

What's New?

What Works Conference

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) hosted its third annual What Works Conference November 10–12, 2008, at The Fairmont in Washington, D.C. This year's conference, "Building Capacity for a Systems Approach to Improving Educator Quality," focused on the alignment of teacher quality and school leadership policies across the educator career continuum. Conference materials are [available online](#) and include a meeting summary, presentations from the conference, and supporting resources.

Please contact Gretchen Weber by e-mail at gretchen.weber@learningpt.org or by telephone at 630-649-6511 with any questions or comments.

Update on the TQ Connection



The TQ Connection continues its series of discussion on Response to Intervention (RtI) in the new year. From January 19–23, 2009, join Dr. Jean Shumaker, former associate director of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, in an interactive dialogue about "Response to Intervention (RtI): Learning Strategies." Dr. Shumaker will discuss how instruction in learning strategies can transform at-risk learners into good learners. She also will discuss the knowledge and skills teachers must acquire to be effective instructors of learning strategies.

Visit the TQ Center's [discussion forum](#) to access content-rich resources and engage in interactive dialogue designed to support teacher preparation programs. Discuss the issues with colleagues, share your ideas, and have your questions answered by content experts!

New topics are offered bimonthly. Past topics include the following:

- *RtI: Multitiered Interventions*—March 3–7, 2008
- *RtI: Evidenced-Based Instruction*—May 5–9, 2008
- *RtI: Implementation in Secondary Schools*—September 8–12, 2008

In This Issue

What's New? 1

Stories From the Field 2

- *The TQ Center hosts technical assistance workshops at the third annual What Works Conference.*

Teacher Quality Questions From the Field 5

- *The TQ Center focuses on a series of state policy questions about certification and licensure for teacher leadership and foreign language elementary specialists, alternative certification, licensure reciprocity, and induction and mentoring.*

Upcoming topics include the following:

- *RtI: Learning Strategies*—January 19–23, 2009
- *RtI: Improving Disproportionality*—March 2–6, 2009
- *RtI: Evidenced-based Math Interventions*—May 4–8, 2009

Please contact Amy Potemski by e-mail at amy.potemski@learningpt.org or by telephone 202-778-4589 with any questions or comments.

New Online Resources

The TQ Center has updated the [State Highly Qualified Teacher \(HQT\) Plans](#) webpage under the TQ Topics page on the website. The updates include two new resources: “[Highly Qualified Teachers in the United States: Where Are We Now?](#),” which summarizes the U.S. Department of education’s release of the 2006–07 highly qualified teacher data, and “[Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements for Special Education Teachers Under the No Child Left Behind Act](#),” a technical assistance response brief that describes how seven states address the requirements for identification, documentation, and notification of highly qualified status for special education teachers as established through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The TQ Center also updated the [Ten Early Lessons Learned From Highly Qualified Teacher Monitoring Reports](#) document, based on the 18 state monitoring visits in 2007–08.

Upcoming TQ Center Webcast

In February, the TQ Center will conduct a webcast on evaluating for teacher effectiveness. This webcast will bring together expert researchers and practitioners to provide an overview of research on teacher evaluation methods—including value-added models and observation protocols, the appropriate uses of various teacher evaluation methods, and examples of how states are using comprehensive methods of teacher evaluation for improving teacher performance and in diversified compensation systems.

Please contact Tricia Coulter by e-mail at tricia.coulter@learningpt.org or by telephone 202-510-2560 with any questions or comments.

Stories From the Field

During the third annual What Works Conference, “Building Capacity for a Systems Approach to Improving Educator Quality,” the TQ Center provided three in-depth technical assistance workshops and a special working session for state education agencies (SEAs) and regional comprehensive centers (RCCs): “Determining Teacher Effectiveness: Tools and Talking Points,” “Moving State Highly Qualified Teacher Plans from Compliance to Implementation,” and “Implementing Evidence-Based Instructional Practices Through Enhancing Teacher Preservice and Inservice Practices.” These workshops are a part of ongoing work that the TQ Center is conducting in these three topic areas.

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is a collaborative effort of ETS, Learning Point Associates, and Vanderbilt University.

Determining Teacher Effectiveness: Tools and Talking Points

Determining teacher effectiveness is an area of debate, concern, and, often, dilemma for schools, districts, and states. The TQ Center has significant staff expertise along with a variety of online resources and tools that SEAs and RCCs can use in determining how to define teacher effectiveness at the school, district, and state level:

- Approaches to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: A Research Synthesis (2008)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/teacherEffectiveness.php>)
- The Link Between Teacher Quality and Student Outcomes: A Research Synthesis (2007)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/link.php>)
- Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Making the Most of Recent Research (2008)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/March2008Brief.pdf>)
- Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for States and Districts (2008)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/February2008Brief.pdf>)
- America's Challenge: Effective Teachers for At-Risk Schools and Students (2007)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/NCCTQBiennialReport.php>)
- Communication Framework for Measuring Teacher Quality and Effectiveness: Bringing Coherence to the Conversation (2007) (<http://www.tqsource.org/communicationFramework.php>)
- Webcast: Highly Effective Teachers: More Than Highly Qualified (2008)
(<http://www.edvantia.org/publications/arccwebcast/june08/>)
- Webcast: America's Challenge: Effective Teachers for At-Risk Schools and Students (2007)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/americasChallenge/>)
- Paying for Teachers' Performance—Strategies and Conditions for Success (2007)
(<http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/payforteach/index.php>)

Please contact Jane Cogshall by e-mail at jane.cogshall@learningpt.org or by telephone at 202-778-4583 with any questions or comments.

Moving State Highly Qualified Teacher Plans From Compliance to Implementation

This session aimed to help states shift the focus of their Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) plans from technical compliance to policy levers for change. The TQ Center has worked with a variety of RCCs and SEAs over the past four years on both writing and implementing state HQT plans and can provide the following direct technical assistance options:

- Two to three weeks prior to a state monitoring visit, TQ Center staff will review a state's HQT plan to highlight HQT challenges and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the plan vis a vis the monitoring protocols.
- One to two weeks prior to a state monitoring visit, TQ Center staff will participate in conference calls with RCC and state representatives to discuss HQT and equitable distribution issues in more depth.

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- Either prior to or after a state monitoring visit, TQ Center staff will work with RCC staff to identify resources that can assist a state in revising its HQT plan and addressing HQT issues.

In addition, the TQ Center has developed a variety of online resources around state HQT plans. These are all available online at <http://www.tqsource.org/topics/HQT.php>.

Please contact Cortney Rowland by e-mail at cortney.rowland@learningpt.org or by telephone at 312-288-7620 with any questions or comments.

Implementing Evidence-Based Instructional Practices Through Enhancing Teacher Preservice and Inservice Practices

The TQ Center at Vanderbilt University has developed tools designed to evaluate current teacher preparation and professional development practices by determining the degree to which scientifically-based research strategies are taught, observed, and practiced. The [TQ Connection](#)'s Issue Papers featured below highlight extensive research evidence and federal policy, identify essential components of evidenced-based instructional strategies, offer innovation configurations (ICs) designed to examine content within coursework and activities, and provide recommendations for improving teacher preparation and professional development. The three papers and accompanying ICs can be accessed below:

- TQ Connection Issue Paper: Effective Classroom Management: Teacher Preparation and Professional Development
<http://www.tqsource.org/topics/effectiveClassroomManagement.pdf>
- TQ Connection Issue Paper: Teacher Preparation to Deliver Inclusive Services to Students With Disabilities
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/TeacherPreparationtoDeliverInclusiveServices.pdf>
- TQ Research and Policy Brief: Barriers to the Preparation of Highly Qualified Teachers in Reading
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/June2007Brief.pdf>

These ICs may be used for a variety of purposes including faculty self-assessment, professional development, department evaluation, and development of association standards. They are designed to identify gaps within general and special education teacher preparation programs.

For training on the use of these ICs, please contact Dr. Dan Reschly, Vanderbilt University, at dan.reschly@vanderbilt.edu or 615-708-7910.

Teacher Quality Questions From the Field

Each month, the TQ Center responds to questions and requests for information from the field. The following requests for information were chosen for their general applicability. This quarter, the TQ Center focused on a series of state policy questions about certification and licensure for teacher leadership and foreign language elementary specialists, alternative certification, licensure reciprocity, and induction and mentoring.

Teacher Certification Policy

- State policies on teacher leadership certification options
- Teacher leadership licensure
- Teacher leadership endorsement

The area of teacher leadership is a relatively new area of research; however, the TQ Center has published a TQ Tips and Tools Key Issue on [Enhancing Teacher Leadership](#). The document provides examples of state and district teacher leader endorsement initiatives, information about national organizations that support teacher leader endorsement programs, and a resource list.

Examples of state activity include the following:

Illinois

The [teacher leader endorsement program](#) in Illinois is a university-based initiative designed around four curriculum strands: subject-specific content knowledge, subject-specific content pedagogy, professional development in curriculum design, and subject-specific curriculum implementation. Each participating university must demonstrate how it will address each of the curriculum strands for each individual seeking a teacher leader endorsement. In addition, the university must ensure that recipients of the teacher leader endorsement are prepared to understand and interpret research in their individual fields, are leaders in curriculum development and implementation, and have the character necessary to become effective instructional leaders.

Louisiana

Louisiana offers a [university-based teacher leader endorsement](#) that requires teachers have a valid Type B, Level 2 or higher Louisiana teaching certificate and complete a state-approved teacher leader program. Teachers also must participate in 90 hours of face-to-face and field-based professional development.

The Louisiana Department of Education also offers a teacher leadership program called [LaLEAD](#). LaLEAD is a one-year program for teachers to become teacher leaders. The program is designed as a professional development opportunity during which teachers learn instructional leadership and school improvement. Participants are paired with highly qualified instructors and site-based mentors throughout the program. The program includes a summer orientation and Leadership Institute, team meetings, site-based experiences, online course work, and professional development training. Teachers receive a Teacher Leader Endorsement certification through the Department of Education's Division of Teacher Certification and Preparation when they complete the program.

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Douglas County, Colorado

Colorado's Douglas County School District offers a district-based teacher leadership program. As part of this teacher leadership initiative, [Building Resource Teachers](#) (BRTs) are placed in each school. BRTs are well-qualified teacher leaders; each has at least five years of successful teaching in the district, 54 quarter hours of graduate work, and experience in supporting adult learners. One reason for the success of the BRT program is that BRTs have clearly defined teacher leader roles, including mentor, coach, consultant, liaison with the district, and resource to teachers, principals, parents, and paraprofessionals.

Missouri

In an effort to develop teacher leadership in mathematics and science, Missouri initiated the [Mathematics and Science Teacher Leadership Academy](#). The Academy includes a four-day summer program during which participating teachers develop a Leadership Action Plan to be implemented during the following school year. Eligible teachers must have at least five years of experience, teach mathematics or science in Grades 6–12, and demonstrate leadership potential.

Iowa

In late June 2008, leaders in Iowa coordinated and hosted focus groups on a teacher leadership endorsement. Several questions came out of the focus groups:

- What next?
- What will one do with a teacher leader license?
- Should this be legislated? Should it be part of a career ladder? Should it just be an option?

The teacher leader endorsement effort is funded through the state's Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) Grant work. Iowa has drafted standards for the endorsement, and the state is currently working on next steps for the standards. The TQ Center is aware of this work in Iowa because Learning Point Associates is the external evaluator of Iowa's TQE grant.

Certification and Licensure Policies for Foreign Language Elementary Specialists

- What are state policies on certification and licensure for teachers from foreign countries?
- What are these teachers allowed to teach and not allowed to teach?
- What restrictions are on their licenses?
- How do states deal with the HQT issue for these teachers?

For state policies on certification and licensure for teachers from other countries, the TQ Center's [Online Resources](#) webpage has a link to our [Certification and Licensure State Policy Database](#), as well as a variety of other databases.

This tool allows users to look up all states policies on international teachers. New Jersey, for example, has quite a specific policy on this issue. This information should answer questions regarding international teachers, except for how states ensure that these teachers are highly qualified. As to the HQT issue, please see the [Letter from the Secretary of Education](#) on the U.S. Department of Education’s website.

Licensure Reciprocity Policy

- What does the research say on benefits and costs of licensure reciprocity?
- What state policies are in place regarding licensure reciprocity?
- Does the TQ Center know of recommendations for states on how to be more reciprocal?

The primary benefit of easing licensure reciprocity for teachers is that it more easily allows districts to recruit teachers in other states and thereby likely will increase the supply of teachers in terms of quantity. The potential drawback of lowering barriers is that a state might “import” lower-quality teachers (at least in terms of their formal qualifications). Addressing the quality problem could be done through means other than state certification policies (e.g., provide training to district personnel in how to hire high-quality teachers).

There are other barriers to interstate mobility. For example, teachers often will not move because of salary differentials or nonportable pension arrangements. To look at average salaries in neighboring states, the TQ Source has an [Interactive Data Tool](#) based on 2003–04 Schools and Staffing Survey data. To learn the difference in average base salary between say, Louisiana and Texas, users can click through Question 4, select Texas and Louisiana and then other parameters of school types to find out how the salaries for teachers in big districts in Texas compare with those in Louisiana.

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Teacher Project

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Teacher Project (MARTP) is a good example of a regional licensure reciprocity agreement. MARTP has established a regionally recognized teaching credential—the Meritorious New Teacher Candidate (MNTC) designation—that eases mobility for particularly outstanding new teachers within the Mid-Atlantic region. Beginning teachers with this designation on their license enjoy “streamlined” reciprocity with the four participants: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. New Jersey will soon join the consortium. This effort is being expanded to teacher preparation programs in other states through the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The criteria for receiving an MNTC designation include having a high cumulative grade point average; scoring in the top quartile on licensing content exams; having a minimum of 400 hours of field experience; scoring in the top quartile on the verbal portion of the SAT, ACT, or GRE; and achieving the highest standards of the recommending institution’s performance assessment. The full list of requirements for the MNTC can be found at <http://www.aacte.org/MNTC/>.

Expanding the use and recognition of the MNTC designation, or establishing a similar one that would be recognized across the country, would go a long way toward easing mobility while maintaining the highest standards of teacher quality. Akin to National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification for accomplished teachers, such a credential for exceptional beginning teachers with well-articulated requirements would support both the profession and teacher interstate mobility.

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Other Ideas for Improving Licensure Reciprocity

The [NASDTEC Mobility Study](#) (2008) provides insight on the issue of licensure reciprocity, including the facilitators and barriers for teacher mobility. Some examples of ways to lower barriers are to open the door for all National Board Certified Teachers, eliminate state-specific coursework requirements, lower Praxis or other licensure test cut scores, and develop a “transitional certificate” for incoming teachers who are on initial or provisional licenses (or were alternatively certified) in their home state that would be provisional until those teachers complete SEA certification requirements.

Another idea is to provide for interim teaching certificates for teachers who are military spouses. The nature of a military career is quite mobile—transfers from base to base and from state to state are common. Teachers whose spouses are in the armed forces are concerned about the interstate transferability of their qualifications, as they may face the process of obtaining new state certification every few years. States who have trouble filling vacancies may welcome the experiences and skills such teachers bring with them. Based on the model of the Troops-to-Teachers Program, Colorado created the Spouses-to-Teachers Program to support the spouses of military personnel seeking to become teachers in high-needs schools, providing a more mobile career.

To help fulfill this promise of mobility, the governor of Colorado signed legislation this year (HB 08-1162) allowing the Colorado Department of Education to issue Military Spouse Interim Authorizations that allow school districts to hire individuals who are certified or licensed, or eligible for certification or licensure, as teachers in other states but who have not yet fulfilled all the requirements for a Level I Colorado license and who are military spouses. The interim authorization is contingent on a thorough criminal background check and is valid for one year while the teacher participates in an induction program and works to fulfill the other requirements for full certification.

Finally, findings from the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) mobility study pointed to two other barriers to teacher interstate mobility that might be easily addressed: poor communication and general confusion about the meaning of “reciprocity.” First, teachers on the move reported that they obtain information about certification and reciprocity requirements from a variety of sources: state certification officials, principals, district human resources personnel, preparation program providers, and others. Some of these sources may be better informed about the various certification and licensure policies than others. Second, survey respondents seemed to equate “reciprocity” with “transferability.” Instead, as the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement makes clear, “reciprocity” merely means that a teacher, if certified in one state, may be eligible to become certified in another state pending satisfaction of various other requirements.

One way to reduce confusion is to create state-hosted websites that make requirements explicit and perhaps even provide for online submission of application materials. For example, one can easily find application materials and procedures online at, for example, North Carolina’s user-friendly website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/licensure/beginning/>) and at Washington’s website (<http://www.teachwashington.org/default.aspx?ID=6>).

Induction and Mentoring Policy

- What are state policies on induction and mentoring policies?
- What information do we have about full-release mentors (and whether any states fund it or have policies about it)?
- What are cost models at a state level for funding full-release mentoring for each new teacher versus funding stipends for mentors?

The New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California, recently published a newsletter that highlights what various states around the country are doing on teacher induction and mentoring (see the map on pages 10–11 at this link: <http://www.newteachercenter.org/newsletters/ReflectionsW08.pdf>). This newsletter also breaks down the costs and monetary returns to comprehensive induction and mentoring programs (see pages 2–3).

Although full-release mentorship programs exist in many states at the local level, according to the New Teacher Center’s website, only Alaska has taken this approach statewide (see http://www.newteachercenter.org/ti_scope_natl.php). The Alaska Department of Education website provides more information about its mentor program (see <http://alaskamentorproject.org/about.php>).

Other states are tackling the mentorship issue in unique ways:

- Under Iowa’s beginning teacher mentoring and induction program, the state provides funding for districts that apply and whose programs include, among other things, district organizational support for release time for mentors and beginning teachers.
- In Massachusetts, all school districts are required to provide an induction program for teachers in their first year of practice, and this must include release time for the mentor (however, it is not clear if full release time is required).
- Nebraska’s Mentor Teacher Program provides funding to districts that provide each first-year teacher in the local system with a mentor. Among other things, they suggest but do not require benefits or incentives for mentors and first-year teachers for their participation that may include release time, stipends, and professional growth points.
- Under the New York State mentor teacher internship program, districts participating in approved mentor programs are eligible for aid to cover costs related to the release time of the mentor teacher up to 10 percent of his or her salary.

In addition, the Southern Regional Education Board (of which Louisiana is a member state) found in a survey that full-release mentoring was not at all prevalent among principals (see page 60 of the report at http://www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/publications/2007pubs/07v05_mentoring_insideandcover.pdf).

Finally, the TQ Center has a Tips & Tools key issue on [Induction/Mentoring/Support of New Teachers](#) that highlights induction and mentoring initiatives in several states and offers a range of strategies for effective induction and mentoring programs.