

# EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

## TEACHER QUALITY

### NCTQ: State teacher policies need improvement

Report gives states D+ on evaluation, retention, exiting policies

By Wangui Njuguna

Although research has found that having a good teacher makes all the difference for student achievement, the National Council on Teacher Quality found states are not doing enough to help districts identify and retain effective teachers and get rid of ineffective ones.

The council's 2008 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, released Thursday, examined policies that affect teachers in their third to fifth years, when teachers and districts typically make decisions about continuing employment.

It found that although 80 percent of all states require some form of teacher evaluation, most do not require teachers who get multiple unsatisfactory evaluations to leave the classroom.

Most states also don't require evaluations to consider evidence of teacher impact on student achievement.

"States are complicit in keeping ineffective teachers in the classroom," said Sandi Jacobs, NCTQ vice president for policy.

Of the policies examined in all states and the District of Columbia, nearly half (23) did not specify what districts should do in cases where a teacher receives unsatisfactory evaluations. Montana, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island do not have evaluation policies. Oregon does not specify what happens with negative evaluations.

Hawaii requires immediate dismissal for unsatisfactory evaluations, while teachers in Pennsylvania are eligible for dismissal after two unsatisfactory evaluations.

States generally grant tenure automatically after three years, and only Iowa and New Mexico require districts to consider some evidence of teacher effectiveness when awarding permanent teaching status, Jacobs said.

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**Today's Highlights**

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## NCLB IMPLEMENTATION

### Assessment agreements highlight experimentation

States struggle to match experimental assessments with NCLB requirements

By Sarah D. Sparks

While the Education Department has encouraged states to experiment with a wide array of assessment systems in the early days of NCLB implementation, states have continued to struggle to match their experiments to the law's accountability.

Agreements outlined in the Jan. 26 *Federal Register* highlighted challenges in Nebraska, Nevada and Vermont to winning full approval of state standards and assessment systems, the first major benchmark required by the law. Each of the states was hindered in part by an inability to win peer review support for their unusual assessment systems, from Nebraska's locally developed tests to Nevada's portfolio assessments.

It is uncertain how ED's approach to assessment systems, particularly experimental ones, will change under the Obama administration and Education Secretary Arne Duncan, as Obama has voiced support for more complex multiple assessment systems in the past.

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# National Even Start Association ceases operations

Disbandment comes amid debate on program's merit, future

By Wangui Njuguna

After 15 years advocating for the federal family literacy program, the National Even Start Association is dissolving, the association's board of directors announced last week.

"NESA has survived for several years on volunteer work, donated space, and the generosity of many partners," the board said in a posting on its Web site. "Unfortunately, despite our hope that family literacy will flourish in the next few years, we no longer have the capacity to continue."

The Even Start program was created in 1988 to provide literacy skills to children from birth to age 7, as well as parenting and adult education for their low-income parents.

Established in 1994, NESAs was a major supporter of the program, hosting conferences on the latest literacy research and advocating for continued funding and strong professional development for instructors in those programs. The association ceased its functions on Dec. 31, 2008, shutting down its Web site and canceling its national conference. Two NESAs members will continue to offer professional development training to instructors of Even Start programs.

## Funding in jeopardy

An "ineffective" rating in 2002 from the Office of Management and Budget greatly undercut support for Even Start, as did multiple efforts by the Bush administration to eliminate it. The Education Department under President Bush said it preferred the Early Reading First program for doing a "better job of preparing students to be successful readers."

Despite congressional efforts to continue the program, its funding has declined each year from a high of \$250 million before the rating to just \$66.5 million in the FY 2009 Continuing Resolution.

NESA was quick to mention that its folding does not relinquish its commitment to Even Start.

"The association most definitely was not dissolved because of funding concerns; in fact we are all very hopeful about continued and increased funding for Even Start," board member Sandra Howe told *Education Daily*®. "NESAs partnered with [the National Center for Family Literacy]

and the Goodling Institute, especially in the areas of legislation and advocacy, and I'm sure these efforts will be continued by both organizations."

In the absence of NESAs, NCFL now will have to "carry even more of the load" for family literacy, said Rich Long, executive director of the National Association of State Title I Directors.

"Not having an association makes it much harder to have a focus on family literacy," he said. With Title I, "we want to go from 'Yes, there is parent involvement' to 'Yes, we have meaningful parent involvement.' Family literacy is just critical. Literacy rates of moms and dads are important."

Some stakeholders question whether Even Start should be a separate program, noting that Early Head Start, Head Start, and state preschool programs also have parent involvement and child education elements, including literacy, math and social development, said Steven Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research.

"I think that Even Start was off on the wrong track," he said. "It didn't make sense for it to be a separate funding stream."

## Even Start in Chicago

Whether the Obama administration will support Even Start will likely be influenced by Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who worked with two Even Start programs during his tenure as CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

The Illinois State Board of Education maintains that Even Start works for families, as adults increase "their own learning, gaining knowledge to help their children achieve success, and meeting their education-related and employment-related goals," according to information from its program's Web site. For FY 2009, the state has 17 Even Start programs.

The Obama administration's education agenda does not specifically name Even Start or family literacy programs, although the president has spoken about encouraging parents to read with their children and be involved in their children's education. The president has, however, called for quadrupling Early Head Start and increasing Head Start funding.



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## House passes stimulus; Senate to take up its proposal next week

The House passed H.R. 1, its version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Wednesday on a vote of 244 to 188.

While earlier reports had estimated the measure at \$825 billion, including \$550 billion of fiscal spending and \$275 billion of tax relief, the Congressional Budget Office this week rescored the budget impact of the measure at \$819 billion — \$544 billion of spending and \$275 billion of tax relief.

Though much of the education funding takes place within two years, the measure does provide for funding programs through the end of the decade. The Senate is expected to take up S. 336, its version of the legislation,

as early as Monday. Both the House-passed measure and the Senate bill contain \$13 billion for Title I, \$13 billion for IDEA Part B grants, \$79 billion for state fiscal relief, and \$1 billion for education technology.

The measures differ in the amounts they propose for school modernization, Pell Grants and the National Science Foundation. In addition, the House version, unlike the Senate's, contains money for the Teacher Incentive Fund, modernization at Impact Aid schools and state longitudinal data systems. Both House and Senate versions contain \$2.1 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start programs under the Health and Human Services Department.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>H.R. 1 (passed Jan. 28)</b>	<b>S. 336 (as introduced)</b>
Money would go to Title I grants to states and high-needs school districts, including schools in improvement status.	\$13 billion	\$13 billion
Funds would support IDEA Part B state grants for special education students to free up state funding to support general education.	\$13 billion	\$13 billion
Money would support IDEA Grants for Infants and Families program to help coordination of efforts and make early intervention services available to more infants, toddlers and their families.	\$600 million	\$500 million
Funds would be devoted to the Enhancing Education through Technology program for state, school district and school efforts to integrate technology into curricula.	\$1 billion	\$1 billion
Over two years, the funding would aid at least 205,000 additional homeless children under the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program.	\$66 million	\$70 million
The bill would support school modernization efforts nationwide, as the average public school is 40 years old. Funds would be distributed to states according to their FY 2008 Title I allocations.	\$14 billion	\$16 billion
The funds would go toward modernization, renovation and repair projects at institutions of higher education.	\$6 billion	\$3.5 billion
Funds would support school modernization efforts at 960 Impact Aid schools nationally. Such schools lack a local tax base and require federal assistance.	\$100 million	Zero
The funds would support an increase in the Pell Grant maximum to aid students struggling to pay education costs during the economic downturn.	\$15.6 billion	\$13.9 billion
Under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, funds would go to State Incentive Grants to reward states for meeting education performance measures. This amount also includes funds to local school districts and colleges and universities through existing state and federal formulas, as well as funds to support public safety and other critical services, which could include education.	\$79 billion	\$79 billion
The funds would support the enhancement of states' longitudinal data systems to enable states to increase the capacity of their data systems, provide teachers and administrators the information they need to tailor instruction to help students, and manage the data systems effectively.	\$250 million	Zero
Additional money for the Teacher Incentive Fund is to help states and school districts develop systems to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and principals and align their pay with performance. Funds are also to aid states and school districts struggling to recruit and retain teachers	\$200 million	Zero
Funds would be provided to the Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities program for the modernization, renovation and repair of 276 charter schools.	\$25 million	Zero
Money would go to the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program to aid states in teacher licensing and certification reform, to address teacher shortages, and to provide alternative routes to teaching for unemployed people to become teachers.	\$100 million	\$100 million

**TEACHERS** (continued from page 1)**Meeting NCLB requirements**

Teachers who have not passed licensing tests or completed all certification requirements also find their way into classrooms in some states.

Further, while NCLB prohibits use of emergency licenses, Jacobs said “serious loopholes” have allowed 42 states to give short-term licenses, half of which allow the temporary licenses to be renewed.

In Indiana, for instance, “if a teacher failed a test, he can teach for one year, but if the state does not know if the teacher took the test, he can teach for three years,” Jacobs said.

NCLB also mandates content knowledge of core subjects, yet Alaska, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming have not implemented requirements for all teachers.

**Keeping good teachers**

In addition to helping districts identify good teachers, states can also do a better job of giving them incentives and supports to stay in the profession, the report found.

States were “farthest along” in the area of incentives, Jacobs said, especially in offering incentives for teaching in a high-need school, or a high-need content area.

However, the report found 17 states offer no such incentives.

Increasingly, the report found states are providing pay increases for teachers who attain advanced degrees, even though these higher degrees are not necessarily related to increased student achievement, according to NCTQ.

More teachers are, however, getting induction services — only 13 states do not require them for teachers new to the profession.

**NCLB IMPLEMENTATION****NCLB** (continued from page 1)

“Locally developed assessments provide much more instructional information than a state test ever would,” said Marilyn Peterson, Nebraska federal programs director. Yet formative tests, particularly those tailored for small populations, proved too difficult to validate for accountability, she said.

“They were matched up around a rubric and a scoring process that was made for a single state test, so there was always a mismatch there. That was always our sticking point with Washington and NCLB, proving that there was technical quality in our local assessments.”

Title I required all states to use, no later than 2005-06, fully approved content standards and assessments in reading/language arts and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, plus at least one alternate assessment for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities and grade span tests in science.

To date, 11 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have not yet finalized their systems. Of those, six have compliance agreements that acknowledge that the state or territory cannot complete its system fast enough to continue to receive Title I grants without help.

After a long fight, Nebraska gave up local assessments for accountability in April 2008, when the state passed LB 1157, requiring Nebraska to cut the entire network of assessments and develop a single, statewide standards and assessment system from scratch.

While the move brought Nebraska in line with the majority of states with regard to NCLB, it made it “genuinely not feasible” for the state to attempt to continue the compliance timeline

as it had, according to then-Assistant Education Secretary Kerri Briggs, “due to the enormity and complexity of the work that is needed to bring [Nebraska’s] standards and assessment system into full compliance.”

Nebraska used the reading, math and science teachers who led development of the district assessments to create the test items for the new assessments, which are being field-tested this spring and rolled out in 2010. Yet that state has encouraged districts to keep using their local assessments, too.

“The state test is much narrower,” Peterson said. “The district assessments provide the kind of information teachers need to improve instruction. When you look at how you meet individual student needs and what your class needs as a whole, you really need to use formative assessments.”

**Alternate issues**

Nevada’s and Vermont’s compliance agreements provided extended timelines for the states to perfect and train teachers in alternate assessments of reading and math for special education students. Those assessments would require evaluations of portfolios of student work in lieu of standardized tests.

Because the portfolios must be similar enough for valid assessments, teachers must be trained in which tasks to assign to match state content standards and how to measure them in a uniform way.

Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction Keith Rheault hopes to implement the new tests by 2010-11, only a few years before NCLB’s universal reading and math proficiency deadline of 2013-14.