

A Summary of the NCCTQ Second Annual What Works Conference: Advancing Student Achievement Through Effective Teaching and Leadership

**November 5–7, 2007
The Fairmont Hotel, Washington, D.C.**

Day 1

Dinner Keynote

Getting Started: New Public School and Teacher Perceptions of Training and First Months on the Job

Jean Johnson, executive vice president of Public Agenda, began the conference by sharing the findings of a recent survey conducted by Public Agenda on behalf of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ) of more than 600 new teachers on their views of their new careers and the usefulness of their education coursework and student teaching. The discussion was moderated by **Eric Hirsch**, director of special projects at The New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, who also discussed the findings of teacher working conditions surveys of over 250,000 participants in multiple states. Some highlights included the following:

- New teachers are committed to the profession. They either wish to share their love for their subject with students or to make a difference. They are confident in their subject knowledge and intend to remain teachers for at least eight to ten years.
- Elementary school teachers feel supported and well prepared to teach reading and mathematics. They are less confident about teaching science and worry that they are not able to be as creative as they would like.
- Middle school and high school teachers do not feel as well supported. They feel prepared to teach their subjects but ill-prepared for motivating and managing classrooms. More than half of the respondents believed their training was too theoretical and not sufficiently practical.
- In high-needs schools, new teachers feel particularly undersupported and believe they are assigned to the most difficult classes to manage.

According to the survey, however, the main reason teachers leave the profession is due to lack of support and feelings that they are not effective. Teachers need greater preparation in diversifying and personalizing instruction and smaller class sizes to do so. The presentation also highlighted the importance of listening to what teachers themselves say they need and want.

Day 2

Regional Team Meetings and Planning Sessions

Adding Value to Your Conference

This session provided the opportunity for regional and state teams to build capacity by determining how best to add value to their conference experience through strategic participation in conference sessions and the use of working sessions material provided by NCCTQ.

Welcome and Introduction

Effective Teachers and Leaders: Advancing Student Achievement

Sabrina Laine, Ph.D., director of NCCTQ and a chief officer at Learning Point Associates, welcomed participants to the second annual NCCTQ What Works Conference. She discussed the following characteristics of the new, Generation Y teachers:

- They look for creativity and contribution in their career.
- They are confident and ready to lead.
- They yearn for support, innovation, and collaboration.
- They will innovate and reinvent public education if we let them.

She highlighted the importance of the relationship between leaders and teachers. The new teachers need leaders who are committed to success, willing to allow for experimentation, able to provide a supportive working environment, open-minded, and capable of nurturing teachers' talents and abilities to improve student achievement.

Opening Plenary

Connecting Teaching and Leading

In this presentation, **Joel I. Klein**, Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, discussed his historic Children First school reform. Klein began by emphasizing that there is a crisis in education and that progress will only occur if we change the status quo. Some highlights included the following:

- Teacher quality is the most important factor for school improvement.
- Good leadership is necessary to facilitate change (e.g., principals as CEOs).
- Context is important.
- Schools (not school systems) should be viewed as the units for progress.
- Efforts must be bold.
- The first phase of their reform model focusing on building the capacity of teachers and school leaders

- The second phase focused on leadership, empowerment, and accountability.

After Klein discussed the changes made to teacher quality, leadership, and school context, he presented examples of New York City's progress in improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and improving parental satisfaction. During the question-and-answer period, he noted the importance of getting principals on board to make changes at the school level, the need to be able to trust principals, and the need to know when people can be developed and when they are just in the wrong job. He reminded the audience that the education system is not run for the employees but for the students.

Concurrent Sessions I

A. Assessment of Teachers and Leaders: *Assessing Effectiveness in Teachers*

The overall goal of this session was to discuss and weigh the tradeoffs of two methods for measuring teacher effectiveness. First, **Richard K. Hill, Ph.D.**, founder and chair of the board of trustees for the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment Inc., discussed the use of student achievement growth models as they relate to teacher accountability. The goals of an accountability system based on student achievement growth are as follows:

- Change teachers' behavior.
- Make expectations known in advance.
- Create the perception that goals can be accomplished.
- Become aware of whether the required resources are available.
- Ensure that teachers have at least partial control over accomplishing goals.
- Develop incentives that are consistent with effort.
- Make sure that all teachers can succeed.

The limitations of using growth models relate to issues of reliability and relativity. Hill concluded that growth models and value-added models are good indicators of school program effectiveness but should not be used for measuring individual teachers depending on the stakes attached.

Next, **Charlotte Danielson**, consultant, discussed the different approaches to measuring teacher effectiveness and the necessary assumptions involved in measuring effectiveness based on what teachers do and accomplish.

Danielson then noted that danger arises when teacher effectiveness is measured with low levels of rigor and high stakes. Also of great importance is the need to be clear about the purpose of measuring teacher effectiveness. The goal of an accountability system must be to promote growth. There also must be an assurance of quality for the public and a focus on improvement in teacher learning. This must all be accomplished in an environment of trust. Finally, Danielson emphasized that we need to think in terms of systems and intellectual capital. We must advance the intellectual capital of a whole school so that actively engaged principals and teachers can

become resources for one another. The discussion was moderated by **Laura Goe, Ph.D.**, associate research scientist in the Teaching and Learning Research Center at ETS and senior researcher for NCCTQ.

B. Creation of Effective Systems: *Teacher Attitudes and Aspirations*

The goal of this session was to further the understanding of both novice and veteran teachers' attitudes and aspirations and the implications of these for the profession at national and state levels. **Jonathan Rochkind**, research manager at Public Agenda, and **Jean Johnson** (Public Agenda) discussed new teachers' views about teaching and what they need to be effective, drawing upon the results of a survey and focus groups with new public school teachers' views of first months on the job. **Judy Stewart, Ph.D.**, founder and president of Taylor Education Consulting Inc., examined the views of those in the pipeline to the urban school principal positions, based on a literature review and field response at NCCTQ-sponsored principal preparation programs in Chicago; Washington, D.C.; and New York City. **Kristi Tally**, education programs manager in the Office of North Carolina Governor Mike Easley, discussed the state's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative. **Eric Hirsch** (The New Teacher Center) was the moderator. Some of the highlights included the following:

- New teachers tend to view teaching as a calling but are aware of the drawbacks to the profession and the potential for burnout. They feel well prepared for their first year, but nearly half believe their coursework was too theoretical and did not prepare them fully for classroom management.
- In high-needs schools, new teachers believe they are assigned the toughest classes and need more support in dealing with parents and special-needs students. Secondary school teachers are concerned about unmotivated students.
- Attractors to leadership positions include the opportunity to give back and empower teachers; authority to make decisions, influence outcomes, and take ownership of a vision; and career advancement.
- The drawbacks of leadership positions include stress, time commitment, accountability pressures, inadequate funding, insufficient compensation, societal problems that make the job difficult, unrealistic expectations, lack of job security, distance from students, and bureaucracy.
- North Carolina introduced a teacher working conditions survey, which became a permanent part of the budget by law in 2005. It revealed five themes (time, professional development, leadership, empowerment, and facilities and resources) of working conditions for teachers.
- North Carolina also initiated a Real DEAL (Dedicated Educators, Administrators, and Learners) Conference, which showcases the schools that have used the teacher working conditions survey to implement best practices.

C. Special Challenges: *Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified Special Educators and Other Related Service Personnel*

Moderated by **Julie Kowal**, consultant with Public Impact, in this session, **Phoebe Gillespie, Ph.D.**, director of the National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers; **Susan Karr, CC-SLP**, director of state education practices at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; and **Kathleen Paliokas**, director of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, discussed how we can address the need to recruit and retain special education teachers and related service personnel.

Paliokas focused on the Center for Teacher Quality's work with 41 state teams on systems-level approaches to teacher quality. Gillespie emphasized the importance of and interaction between the state, district, and building levels and the challenges and strategies for teacher recruitment and retention. Karr discussed issues regarding special education teacher retention, funding, and workable solutions. Some of the conclusions were as follows:

- More collaboration and alignment is needed between general and special education.
- Retention is a building-level issue for special education teachers.
- The focus must be on leadership, local education agency partnerships, coursework, and working conditions.
- All of us are responsible for making change; prevention of failure is cost-effective.

D. Sustaining the Development and Implementation of Your State's HQT Plan: *A Focus on Data*

This session included an analysis of 2005–2006 state highly qualified teacher (HQT) data, a discussion of methods for verifying state HQT data, and a presentation of two state approaches to collecting and managing teacher data. The presenters were **Jeff Sellers**, assistant deputy commissioner in the Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement at the Florida Department of Education; **Elizabeth Witt, Ph.D.**, team leader for Teacher Quality Programs at the U.S. Department of Education; and **Wayne Barton, Ed.D.**, director of professional accountability at the Delaware Department of Education. The moderator was **Cortney Rowland**, program associate at Learning Point Associates and coordinator of policy products and services for NCCTQ.

State education agencies are required to track the proportion of core academic subject *classes* taught by HQTs, not the proportion of *teachers* who meet the HQT criteria. Last year, 92 percent of U.S. classes were taught by HQTs; however, a substantial gap still remains between high- and low-poverty schools. Specific features of the educator databases used by officials in the states of Delaware and Florida were detailed. Some highlights from the discussion included the following:

- These two states' data systems were able to integrate large amounts of data about teachers and students.
- The U.S. Department of Education's former focus on HQT definitions is shifting to the quality of HQT data.

- Developing data systems can broaden options for analyzing and improving teacher quality.
- When developing a data system, the goals should be articulated early on, and all stakeholders (from data entry to curricula staff) should be brought to the table.
- Controlling data entry when possible and linking it to the payroll system can be beneficial.
- Data checks should be built into the system so that data errors may be identified.

E. Building Capacity to Advance Teacher Quality and Leadership Quality: *Moving From Compliance to Innovation*

This session was led by **Paul Kimmelman, Ed.D.**, senior advisor in the office of the CEO at Learning Point Associates, and **Gretchen Weber**, senior program associate at Learning Point Associates and coordinator of field services at NCCTQ. The purpose of this presentation was to stimulate conversation to help educational leaders move from a mentality of compliance with federal or state guidelines to a mentality of innovation to advance education. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- Definitions of innovation
- Examples of innovation in education
- Pros and cons of innovation
- Historical and present context of innovative and compliant mind-sets
- Approaches to innovatively addressing contemporary compliance issues in education
- The role of effective leaders in surmounting the barriers to innovation

Innovation energizes support but can also energize resistance. Innovation depends upon context—something that seems innovative to one person might not be innovative to others. Innovation might not be trusted, yet it is necessary for making progress toward changing the status quo, particularly for the next generation of teachers.

Luncheon Plenary

Coteaching: Classroom Partnerships for Student Success

The luncheon plenary highlighted the importance of collaboration. Presenters included **Marilyn Friend, Ph.D.**, professor of education in the Department of Specialized Education Services at the University of North Carolina; **Chriss Walther-Thomas, Ph.D.**, professor and chair of the University of Kansas Department of Special Education; and **Daniel J. Reschly, Ph.D.**, professor of education and psychology and chair of the Department of Special Education at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, who stepped in for **Margo Mastropieri, Ph.D.**, professor in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University, who was unable to attend. The discussion was moderated by **Bonnie Jones, Ph.D.**, education research analyst in the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education.

The presentation advocated for more collaboration in education, particularly through coteaching. Models and contexts for effective coteaching were discussed, as were common dilemmas that may arise. The findings included the following:

- There is a great deal of collaboration in almost every other profession except for teaching.
- Coteaching should involve two or more licensed educators using shared purposeful instruction who are jointly accountable for a single group of children, although a common problem in practice has been that collaboration is unequal (e.g., a special education teacher serves as an assistant to a general education teacher).
- Successful collaboration must involve the support of school leaders and the provision of common planning time and professional development.
- Research finds that coteaching is perceived positively, but there is limited data on student outcomes.
- Collaboration and coteaching ought to be included in teacher preparation courses.

Concurrent Sessions II

A. Assessment of Teachers and Leaders: *Measuring Principal Effectiveness in a Performance-Based System*

This presentation discussed the evaluation of principals as school leaders. Specifically, a new tool being piloted by researchers at Vanderbilt University, VAL-ED (Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education), and an accountability protocol that has been used in New York City, were discussed. The presenters included **Xiu Chen Cravens**, Ph.D. candidate in educational leadership and policy at Vanderbilt University and an educational experimental research training fellow; **Patrick Schuermann, Ed.D.**, research assistant professor of educational leadership and public policy at Vanderbilt University; and **Laura Dukess**, director of professional development at the Office of School Leadership for the New York City Department of Education. **Sabrina Laine, Ph.D.** (Learning Point Associates and NCCTQ), moderated the discussion.

The presentation noted some problems with a sampling of current evaluation instruments that are used, including alignment of curriculum, managing change, and focusing on closing achievement gaps. The presenters shared the following six core components of the VAL-ED instrument:

- High standards for student learning
- Rigorous curriculum
- Quality instruction
- Culture of learning and professional behavior
- Connections to external communities
- Performance accountability

At the end of the project and as a result of pilot testing, the VAL-ED instrument will contain the following characteristics: works in any setting/context, valid, reliable, can be used easily by

evaluator of principal, and drives conversation about enhancing teaching and learning. The final instrument will provide a norm-referenced score and a criterion-referenced score as well.

Next the discussion turned to the leadership assessment instruments in Region 1 of New York City, which assessed programs for leadership development and principals' performance. As part of a performance-based evaluation process, practitioners developed an accountability protocol. It rates the following:

- Instructional leadership
- Organizational leadership
- Staff development
- Student support services
- Community relations and communication

The protocol was not only developed to measure what happened; rather, it is based on standards and a specific leadership framework.

B. Creation of Effective Systems: *Working With Unions to Advance Teacher Quality*

This presentation examined the working relationships between district officials and the teacher unions in Clark County (Nevada) and Hamilton County (Tennessee) and their use of interest based bargaining (IBB) to create an atmosphere of open discussion to advance compensation reform. Presenters included **George Ann Rice, Ph.D.**, former associate superintendent, Human Resources Division, and chief negotiator of the Clark County School District; **Leslie James**, consultant at the Nevada State Department of Education; **Rhonda Catanzaro**, former chief spokesperson for her education association in Tennessee and field organizer and personnel dispute mediator for the Tennessee Education Association; and moderator **Kathleen Fulton**, director of Reinventing Schools for the 21st Century at the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. There are five steps for successful IBB:

- Open discussion of the importance of the issues to both parties
- Brainstorming on how to overcome existing barriers and solve problems
- Taking a weighted vote for the five options deemed most likely to be successful
- Development of criteria for the evaluation of possible solutions
- Application of the criteria to each viable option

Many examples of what may be included in the resulting negotiated agreement were then discussed. Student achievement and teacher supply in Clark County and Hamilton County greatly improved after IBB. It is a highly effective tool to bring together district officials and teacher representatives for honest conversations and problem solving, providing all parties are committed to the idea.

C. Special Challenges: *Preparing Teachers for Challenging Assignments and Student Populations*

This presentation provided an overview of special needs populations (middle schools, urban schools, rural schools, and special education) and approaches to prepare teachers to serve those populations. **Richard W. Mainzer, Jr., Ed.D.**, associate executive director of professional services at the Council for Exceptional Children, moderated the session.

Analyzing SAT and Praxis results, **Drew Gitomer, Ph.D.**, research director at the ETS Policy Evaluation and Research Center, found that the academic quality of teacher candidates is lower than for other subject majors. Furthermore, he found that, although NCLB requires that teacher candidates prove their subject competency, middle school teachers were previously excluded from this requirement in some states and instead were trained as elementary teachers. It is of note that middle school is where student achievement begins to falter. An area for future research is whether the subject mastery of middle school teachers has an effect on student achievement at this level.

Gerald Gipp, executive director for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, highlighted the challenges faced in rural schools, with an emphasis on the 60,000 students educated under the Bureau of Indian Education. He spoke of the importance of teachers understanding the community and cultures in which they teach. For example, there are 500 American Indian tribal entities, each with a different language and culture, but until the mid-1970s, tribes had no control of these schools. More generally, rural populations can be very diverse. As an “invisible population,” these students do not receive equitable funding compared to urban areas, even when poverty rates are equivalent. Moreover, recruiting and retaining teachers is difficult for these schools.

Al Bennett, Ph.D., Harold Washington Professor of Sociology and Education at Roosevelt University–Chicago, then discussed the conceptualization of urban education. He argued that in high-needs urban schools, principals require an even higher level of preparation than teachers, and superintendents require a higher level than principals. Superintendents require specific additional training in multiculturalism, deeper and richer field experiences, and mentoring. Why not train everybody at such a high level? He noted the “3 Cs”: Cost, the Choice of teachers, and the Capacity of higher education institutions. He also argued that urban schools require teachers from similar backgrounds as the students they teach; smarter, better teachers; and teachers who will use data routinely to improve student learning. What we need most is resilience—the knowledge that tomorrow will be better. How do we help new teachers develop resiliency in the classroom?

Finally, **Angela Baber**, a researcher for the Teacher Quality and Leadership Institute at Education Commission of the States (ECS), discussed the importance of aligning state requirements to decrease barriers for special education teachers. She collated two state-level databases on special education teacher requirements and compared these across all states. She found that there is no common landscape across the states in terms of special education requirements. HQT requires that special education teachers must pass both content assessments *and* special education assessments. Currently, 18 states have aligned certification and licensure requirements for new special education teachers, but in at least 23 states, they are not aligned.

D. Sustaining the Development and Implementation of Your State’s HQT Plan: *A Focus on Equitable Distribution*

This presentation drew attention to how the U.S. Department of Education is approaching the next steps with respect to state HQT plans and how three states (North Carolina, New Jersey, and Ohio) are implementing the plan, measuring the plan’s progress and reporting it. The speakers included **Elizabeth Witt, Ph.D.** (U.S. Department of Education); **Charles L. Thompson, Ed.D.**, Lora Wilson King, Distinguished Professor in Education at East Carolina University; **Wesley G. Williams, II**, director of the Office of Educator Equity at the Ohio Department of Education; and **Eileen Aviss-Spedding**, manager of professional standards and higher education initiatives at the New Jersey Department of Education. **Tricia Coulter, Ph.D.**, principal investigator for NCCTQ and director of the Teaching Quality and Leadership Institute at ECS, moderated the discussion. This is an important issue primarily because following the creation and approval of the HQT plans, federal law requires that states monitor, evaluate, and report progress to ensure that the plan works and modify it if need be.

In **North Carolina**, the governor and the State Board of Education established a pilot study in 16 districts to provide funds to improve educational outcomes for academically disadvantaged students, who currently have less access to high-quality teachers. They found that the competitive disadvantage for the Disadvantaged Students Supplemental Fund districts decreased. The salary supplements improved but were still below the statewide average.

In **New Jersey**, the state is collecting and analyzing a variety of data to develop a statewide plan to update teacher preparation programs, recruitment and retention, professional development, and working conditions. The data are used to determine what is and is not effective and how to make improvements and comply with NCLB. All districts and charter schools will complete an online HQT plan this winter, which will include plans for teacher recruitment, retention, HQT, and statements of assurances. They found that the induction phase is important, but that it is not working as is. They also found that targeting recruitment efforts to specific high-needs districts has been effective.

In **Ohio**, the state created an Office of Educator Equity to work on HQT and equity issues and assist districts in the identification and implementation of goals. In the first year, every district was required to develop a plan, and the office conducted visits to a number of districts in the state to check on progress and help address problems related to recruitment and retention, collective bargaining, and culturally responsive issues. A website through the office was created for public reporting so the state can share what the office is doing regarding the HQT plans and requirements. The office is working with the unions to address critical issues regarding signing bonuses and incentives to recruit teachers to high-needs districts and schools. Finally, the presentation emphasized the importance of collaboration among stakeholders.

E. Building Capacity to Advance Teacher Quality and Leadership Quality: *Innovation Configurations*

This presentation introduced the Scientifically Based Reading Instruction (SBRI) Innovation Configuration (IC), developed by **Daniel J. Reschley, Ph.D.**, Vanderbilt University, and **Susan Smartt, Ph.D.**, senior research associate at Vanderbilt University and member of the NCCTQ team. **Greg Roberts, Ph.D.**, associate director of the Vaughn Gross Center at the University of Texas–Austin, served as the moderator.

An IC is a tool created primarily to analyze teacher preparation and professional development. This presentation focused on how to use the SBRI-IC (one of various ICs) to assess the degree to which selected evidence-based practices for reading instruction are being implemented in required reading courses. Studies find that most general education teacher preparation programs are not teaching the five components of scientifically based reading, despite certain SBRI components being specifically mentioned in NCLB. This may have critical results for early reading development. The IC tool is comprised of 11 components, which were derived from the research.

There was concern among participants about the validity of the evidence upon which the tool was based and the use of the syllabus as a reflection of what actually is taught, but it was noted that, though not perfect, the IC is a useful tool, particularly if regarded as just one piece of a whole toolkit for evaluating preparation programs. In summary, universities have been supportive and encouraging of this approach, but the next step is ensuring that the tool is used by those who need it. At the very least, these tools should enter the dialogue on how we are preparing our teachers.

Regional Team Working Sessions

Conference participants had the opportunity to meet as regional or state teams to discuss conference themes and share ways in which these themes reflect priority areas in their state or region. Working session materials were provided by NCCTQ to support the teams in collaborating on issues related to teacher quality and leadership.

Day 3

Early Bird Session

Teacher Quality and Leadership Indicators

In this session, **Lynn Olson**, managing editor for special projects at *Education Week* and the executive project editor for *Quality Counts*, set the stage by discussing how the newspaper is compiling a new set of indicators on human capital and soliciting feedback on these indicators. Overall, the new focus of the indicators will look at education in a broader, more nuanced manner. The goal is to include characteristics and state support across the entire teacher-leader continuum, including the following:

- State requirements for performance assessments

- Induction
- Teacher preparation programs
- Provision of alternate pathways
- The importance of leaders
- Financial incentives
- Equitable distribution of teachers
- Working conditions

Their goal is to ask whether states are doing the best they can to recruit, develop, and retain the best talent out there. Their approach bears in mind the three roles of government in improving teacher quality: accountability, incentives, and capacity-building. The session was moderated by **Sabrina Laine, Ph.D.** (Learning Point Associates and NCCTQ).

Morning Plenary

NCLB Reauthorization and the Aspen Institute Report: Key Recommendations for Teaching and Leading

The morning plenary was presented by **Gary Huggins**, director of the NCLB Commission at the Aspen Institute, who stepped in for **Alex Nock**, deputy staff director for the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee, and moderated by **Paul Kimmelman, Ed.D.** (Learning Point Associates). The presenters provided an overview of the draft proposals for the renewal of NCLB and the impact of the NCLB Commission's recommendations on congressional discussions. Currently, there is significant controversy over which components of NCLB will be reauthorized and what other changes will take place. The discussion details the areas in which improvements were deemed necessary:

- Accountability
- Improved tests
- Use of data
- Teachers
- Principals
- School choice
- School improvement
- Standards
- High schools

Huggins remarked that, despite certain flaws in its implementation, NCLB has been a success in that it changed the focus of education from interests to results, focused on data, and made visible previously invisible children.

Panel Presentation and Roundtable Sessions

Participants rotated between a panel presentation and roundtable discussions. Panel presentations and roundtable discussions were held twice so that participants could be involved in both.

Defining a Highly Effective Teacher: A Practitioner View

The purpose of this presentation was to allow participants to learn from recent Teachers of the Year with respect to their views on how to define, promote, and measure teacher effectiveness. **Katherine Bassett**, director of educator relations for the Higher Education Division at ETS and New Jersey Teacher of the Year, moderated the session. **Andrea Peterson**, Washington Teacher of the Year, defined teacher effectiveness with “4 Rs”: rigor, relevance, relationship, and reflection, with relationships serving as the cornerstone for effective teaching. **Jason Kamras**, D.C. Teacher of the Year, advocates for better measurements of effective teaching and outlined the key ways to retain the most promising teachers. These included the following:

- Improved Professional Development (e.g., long-term, job-embedded, reflective)
- The transitioning out of consistently ineffective teachers
- Differential pay (extraordinary dollars for teachers performing extraordinary jobs)
- Provision of stronger leadership at the principal level
- Provision of career ladders, structured sabbatical, mentors, and ways for teachers to be challenged

Finally, **Justin Minkel**, Arkansas Teacher of the Year, discussed three shifts that he would like to see in the dialogue about teacher effectiveness:

- A shift from gaps to gifts (to focus on teachers’ strengths)
- A shift from defining teacher effectiveness in terms of tests to relationships, passion, and engagement
- A shift from external to internal accountability (as measured by a combination of the teacher himself or herself, colleagues, principals, and students)

Roundtable Sessions

Participants had the opportunity to engage in small, informal settings to discuss initiatives, tools, and resources designed to support and advance teacher quality and leadership for the benefit of enhancing student achievement. Each session lasted 25 minutes so that participants could partake in two roundtable discussions during the session.

Carrie Mathers, research associate at Learning Point Associates; **Jane Coggsall, Ph.D.**, research associate for NCCTQ at Learning Point Associates; and **Charlotte Danielson**, educational consultant, delivered separate roundtable presentations with the strand of *Assessment of Teachers and Leaders*.

Tricia Coulter, Ph.D., ECS; **Robert J. Yinger, Ph.D.**, professor of educational studies and teacher education at the University of Cincinnati; **Mark A. Bounds**, deputy superintendent for the Division of Educator Quality and Leadership for the South Carolina Department of Education; and **Barnett Berry, Ph.D.**, founder and president of the Center for Teaching Quality, led separate roundtable discussions on the strand of the *Creation of Effective Systems*.

Joe Sutton, Ph.D., professor of special education and chair of the Division of Special Education at Bob Jones University; **Deborah Luedtke**, teacher quality supervisor in the School Improvement Division of the Minnesota Department of Education; **Dan Reschley, Ph.D.** (Vanderbilt University); and **Phoebe Gillespie, Ph.D.** (National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers), individually spoke to participants about *Special Challenges*.

Julie P. McCargar, Ed.D., executive director of federal programs for the Tennessee State Department of Education; **Donna Carr, Ed.D.**, NCLB Title I research and development specialist for the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center; and **Catherine Oleksiw, Ph.D.**, senior research and evaluation officer at the National Institute for Work and Learning at the Academy for Educational Development, gave presentations related to the strand of *Sustaining the Development and Implementation of Your State's HQT Plan*.

Finally, **Jean Johnson** (Public Agenda); **Cortney Rowland** (Learning Point Associates); and **James R. Vivian**, founding director of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, separately presented on the topic of *Building Capacity to Advance Teacher Quality and Leadership Quality*.

For descriptions of each of the roundtable sessions, refer to the full agenda.

Regional Teams Working Sessions

Full regional and state teams debriefed each other on the conference sessions and planned specific action strategies to move forward. Teams completed an action planning tool provided by NCCTQ that connects state HQT plans, NCCTQ tools and resources, and conference session materials.

Concurrent Optional Panel Presentation

Educator Quality in the Press

The goal of this session was to further our understanding of how the media works, how teacher quality issues are and are not addressed in the media, and how to use that information to become better able to communicate about teacher quality issues to the public. The panelists included **Robert Frahm**, former chief education reporter for the *Hartford Courant*; **Lynn Olson** (*Education Week*); **Alexander Russo**, an education writer who hosts the blog *This Week in Education*; and **Larry Shumway, Ed.D.**, associate superintendent of the Utah State Office of Education. **Richard Colvin**, director of the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media at Teachers College, Columbia University, moderated the panel. Topics included the following:

- How do stories about teacher quality make their way into newspapers?
- How does *Quality Counts* address issues of teacher quality?
- How has the blogosphere contributed to discussions of teacher quality?
- What are some of the challenges that state agencies face in communicating about teacher quality with the press?
- What communication challenges have occurred in the coverage of the teacher quality provisions of NCLB, and how have they been addressed?

Stories about teacher quality usually arise in the context of other education issues. Newspapers look for conflict or irony around teacher quality issues. With online journalism, new teachers, award-winning teachers, principals, and superintendents have MySpace and Facebook pages, all of which at times comment on teacher quality. Thus, there are more details and more voices about effective teaching and many more reminders about possible policy solutions than before. Moreover, the online journalism environment allows for interactivity.

There is great confusion surrounding the issue of teacher quality, however. The issues surrounding HQT sound simple but are actually quite complex. Though time-consuming, communication with journalists at a local level is crucial to ensure that educational news is not misrepresented and that it is adequately understood. It is important to inform editors and reporters about why these issues matter. One benefit of NCLB is that it has caused the media to focus on the equitable distribution of teachers, an issue we previously knew was important but were not as comfortable addressing. An important element that was believed to be omitted from the reporting is whether NCLB is making *teachers'* lives better. Finally, panelists expressed concern over how porous and meaningless the term *HQT* has become; they hoped that the term *highly effective teacher* would not be similarly watered down.

General Plenary Session

What Is the Role of the Federal Government in Supporting Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders?

This presentation was moderated by **Paul Kimmelman, Ed.D.** (Learning Point Associates), and addressed the role of the federal government in education, including the roles of the government in the context of NCLB's pending reauthorization. First, **Richard W. Mainzer, Jr., Ed.D.** (Council for Exceptional Children), noted that, although NCLB contains some great principles in it and everybody wants teachers and students to succeed, the source of disagreement is about the best way to facilitate improved student achievement. **Gary Huggins**, Commission on NCLB, focused on the commission's recommendations regarding the reauthorization of NCLB. He noted the need for NCLB to focus more on teacher effectiveness rather than qualifications, on school leadership, and on the inadequate supply and distribution of teachers.

Next, **Alice Johnson Cain**, senior legislative aide to U.S. Representative George Miller, discussed her role in shaping the new draft of NCLB. Based on hearings and comments from draft legislation, she found that further attention must be given to the accountability system and how progress is and should be measured, high school dropout problems, testing for students with

disabilities and English language learners, and the Title II teacher quality provisions. On Title II, she commented that closing the teacher quality gap required the following:

- Professional development that is job embedded, highly relevant, and long-term
- Attracting top teaching talent to the profession through induction programs, career ladders, and leadership academies
- Financial incentives, such as performance pay in high-needs districts

Finally, **Amanda Farris**, deputy assistant secretary for Policy and Strategic Initiatives in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, remarked that the fundamental concern at the U.S. Department of Education is making sure that the government is flexible enough to let states and districts do what they need to do to improve teacher quality. The department advocates using research-based information and believes there is not necessarily only one way to improve teacher quality. The department is committed to the implementation of HQT, but it is just a starting point to securing an effective supply of teachers. She discussed the need to build on current infrastructure, through such initiatives as the following:

- Teacher Incentive Fund
- Troops to Teachers
- Improved professional development
- Transition to Teaching

Closing Remarks

Sabrina Laine, Ph.D. (Learning Points and NCCTQ), closed the conference, thanking participants, presenters, and staff and encouraging all to provide feedback on the event.