quality, though extensive, is not highly conclusive. Because teacher quality is a broad concept, the factors that can affect teachers are wide ranging. Also, difficulty in performing experiments with children in schools makes it hard to identify which factors clearly lead to quality teaching. Despite the limitations, some commonsense notions do have moderate research support.

The quality profile that emerges suggests that “smarts” matter, but knowledge of academic content and how to teach it may be more critical for student learning. With regard to academic content knowledge, college-level subject matter courses that are closely aligned with the actual content of the k-12 curriculum may be most critical. Education courses and/or professional development experiences that help teachers develop nuanced understanding of how learners learn content and that provide teachers with practical tools to teach academic concepts and skills also matter.

Recruiting and retaining diverse teachers is important, particularly as the student population becomes increasingly more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse in the years ahead. There is some modest evidence that suggests that same-race pairings may positively affect student achievement, though researchers cannot explain mechanisms for why. In addition to efforts to recruit and retain diverse teachers, it is essential all teachers develop cultural competence to support *all* learners, particularly students in low-performing schools. Finally, though there are some flaws in the assumptions of research on teacher experience, teacher experience appears to positively affect student learning. Efforts to support teacher learning and development during initial years and to cultivate productive working conditions is a cost-effective strategy to retain teachers.

Colorado has made strides on a number of factors related to teacher quality, namely academic ability, academic content and pedagogical knowledge. To ensure Colorado has a quality teacher workforce so *every* child has a high quality teacher, policy attention should be focused on the following aspects of teacher quality: increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce, preparing teachers for diverse learners, enhancing teacher working conditions, and developing a systemic view of teacher learning and development, from pre-service to induction to continuing professional development.

