

New Teacher-Recruitment and Hiring Strategies Yield Positive Results for Schools, Example for Policymakers

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WASHINGTON -- A New York City

strategy to improve the qualifications of teachers in the city's highest-poverty public schools likely contributed to student gains in those needy classrooms, says a new report from the Urban Institute's National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER).

In school systems nationwide, the teachers with the shakiest credentials typically work in the poorest schools. But in New York City between 2000 and 2005, new hiring standards and teacher-recruitment methods helped strike a remarkable balance in newly hired teacher qualifications throughout many of the city's schools. In 2000, 35 percent of teachers serving in the highest-poverty schools had failed their first attempt at a certification exam, compared with a 15 percent failure rate for educators working in the lowest-poverty schools. By 2003, the failure rate for new teachers had dropped overall and was about the same in all school poverty categories.

This convergence in teacher qualifications stemmed largely from policy changes implemented between 2000 and 2005. School officials all but banned uncertified teachers from classrooms, permitted alternative credentialing programs, and recruited high-achieving college graduates through the New York City Teaching Fellows programs and Teach for America (TFA). By 2005, nearly 40 percent of all new hires in the poorest 25 percent of New York City schools were Teaching Fellows or TFA corps members. These specially recruited teachers on average brought stronger academic backgrounds to their new careers and outperformed other new hires on an exam for educators.

Average performance on fourth- and eighth-grade math and language arts tests rose between 2000 and 2005 in all New York City public schools, with particularly substantial gains scored in the system's poorest schools. Indeed, more than double the share of fourth-grade math students in the low-income schools met proficiency standards in 2005 than did in 2000.

The report "The Narrowing Gap in New York City Teacher Qualifications and Its Implications for Student Achievement in High-Poverty Schools" demonstrates the link between teacher qualifications and student learning. Together, teachers' experience, academic abilities, preparation, and certification contribute to effectiveness in the classroom. Bringing teachers with strong qualifications into hard-pressed schools likely improved the performance of students in those schools.

The question now, say the study's authors, is whether this recruitment achievement can be combined with professional development and other supports to reduce turnover, enhance teachers' capabilities, and continue to foster student learning.

"New York's success in hiring well-qualified teachers for needy students stands as a powerful example for education leaders everywhere," says Susanna Loeb, an author of the report and associate professor of education at Stanford University. "This research will help inform the debate going on in Congress now, as lawmakers consider changes to the No Child Left Behind education law that will offer incentives for matching good teachers with the neediest schools."

The report's authors are Donald Boyd, Hamilton Lankford, and James Wyckoff of the State University of New York at Albany; Susanna Loeb of Stanford; and **Jonah Rockoff** of Columbia. The authors are affiliated with Teacher Policy Research (TPR), a partnership between the University at Albany and Stanford University. More about TPR can be found at <http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org>.

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The full report will be presented Thursday, October 4, at a CALDER conference in Washington, D.C. For a copy, contact Elizabeth Cronen at 202-261-5723 or ecronen@ui.urban.org.

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