
America's Challenge: Effective Teachers for At-Risk Schools and Students

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The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality is a collaborative effort of Education Commission of the States, ETS, Learning Point Associates, and Vanderbilt University.



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CHAPTER 7



The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality: A Resource for Systemic Improvement in the Equitable Distribution of Teachers

Chapter 7

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality: A Resource for Systemic Improvement in the Equitable Distribution of Teachers

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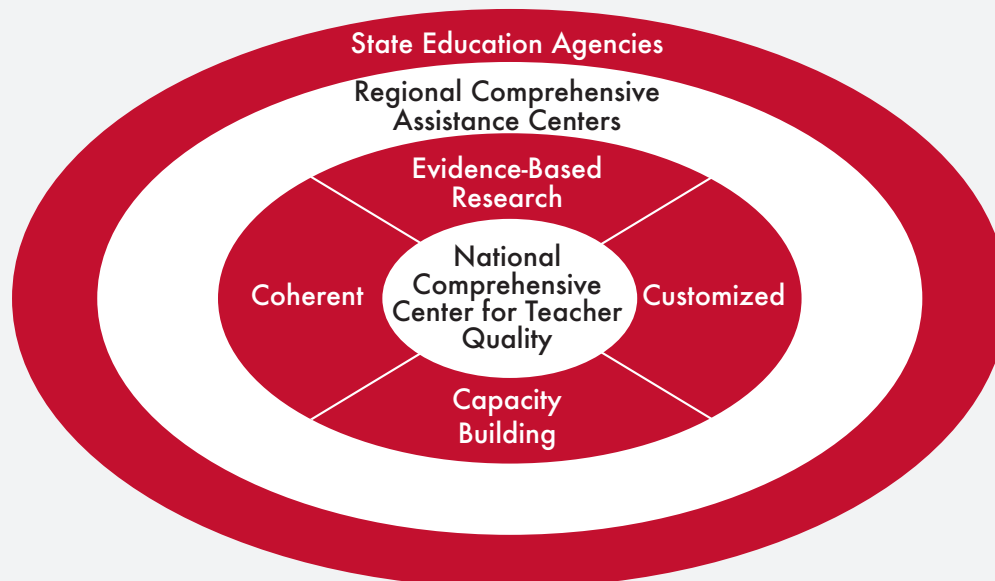
The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ) is a national resource for strengthening the quality of teaching—especially in high-poverty, low-performing, and hard-to-staff schools. The regional comprehensive assistance centers (RCCs), states, and other education stakeholders turn to NCCTQ for guidance in addressing needs related to teacher quality to ensure that highly qualified teachers (HQTs) are serving all students.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, NCCTQ is a collaborative effort of the Education Commission of the States, ETS, Learning Point Associates, and Vanderbilt University. The University of Michigan serves

as its external evaluator. NCCTQ is part of a group of 21 federally funded centers, 16 RCCs that each serve a specified geographical region, and 5 comprehensive content centers that focus on a particular research area (i.e., NCCTQ, the National High School Center, the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, the Center on Innovation and Improvement, and the Center on Instruction). As a comprehensive content center, NCCTQ's mission is to help the RCCs and the states they serve with issues related to teacher quality. The NCCTQ website (www.ncctq.org) provides more information.

As shown in Figure 1, NCCTQ's operating principles are built upon technical assistance that is research-based, capacity-building, coherent, customized, and focused.

Figure 1
NCCTQ's Operating Principles



As NCCTQ begins its third year of operation, it has identified systemic change through collaboration as the framework for future teacher-quality technical assistance and outreach. Equitable distribution of HQTs is the overarching focus.

The NCCTQ Approach: Systemic Change Through Collaboration

A thorough review of collected and analyzed needs-assessment data gathered during the first two years of the grant, makes it clear to NCCTQ that the RCCs and state education agencies (SEAs) often need models for systemic change strategies to initiate teacher quality improvements. They require assistance with how to think through and implement the array of actions required to institute change across the whole system of public education in their states.

NCCTQ firmly believes that systemic change and collaboration are two key elements that drive innovative reform. During the past year, NCCTQ developed a mapping tool—the Teacher Quality Gap Analysis Tool (www.ncctq.org)—and worked with states to help them meet their NCLB requirements for comprehensive planning for teacher quality change. The Teacher Quality Gap Analysis Tool directs systemic change by guiding conversations and plans that eventually will lead to new state teacher quality policies and changes in practice at the local levels of education. Such a systemic approach to planning and implementation can be powerful but only if collaboration and open communication are supported between and among all offices of the SEAs down to the local education agencies, and across to all who want to provide services to improve teaching and learning for all students.

As one example of this approach, NCCTQ will demonstrate to the RCCs and SEAs that what students need to know and be able to do (as defined by state standards of academic achievement) should drive what teachers should know and be able to do (as exemplified

in teacher standards, teacher exams, credentialing, and other areas). This, in turn, directs what institutions of higher education and alternate teacher-preparation systems should offer in their syllabi, as well as in their student teaching requirements.

Program approval processes conducted by SEAs should reflect these teacher requirements and initiate systems of checks and balances that drive changes in overall teacher preparation. Evaluation systems that collect reliable data should be established and made part of the system of review and analysis. Finally, the findings of these analyses should direct new policy and the targeting of funds to support those most in need of improving the education they offer to students. NCCTQ is committed to helping its constituents find best practices grounded in verifiable research that will lead to systemwide change. NCCTQ's focus is always centered on helping educational institutions meet the academic achievement needs of all students—in general education; in special education; and, especially, in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools.

NCCTQ will continue to provide cutting-edge support for systemic, collaborative, and innovative thinking about teacher quality and educational change. NCCTQ will continue to offer the best policy, practice, and research to define teacher quality and effectiveness. In the third year of operation, NCCTQ will create opportunities for the 16 RCCs and their partner SEAs to work as teams to establish teacher quality action plans that are feasible, systemic, and sustainable. Data on the needs of the RCCs and SEAs guide this work.

Reaching the Goal: Equitable Distribution of HQTs

Teacher quality issues are embedded across the teacher-development continuum. In its work to date (see www.ncctq.org for complete details), NCCTQ has approached the complex topic of teacher quality by focusing on a number of interrelated teacher quality issues,

including recruitment, teacher preparation (university-based and alternative routes), licensure, credentialing, teacher testing, new teacher induction, professional development, and teacher effectiveness as it relates to student achievement. NCCTQ's work concentrates specifically on how these issues take shape for high-poverty, low-performing, and hard-to-staff schools. NCCTQ is committed to assisting with these issues as they are reflected in both the general and special education environments.

As it begins its third year, the unifying goal of all NCCTQ efforts is the equitable distribution of HQTs. NCCTQ plans to unite all of its print and online products and publications and all of its events, such as webcasts, issue forums, and the NCCTQ national conference, around the theme of the equitable distribution of HQTs. With these resources, NCCTQ hopes to empower states with the tools they need to work strategically, using data-driven decision making, to target resources and implement systemwide change in service of the most critical aspect of improving education for all of the children in our nation: providing HQTs to every student in general and special education.

Tapping into *TQ Source* Tips and Tools

As educational practitioners continue to explore reforms related to teacher and leadership quality, it is necessary to tap into resources and identify strategies they can use to enhance their efforts. *TQ Source* Tips and Tools: Emerging Strategies to Enhance Educator Quality (see www.ncctq.org/strategies) provides up-to-date information, including research bases for certain classroom practices and examples of policy initiatives in various districts and states. These resources are indexed into three salient topic areas:

- Recruiting Quality Teachers for Mathematics, Science, and Special Education
- Teacher Quality in At-Risk Schools
- Leadership Quality

Within each topic area, a user can find one or more key issues that are most relevant.

These comprehensive and carefully indexed resources allow teachers, administrators, and other professionals to access and leverage emerging expertise to meet the immediate challenges in their own states, districts, and schools.