

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT TEACHER QUALITY IN COLORADO

There is a teacher quality gap.⁵

- High minority and high poverty schools have less experienced and less educated teachers than schools with lower minority/poverty.
- Teacher attrition is greater in schools with high minority enrollment.
- By the time they reach high school, students at high poverty schools are twice as likely to have teachers who are not designated “highly qualified” (NCLB measure) as students in low poverty schools.

The gap is widening.⁶

- In 2005, the gap between the percent of less experienced and less educated teachers in high versus low poverty/minority schools was wider than in 2000.
- The gap in teacher attrition between high and low minority/poverty schools grew even though attrition decreased overall. When measured in high versus low minority schools, the gap grew 17% between 2000 and 2004.

Student performance is correlated with teacher experience and education.⁷

- As the average score on the math section of the Colorado ACT⁸ goes down, the proportion of less experienced and less educated teachers⁹ increases.
- Schools in Colorado with students who scored the lowest on the math section of the CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) also have the greater proportion of less experienced and less educated teachers.
- On average, in the 20 largest Colorado districts, the math achievement gap lessens as minority students have more experienced teachers¹⁰.

School performance¹¹ is correlated with teacher experience and attrition.¹²

- Lower performing schools (measured by the Colorado School Accountability Rating) have higher teacher attrition.
- More than twice as many teachers leave unsatisfactory performing schools than average performing schools.
- Unsatisfactory schools have nearly twice as many novice teachers (less than two years teaching experience) than do high performing schools.

⁵Shining the Light: the State of Teaching in Colorado. Alliance for Quality Teaching, 2006.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸American College Test (ACT), college entrance examination assessing high school students' abilities to complete college level work. (www.act.org) All 11th grade students in Colorado public schools are required to take the ACT.

⁹Experience was measured considering “novices” those teachers who have less than two years teaching in the classroom; education was measured using the minimum education requirement for licensure, a Bachelors' degree (BA) compared to those with education beyond a BA.

¹⁰The Math achievement gap decreases 1.5 percentage points for every percentage point decrease in minority novice teacher gap. Shining the Light: the State of Teaching in Colorado. Alliance for Quality Teaching, 2006.

¹¹School performance is measured by the Colorado School Accountability Ratings, SAR. The SAR gives schools one of five academic performance ratings ranging from unsatisfactory through excellent. Information about the SAR is on the Colorado Department of Education web site: <http://reportcard.cde.state.co.us/reportcard/CommandHandler.jsp>

¹²Shining the Light II: State of Teacher Quality, Attrition and Diversity in Colorado. Alliance for Quality Teaching, 2008.

Teacher attrition is costly.¹³

- Teacher attrition disrupts the formation and cohesion of professional learning communities.
- Researchers have found the cost to replace a teacher to be approximately \$10,000 in terms of time, actual expenditures and training through the first year.
- Colorado school districts spent more than \$70 million dollars to replace teachers who left their employ in 2005.

An increasingly diverse student population is taught by a much less diverse teacher population.¹⁴

- Diversity of the teacher workforce in Colorado increased 1% between 2000 and 2005 (to 10%) while student diversity increased 6% (to 38%).
- The proportion of Latino students increased five times greater than the proportion of Latino teachers.

WHAT CAN LOCAL EDUCATION LEADERS DO TO SUPPORT QUALITY TEACHING?**1. Understand the Challenges Affecting Teacher Quality**

A district's ability to attract, hire and retain quality teachers is affected by a variety of challenges. Among these challenges:

Living/community Conditions

- Housing that is not affordable for teachers such as in resort areas.
- Hard-to-reach or isolated living such as in rural areas.
- Safety and security in some neighborhoods.
- District/community reputation, including that formed through media coverage.
- High cost of commuting particularly with increasing fuel costs.

Working & Hiring Conditions

- Low starting salaries compared to neighboring districts.
- Inability of a district to support a competitive salary schedule.
- Contractual provisions that affect hiring, retention and placement practices.
- Number and quality of teachers available, especially in shortage areas.
- Teachers' abilities to teach students who are less like themselves (race, culture, socio-economic status)
- Professional development and other professional growth opportunities.
- Discipline policies that affect teacher-student interactions.
- Level of leadership support for teachers.
- Classroom resources and school facilities.
- Leadership opportunities for teachers.

¹³ibid.¹⁴ibid.