

The Condition of Teacher Quality in Arizona: 2004

Executive Summary

Despite widespread concern about teacher quality, its definition varies widely. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) equates quality almost exclusively with subject matter knowledge rather than pedagogical skills. Recent examinations of data suggest that although there is an adequate supply of teachers in total to fill anticipated vacancies, shortages are increasingly likely in specific subjects and geographic areas. A growing body of research finds that better-prepared teachers are less likely to leave the field. Teaching programs are most effective when they provide early exposure to real world teaching conditions, instruction on pedagogy, instruction on how to make curricular and teaching decisions informed by theory and research, and instruction on how to motivate students and manage a classroom.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) organize collaborations with colleges of education to develop a comprehensive database to track employment patterns of graduates from the state's teacher education programs.
- The ADE organize collaborations and partnerships with colleges of education and school districts to strengthen mentoring and coaching of beginning teachers to reduce attrition rates.
- The Arizona legislature explore incentives such as loan forgiveness, reduced housing costs, and salary bonuses to recruit teachers who have left the field back into teaching, particularly favoring highly qualified teachers who choose to work in the state's rural and inner-city classrooms and in under-staffed subject areas.
- The Arizona legislature align state education and education-finance policy with findings that better pay and working conditions can help retain highly qualified teachers.
- Arizona colleges of education and school districts develop and implement policies that encourage and support prospective teachers by balancing training in theory and in practice with exposure to real-world teaching conditions.