



# Ensuring Effective Teachers for All Students

Six state strategies for attracting and retaining effective teachers  
in high-poverty and high-minority schools

Robin Chait May 2009

# Introduction and summary

Effective teachers matter a great deal for all students, but particularly for those in schools with large concentrations of low-income and minority students. Education experts of all political persuasions, policymakers, and the general public recognize this truth, yet federal education policy is only just beginning to address it in a vigorous way.

The recent passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, in which Congress and the Obama administration authorized more than \$100 billion to be spent on education as part of the \$767 billion economic stimulus package, sent a clear signal about the importance of an effective teacher for every student. In order for the states to receive a second installment of their share of \$48.6 billion in state fiscal stabilization funding, states are required to report on four assurances that they are advancing core reforms: adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments; establishing data systems and using data for improvement; increasing teacher effectiveness and the equitable distribution of effective teachers; and turning around the lowest-performing schools.

Our interest in this paper in particular is that states must assure the Secretary of Education that they will take steps to improve teacher effectiveness and ensure “the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need.”<sup>1</sup> Although federal policy has focused on the equitable distribution of teachers before, requirements were barely enforced until 2006, which means the states haven’t done much yet to tackle this issue. Both President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have made statements indicating that this time is different, and they plan to focus on “creating new pathways to teaching and new incentives to bring teachers to schools where they are needed most.”<sup>2</sup>

This report will outline why states should work to ensure that every student has an effective teacher, what that means, and what the federal role has been until now. It then highlights six strategies that states can undertake to work toward ensuring every student has access to an effective teacher. These strategies are:

- Analyze and report on the distribution of teachers between schools using value-added estimates and other measures.
- Design a model evaluation system for measuring teacher effectiveness and improving teacher performance.

- Support programs that offer financial incentives to effective teachers in high-poverty schools.
- Provide funding and models for recruitment and preparation programs that are specifically targeted to high needs schools.
- Provide an induction and mentoring program for new teachers in high-poverty schools.
- Require schools to report their budgets by actual expenditures, rather than positions.

The six strategies have all been tested in select school districts around the country—as this report demonstrates in a series of examples. These strategies are research-based, but most have not been tested on a widespread basis in many states. This report, then, is not intended to be a comprehensive plan, but rather a series of sign posts indicating critical leverage points where states can begin to tackle this issue.

Getting serious about the shortage of effective teachers in high-poverty schools does, of course, take resources. Fortunately, one-time funds stemming from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act can support planning and initial investments in these strategies. The states, however, will need to identify more stable sources of funding to support them in the long term. This paper will help the states make the judgments necessary to ensure this future funding supports strategies that work to give all students access to effective teachers so they can learn successfully and consistently in grade school, middle school and high school.

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