



Where We Stand on Teacher Quality

An Issue Paper from ETS

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Introduction

ETS, the world's largest private educational testing and measurement organization, has more than 50 years of experience in the area of teacher quality. We develop teacher, administrator and paraprofessional assessments; produce related professional development products and services; and conduct program and policy research on education personnel and practices.¹ In these roles, we are often asked for advice and counsel about improving the quality of teachers. In order to share our understandings with a wider audience, ETS has decided to publish them in a series of issue papers on improving the quality of the teacher workforce in the United States.

This first paper in the series, entitled *Where We Stand on Teacher Quality*, addresses aspects of teacher quality that we believe are fundamental. Some of our conclusions are based on compelling research; others, in the absence of hard data, on our own and others' experience and on the best available professional judgment. The issues included here are not comprehensive. We have selected those aspects of teacher quality that ETS, because of its experience and expertise, has a particular standing to address.

More specific papers following in coming months will focus on particular topics we believe warrant further examination. They will address, in general, closing the achievement gap and the related teacher quality gap.



What It's All About

Good teachers produce good students.² A teacher's most important task is contributing to and enhancing the learning and achievement of his or her students.

What are the characteristics of teachers who consistently improve the achievement of their students? A large segment of the education research community is engaged in attempting to answer this challenging question. Promising progress is now being made in creating data systems to identify the attributes and strategies of teachers whose students, over periods of several years, have achieved unusually large gains in the subjects taught.³ ETS is investigating the challenges of aligning teacher data with student data; linking teacher performance to student learning; and determining the accuracy, fairness, and appropriate use of these methods and measures. We are also designing a study to investigate the relationship between teachers' performance on licensure tests and student achievement.

¹ More specifically, ETS develops the Praxis assessments for beginning teachers, the Parapro Assessment for paraprofessionals, assessments of accomplished teaching for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the School Leaders Licensure Assessment, and the School Superintendent Assessment. ETS also produces the PATHWISE series of professional development materials, workshops, training sessions, software, and minicourses for teachers; the PATHWISE Framework Induction Program, Observation Program, Portfolio Program, and Leader Academy; as well as the PATHWISE Teacher Evaluation System, the PATHWISE School Leadership Series, and the PATHWISE Understanding Assessment Series. See: <http://www.ets.org/pathwise/index.html>.

² Jennifer King Rice, *Teacher Quality: Understanding the Effectiveness of Teacher Attributes* (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2003).

³ Charles T. Clotfelter, Helen F. Ladd, and Jacob Vigdor, "Do School Accountability Systems Make it More Difficult for Low-Performing Schools to Attract and Retain High-Quality Teachers?" *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 23, no. 2 (2003): 251-257.

The remainder of this paper describes where ETS stands on teacher quality and examines this important topic within the context of a teacher’s progression along the continuum of teaching — from teacher preparation through ongoing professional development and performance evaluation. It includes recommendations for:

- defining teacher quality
- raising standards for those entering the profession
- supporting teachers throughout their careers

Defining Teacher Quality

There are certain things we know about teacher quality. A correlation exists between teacher verbal ability and student achievement. Teachers who have majored in the subject they teach are better teachers of that subject than those who have not. Pedagogy, particularly content-based pedagogy, has a positive impact on student achievement, and teachers with considerable experience are likely to make a greater contribution to student learning than teachers with few years of teaching experience.⁴

While there is some evidence about the qualifications of those who enter the profession, there is a need for more information and research on the quality of teachers’ classroom practices, on the impact of those practices over time, and on how professional development programs support improved teaching and learning.⁵ Any definition of teacher quality, of course, must be made within the context of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) and its “highly qualified teacher” provisions.

Knowing Content. States are attempting to comply with the NCLBA requirement that all teachers of core subjects will be highly qualified by the school year 2005-06. The definition of a highly qualified teacher contained in NCLBA is based on the above-noted, widely accepted conclusion that good teachers must *know the subjects* they teach.

To be highly qualified, according to NCLBA, teachers must meet three general requirements: have a bachelor’s degree, be licensed or certified by the state, and demonstrate *subject matter competence* in each academic subject they teach. The definition differs depending on the level of students being taught and whether a teacher is new or already teaching. *New elementary* teachers must demonstrate their knowledge and teaching skills by passing a rigorous state test in reading, writing, math, and other areas of the elementary curriculum. *New middle/secondary* teachers may demonstrate competency in each academic subject they will teach by having a major or equivalent coursework, a graduate degree, or an advanced credential — or, alternatively, by passing a rigorous state academic subject test — in each subject to be taught. *Current* teachers at any level may demonstrate competence as noted above or by meeting a “High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation,” also known as a HOUSSE.

ETS and others⁶ are concerned about the rigor of the HOUSSE provisions and about reports that some states may be using them as ways to circumvent teacher accountability provisions intended by the law. We encourage states

⁴ Daniel Fallon, “Case Study of a Paradigm Shift: The Value of Focusing On Instruction” (speech given at the fall Steering Committee meeting of the Education Commission of the States, Richmond, Va., November 12, 2003, <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/00/4900.htm>).

⁵ Harold Wenglinsky, *Teaching the Teachers: Different Settings, Different Results* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, Policy Information Center, 2000); Barbara A. Bruschi and Richard J. Coley, *How Teachers Compare: The Prose, Document, and Quantitative Skills of America’s Teachers* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, Policy Information Center, 1999); Drew H. Gitomer, Andrew S. Latham, and Richard Ziomek, *The Academic Quality of Prospective Teachers: The Impact of Admissions and Licensure Testing* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, Teaching and Learning Division, 1999).

⁶ For example, The Education Trust and The Teaching Commission.

to raise the floor and build a two-story HOUSSE, one devoted to content knowledge verification, the other to measuring actual skill in teaching students. Veteran teachers with three or more years' experience should have an opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved a high level of proficiency in their content area and also in the skills and art of actual classroom practice.

Thus ETS recommends that states:

- raise the bar for content rigor by reviewing and increasing passing scores on teacher licensure content examinations
- grant a content “pass” to all veteran teachers who reached the new passing score when initially assessed
- institute an ongoing series of rigorous, uniform performance assessments, to be administered to veteran teachers by trained reviewers following a standard observation protocol
- utilize teacher performance data in concert with student achievement data as indicators of teacher quality

Knowing How, and Being Able to Teach. ETS has elected not to participate in the debate over the importance of content knowledge versus teaching skills (or pedagogy) in defining good teaching. We believe that it creates an inappropriate dichotomy and offers a false choice. Knowing one's subject, knowing how to teach it, and actually being able to teach it are all critical.

The public holds this view as well. According to *Quality, Affordability, and Access: Americans Speak on Higher Education*, a public opinion poll conducted by Democratic pollster Peter Hart and Republican pollster Robert Teeter, one-third or more of the public cites having the skills to design inspiring learning experiences and having a caring attitude toward students as the two most important qualities for a good K-12 teacher.⁷

ETS believes that competent teachers should have the following knowledge and skills:

1. basic academic reading, writing, and math⁸
2. thorough knowledge of the content of each subject taught, appropriate to the levels of their students⁹
3. both generic and content-specific knowledge in areas such as child development, classroom management, motivating children to learn, interpreting and using assessment data, individualizing instruction, aligning content to the state's standards, developing appropriate instructional materials, and working with children with disabilities or from other cultures¹⁰
4. actual hands-on ability and skill to use the above types of knowledge to engage students successfully in learning and mastery¹¹

⁷ Peter Hart and Robert Teeter, *Quality, Affordability, and Access: Americans Speak on Higher Education* (Washington, D.C., 2003). Opinion poll commissioned by ETS.

⁸ As demonstrated through test scores, see: Ronald Ferguson, “Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters,” *Harvard Journal of Legislation* 28 (Summer 1991): 465-498; Brian Rowan, Fang-Shen Chiang, and Robert J. Miller, “Using Research on Employees’ Performance to Study the Effects of Teachers on Students’ Achievement,” *Sociology of Education* 70 (1997): 256-284; and David H. Monk, “Subject Area Preparation of Secondary Mathematics and Science Teachers and Student Achievement,” *Economics of Education Review* 13 (1994): 125-145.

⁹ As demonstrated through test scores, see: Brian Rowan, Fang-Shen Chiang, and Robert J. Miller, “Using Research on Employees’ Performance to Study the Effects of Teachers on Students’ Achievement,” *Sociology of Education* 70 (1997): 256-284; and David H. Monk and Jennifer A. King, “Multilevel Teacher Resource Effects in Pupil Performance in Secondary Mathematics and Science: The Case of Teacher Subject-Matter Preparation,” in *Choices and Consequences: Contemporary Policy Issues in Education*, ed. Ronald G. Ehrenberg, 29-58 (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1994).

¹⁰ As demonstrated through appropriate teacher certification, see: David H. Monk, 1994, and Linda Darling-Hammond and Peter Youngs, “Defining ‘Highly Qualified Teachers’: What does ‘Scientifically Based Research’ Tell Us?” *Educational Researcher* 31 (2002): 13-25.

¹¹ On classroom practice as an indicator of teacher quality, see: Harold Wenglinsky, *How Teaching Matters: Bringing the Classroom Back Into Discussions of Teacher Quality* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, Policy Information Center, 2000).

Increased attention to the importance of noncognitive measures is under way. The importance of persistence, enthusiasm, communication skills, and the belief that all students can learn are important factors that ETS and others are studying.



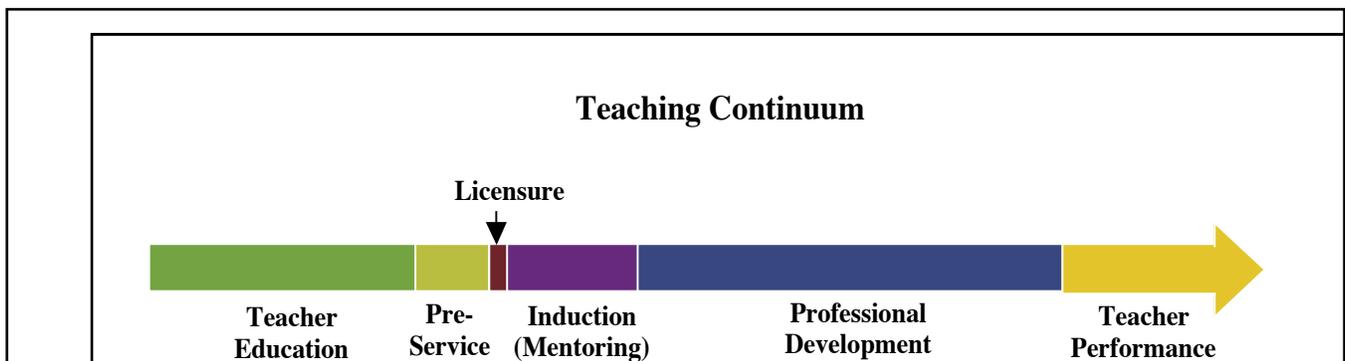
The Teaching Progression & Continuum

Teachers do not enter the classroom as finished products. Most teachers who remain in the profession improve and grow over time.¹² When they first enter the classroom, new teachers do not possess all the knowledge and skills they will need to become highly effective, but with experience, practice, assistance and training, novices can become better teachers.

Often overlooked is the fact that NCLBA defines another type of teacher, an “exemplary” teacher. This is not a beginning teacher, but an experienced teacher that the law describes as one who meets the “highly qualified” requirements and is recommended as exemplary by administrators and others; mentors other teachers, helping them improve their instructional strategies and skills; develops curricula; and offers other forms of professional development. This is the ultimate, highest quality teacher that the nation seeks for every classroom — and that ETS is striving to help develop through our work for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

ETS develops assessments used by the National Board to measure the performance of certification candidates against high and rigorous standards. Recent studies have found a correlation between NBPTS certification and student achievement gains.¹³

We see the profession of teaching as a continuum, from preservice preparation to initial licensure, to hiring and induction, continued practice and professional development through mastery and advanced certification. The graphic below offers a time-line perspective illustrating the transitions in the developing career of a teacher. Particularly striking is the brief period from preparation (Teacher Education) to hiring (Licensure), and the lengthy expanse of on-the-job classroom teaching (Professional Development and Teacher Performance Evaluation). The pre-employment phase consumes only about one-tenth of a full 40-year, lifetime teaching career. It is during the time spent teaching in the classroom that teachers, given proper support, evaluation, feedback, and targeted professional development, can evolve and mature into accomplished, exemplary teachers.



¹² National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children, Summary Report* (Washington, D.C.: NCTAF, 2003), 20.

¹³ Linda Jacobson, “First Major Study Suggests Worth of National ‘Seal,’” *Education Week* 27, no. 7 (2004): 1 and 24; and Dan Goldhaber and Emily Anthony, *Can Teacher Quality Be Effectively Assessed?* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2004). Available online at <http://www.urban.org>.

A critical factor in this developmental progress is the *alignment* of the state student content standards throughout the continuum. This is essential for both equity and efficacy in helping students meet the standards on which they will be tested — and on which, increasingly in the future, teachers’ performance will be based. Alignment of state standards should be evidenced in pre-service preparation, licensure exams, curricula, related professional development efforts, and teacher performance evaluations. Just as students must be exposed to curricula linked to the standards upon which they are assessed, teachers must be prepared to teach such curricula before their effectiveness is evaluated.

ETS is committed to enhancing the alignment of our tests and professional development products for teachers and school leaders with state student content standards. For our Praxis licensure series, we develop specifications for each test that are aligned both with the knowledge requirements of the entry-level teacher’s job and with the appropriate teaching curriculum standards established by the nation’s organizations for professional teaching disciplines.¹⁴ ETS also works with each client state to identify those subject tests that best align with the state’s content standards for entry-level teachers teaching subject areas and/or grade levels.

“We should connect teacher professional development with teacher preparation standards, student standards, curriculum and assessments to achieve an aligned system of preparing and supporting new and in-service teachers.”¹⁵

Kurt Landgraf, President and CEO, ETS

Teacher Preparation

Accountability. Title II of the Higher Education Act, currently being reauthorized by Congress, includes accountability provisions for the nation’s teacher education programs. A key requirement is the annual reporting of the pass rates of each institution’s graduates on state teacher licensure exams. ETS provides the institutional pass rate information in states using the Praxis assessment series.

ETS believes Title II should be redirected to focus on strengthening teacher education programs¹⁶ so as to enhance the quality of program graduates. ETS President Kurt Landgraf in congressional testimony said, “It is not clear that pass rate-based standards lead to improvement of teacher education programs or to the quality of their graduates.”¹⁷

ETS also supports the recommendation of the National Research Council’s recent report against using pass rates on

¹⁴ For example, Praxis science exams are aligned with the standards of the National Science Teachers Association.

¹⁵ Kurt M. Landgraf, testimony on teacher preparation and accountability at hearing on Training Tomorrow’s Teachers – Providing a Quality Postsecondary Education, before the Twenty-First Century Competitiveness Subcommittee of the U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee, October 9, 2002.

¹⁶ See Ronald G. Ehrenberg and Dominic J. Brewer, “Do School and Teacher Characteristics Matter? Evidence from High School and Beyond,” *Economics of Education Review* 13, no. 1 (1994): 1-17; and Harold Wenglinsky, *Teaching the Teachers: Different Settings, Different Results*.

¹⁷ Kurt M. Landgraf, testimony on teacher preparation and accountability.

teacher licensing tests as the sole basis for determining the performance of teacher education programs.¹⁸

We believe that pass rate data are important but that additional information is needed, including data on candidates' actual scaled scores, to provide more useful information about the quality of preparation programs. Yes/No pass rate data do not indicate the range or the distribution of candidate scores, providing information of limited use as a result. Further, the fact that different states set different passing scores on the same licensing tests makes cross-state comparisons impossible. Thus, using pass rate data in concert with scaled scores and other output measures about the program may provide reason to remediate or celebrate.

Even with additional output measures, however, it is important to know the characteristics of the teacher candidates. Prospective teachers vary according to their literacy skills, content knowledge and motivation to succeed — qualities that are not equally distributed among candidates at various institutions. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain whether high test scores are due to significant student growth resulting from an institution's rigorous preparation program or to the pre-existing skills and drive of those students who chose to attend it. It is therefore imperative that multiple indicators be used to measure the effectiveness of teacher education programs.

Accreditation. ETS is cooperating with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to establish a professionally recognized and defensible range of common passing scores on selected Praxis content knowledge tests to help make institutional accreditation decisions compatible from state-to-state, while recognizing local demand and supply of teachers. Both ETS and NCATE believe that the existence of professional benchmarks, as defined by the teaching profession, will enable more equitable accreditation decision-making and be helpful in increasing the quality of teacher preparation programs.

Clinical experience. ETS supports the inclusion of clinical teaching experience over a sustained time period as a part of teacher preparation and as a condition of program approval and licensure. Recent data show that a few remaining states do not require clinical experience during teacher preparation¹⁹; we recommend that they do so.

The United States was the only one of the seven high-performing countries on TIMSS 99 that did not have a high-stakes evaluation of practical experience as part of its teacher education requirements.²⁰ We believe such experience helps develop teaching competence, confidence, and retention on the job, and that continued observation, monitoring and feedback are also critical. The lack of clinical skills and classroom experience has been found to be linked to teacher burnout and attrition among new teachers.²¹

We are particularly cognizant of the Carnegie Corporation's exciting and promising Teachers for A New Era (TNE) teacher education reform initiative. TNE does not simply call for a practice teaching component; it redefines teaching itself as an academically taught clinical practice profession, requiring close cooperation between colleges of education and actual practicing schools. Eleven outstanding teacher preparation institutions are beginning to transform their education programs into schools of modern clinical practice, providing their graduates with clinical residency programs similar to those in the field of medicine.

Recognizing Excellence. ETS is working on several fronts to help districts, states, education leaders, and policy-makers raise the standards for those entering the profession. The new Recognition of Excellence program, similar

¹⁸ National Research Council, *Testing Teacher Candidates: The Role of Licensure Tests in Improving Teacher Quality* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Ronald A. Skinner and Lisa N. Staesina, "State of the States – Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality," *Education Week, Quality Counts 2004: Count Me In* 23, no. 17 (2004): 110.

²⁰ Aubrey H. Wang and others, *Preparing Teachers Around the World* (Princeton, N.J.: ETS, Policy Information Center, 2003), 7, 21-23, and 44. [TIMSS 99 refers to the repeat, in 1999, of the *1995 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*, for students in the eighth grade.]

²¹ National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *No Dream Denied*, 20; and Erling E. Boe and Sharon A. Bobbitt, "Why Didst-Thou Go? Predictors of Retention, Transfer and Attrition of Special and General Education Teachers from a National Perspective," *Journal of Special Education* 30 (4): 390-411.

to a college honors diploma, recognizes and encourages exceptional individual performance on select Praxis II tests. Candidates who earn high scores (in the top 15 percent of test takers) on any of 11 Praxis II tests will receive a certificate from ETS, and the award will be noted on all Praxis score reports.

Teacher Licensure

What it Means. Licensure is an important element to assure quality in the teaching workforce of each state. The purpose of teacher licensure, however, is often misunderstood. Licensure is used to identify those teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills deemed important for a beginning practitioner. Initial licensure represents a beginning for the novice. The newly certified candidate has earned the right of passage to a profession that, like others, is characterized by an upward progression of knowledge and skill, achieved over time through additional learning, practice, experience, and maturity. Licensure establishes a floor; it does not ensure excellent practice. That determination can only occur in the context of teaching.

Typically, states offer an initial provisional license at the time of hiring. After serving successfully for several years on the job, the teacher may then apply for a permanent license, which is subject to renewal after a set period of time.

Key Components. ETS believes that whatever the route, responsible licensing decisions include three key components:

- Education
- Experience
- Examination

The role of the teacher in advancing learning is so important that education, an examination, or experience alone will not provide a sufficient basis to make an appropriate decision regarding licensure. All three are critically important.

Licensure Tests. Tests are usually one of several criteria necessary for licensure. Licensure tests by their very nature are intended to distinguish between those who have the desired level of competence to begin practice from those who do not. The tests are measures of knowledge — knowledge of basic skills, of subject matter, and of how to teach. They do not, however, measure one's competence in the classroom, nor do they indicate how well a teacher communicates with students or engages students' interest in learning. Praxis III, the performance-based assessment, does however, offer an observation-based evaluation of beginning teachers' classroom performance.

Historically, licensure tests have not been designed to predict performance. For example, the bar examination does not predict how good a lawyer a student will become or the number of cases that person may win. Similarly, teacher licensure tests have traditionally not been held to the standard of predicting outcomes — but the changing environment in K-16 accountability has produced increased interest in holding them to this higher standard.

In developing The Praxis Series, ETS has addressed how and what teachers should learn in order to gain entry to the profession. We have analyzed the 49 sets of state student standards in every content area in which they are available. We have combined that with national disciplinary organization standards and based the content of the teacher licensure tests on the many areas in which all standards agree. We have consulted with teachers and subject matter experts across the country in developing the Praxis assessments.

Helping Candidates Succeed. To help teacher candidates prepare for the Praxis assessments, ETS has published

learning guides for 27 of the subjects we test. Each guide presents an architectural diagram of the critical foundations of the content domain of each test. Our new Praxis Diagnostic Preparation Program (DPP) provides detailed, customized feedback about candidates' performances so they can better understand their strengths and weaknesses and can focus their test preparation efforts accordingly.

Alternative Routes. ETS supports the concept of alternative routes to teaching, including reducing unnecessary barriers and expediting the process to encourage the entry of new, talented candidates into the field. While the relative emphasis placed on each of the three factors noted above (Education, Experience and Examination) may change in order to open the door to prospective teachers, regardless of what route a teacher follows, all three components are needed. We support public policies that require graduates of alternative programs to meet the same accountability requirements as their traditionally prepared peers.

Licensure Reform. ETS believes that through its impact on entry to the profession, licensure offers great potential to enhance teacher quality across the country. However licensure reform is necessary. Given that there is no national licensure standard and state practices and policies vary considerably, ETS encourages cross-state collaboration to expedite progress.

Raising the Bar. States should reevaluate their existing teacher licensure programs and begin to raise the standards for those entering the profession. Specifically, states should work toward a common standard for subject-area tests and set cutoff scores at a level that requires teaching candidates to demonstrate mastery reflecting college level study.²²

Uniformity, Comparability and Portability. The Praxis Series of assessments is a national program, with the same tests provided to all states that select them. Only the variation in passing scores precludes comparability. Portability of scores, and thus candidate mobility and reciprocity across states, would be greatly enhanced with uniform passing scores. ETS is committed to working with states to reduce differences in passing scores on Praxis tests across states. States can begin by reviewing existing standards required for demonstration of subject matter knowledge, including the passing scores currently required on these assessments. We also commit to working with our client states to develop more uniform methods of evaluating clinical experience.

We are currently working with an exciting collaboration, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Teachers Project (MARTP), to develop full regional licensure reciprocity, new-teacher mentoring programs, common regional standards for alternative certification, regional pension portability, and a new regional designation of "meritorious new teachers."

Streamlining the Process. We agree with calls to streamline the cumbersome bureaucracy that often surrounds teacher licensure in order to make the profession more attractive to a wide range of qualified candidates.²³ States should consider reducing the number of licenses and working together toward more uniformity across states. ETS is collaborating with Teach for America, offering Praxis tests at convenient times to help accelerate Teach for America candidates' entry to the classroom. We are also offering flexibility to candidates of The New Teacher Project in the Praxis registration process.



²² The Teaching Commission, *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action* (New York: The Teaching Commission, 2004), 40-1.

²³ Ibid.

Induction and Mentoring

ETS urges all states to establish induction programs for beginning teachers that provide teachers with mentoring and other support during the crucial first years of teaching. Research shows that teachers without induction support leave the profession at rates almost 70 percent higher than those who receive it.²⁴ With about one-third of new teachers leaving the classroom within three years and nearly one-half within five years,²⁵ not providing induction is an irresponsible decision. Yet, only 15 states both require and finance mentoring programs for all novice teachers²⁶ — a dismal record, especially since significant federal funds are available for this purpose. Others have echoed this conclusion, recommending a mentor for all new teachers throughout their first year. As asserted by The Teaching Commission: “Nobody should simply be thrown into a classroom without the support needed to be successful.”²⁷

In his October 2002 testimony before Congress, ETS President and CEO, Kurt Landgraf, highlighted the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST), an assessment process designed to help beginning teachers grow in their profession. Modeled after ETS’ Framework for Teaching, CFASST supports beginning teachers in their development through a dynamic, ongoing process — planning and teaching lessons, reflecting on the results, and then making informed instructional changes. Results of a recent study commissioned by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing examined the impact of its Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA)/CFASST on the teaching effectiveness of beginning teachers and on the learning of the students of these teachers. Overall, the findings showed a positive impact of BTSA/CFASST program on teachers and students and confirmed the model of how BTSA/CFASST works: the support of an experienced teacher, the curriculum of CFASST events, and the improved practices, in turn, lead to improved student learning.²⁸ ETS is also working with Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Virginia, and Mississippi on teacher induction.

Essential to good mentoring programs is a cadre of highly skilled mentors who are able to quickly diagnose the needs of struggling teachers and can constructively relate to and support them. ETS’ Framework Observation Program gives mentors, administrators, and coaches crucial training and tools for conducting in-depth observations based on evidence, not opinion, and for providing consistent feedback. It also offers a structured process for enhancing practice through planning, reflection, and analysis.



Ongoing Professional Development

Continuous professional development is critical to developing and maintaining high quality teachers. Data show that without highly skilled support, even those with high qualifications will not remain in the profession long enough to make a difference in children’s lives. The Teaching Commission urges principals to ensure that all

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline: 1992-93 College Graduates and Elementary/Secondary School Teaching as of 1997* (Washington, D.C.: 2000). NCEs 2000-152.

²⁵ National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, *No Dream Denied*, 24.

²⁶ Ronald A. Skinner and Lisa N. Staresina, “State of the States – Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality,” 112.

²⁷ The Teaching Commission, *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action*, 48-9.

²⁸ Marnie Thompson and Pamela Paek, “Implementation and Impact of BSTA/CFASST” (paper presented at the National Induction Conference, Sacramento, Calif., March 10-12, 2004. Revised March 30, 2004).

teachers have the chance to improve their classroom instruction by receiving ongoing training aimed at professional growth and better student outcomes. Principals should “be held responsible for ensuring that all teachers benefit from scientifically based professional development opportunities that focus squarely on assessing and improving instructional practices and thereby raising student achievement.”²⁹

The development of each of the PATHWISE products for professional development, designed to improve teacher and school leader performance, are grounded in what research studies define as “best practice.” More importantly, however, ETS is committed to conducting its own rigorous long-term, scientifically based research, designed to show either that these products do, in fact, produce gains in student learning, or that we must modify these programs to bring about such gains.



Teacher Performance Evaluation

Evaluations of teachers’ performance in the classroom occur at many points on the teaching continuum, at various times throughout a school year, and for a variety of purposes. These can include relatively low-stakes evaluations, such as ones that provide remediation to a teacher candidate, determine assistance required by a novice, or identify the effects of a professional development program. Alternatively, they may be evaluations for more high-stakes decisions such as licensure, hiring, performance pay, promotion, or tenure.

ETS believes strongly that the teaching skills and content knowledge of teachers should be routinely observed in the classroom and evaluated throughout their careers. Unfortunately, performance evaluation is frequently a missing element of teacher development planning and, as noted earlier, when used to assist fledgling candidates, can mean the difference between leaving and staying.

ETS has developed the strategies, methods, and techniques for appropriate and accurate direct observation of teacher performance. These are reflected in the assessments of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and in the Praxis III Performance Assessments for second tier licensure. They are also incorporated in our PATHWISE Framework Observation program.

We recognize that additional research is needed in order to utilize the emerging rich data on student achievement and to relate it to teacher performance evaluations. ETS has developed a long-term policy research agenda to investigate this and related issues, and we are committed to studying the relationship between good teacher performance and improved student achievement. As the national leader in the field of assessment, we are leading the way in improving performance assessment for teachers and using student achievement data in the process.

We urge that high quality performance evaluations be required as a part of licensure and in the concept of states’ High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation. We also support the use of individual teacher evaluations for performance pay determinations.



²⁹The Teaching Commission, *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action*, 47.

Where We Stand on Teacher Quality

ETS stands ready to work with policy-makers and practitioners to improve teacher quality and student achievement. From our perspective, strong content knowledge and knowing how to teach are both essential qualifications that beginning teachers must have to enter the classroom. We believe that teachers who meet high qualifications for entry will grow and progress in their classroom teaching practice. We recommend that states work together to achieve more commonality and comparability in qualifications for those entering and staying in this important profession. More specifically, we urge public policy-makers to adopt policies on three critical issues highlighted below:

Defining Teacher Quality

- Good teachers produce good students. That is the primary purpose of teaching and the basis upon which teachers should be evaluated.
- ETS eschews the debate over content vs. teaching skills in defining good teaching. It creates an inappropriate dichotomy, a false choice.
- Good teaching requires four types of knowledge and skills: (1) basic academic skills, (2) thorough content knowledge of each subject to be taught, (3) knowledge of both generic and content-specific pedagogy, and (4) hands-on teaching skills.

Raising Standards for Entry

- States should re-evaluate their teacher licensure programs and begin raising their entry standards, including the passing scores required on licensure exams.
- ETS pledges to work with states on efforts to reduce differences in passing scores on Praxis tests across states.
- We support the inclusion of sustained clinical teaching experience in teacher preparation and as a condition of program approval and teacher licensure.
- Teacher candidate pass rate data are not enough; candidates' scaled test scores will provide additional, useful information about the quality of their teacher preparation.

Supporting Teachers

- ETS urges all states to establish induction programs for beginning teachers, providing mentoring and support during the first years of teaching.
- Continuous high-quality professional development is critical to developing and maintaining high quality teachers.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on observing and evaluating teachers' teaching skills and content knowledge in their actual classrooms throughout their careers.



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