

# What's Working

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## SNAPSHOTS

### TECHNOLOGY

According to a new survey sponsored by PBS, preK-12 educators are increasingly adopting digital media and social networking tools, a finding that could aid decision-making among educators and policymakers. **Page 7**

The National Center for Technology Innovation is accepting proposals for the 2010 Tech in the Works competition. **Page 7**

### DATA BANK

School districts have implemented education technology initiatives over the past decade to prepare students for the digital age in the workplace, says a report from the Institute of Education Sciences. **Pages 8-9**

States' policies for teacher preparation, retention, compensation, and dismissal do not emphasize access to quality teachers, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality's 2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook. **Pages 10-11**

## COVER STORY

### Uniform grading policy enhances accountability, accuracy

Students, parents and principals are often vexed by grading policies that vary from teacher to teacher. By adopting a uniform system, you can paint an accurate picture for students of how they are progressing. "We wanted the same grading scale in all classes because an A in one room would be a C in another room," said Jeffrey Erickson, assistant principal at Minnetonka (Minn.) High School. "We had no sense of protocol to determine grades." Erickson changed his school's assessment, attendance, academic honors, and integrity policies to give students and parents a more realistic assessment. Find out how to rework your grading policies to improve attendance, lower disciplinary events, and enhance the learning environment. **Full story, page 3.**

#### Solicit stakeholder feedback

Give teachers and students a voice when changing grading. **See page 3.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Report decries high-stakes exams, zero-tolerance policies

Zero-tolerance policies and NCLB's high-stakes testing have worsened learning for disadvantaged students and contributed to dropouts, according to a report. **Page 2**

### Classroom walkthrough spurs teacher improvement

The classroom walkthrough should be about coachable moments during the lesson, not evaluation. By providing effective feedback to the teacher without evaluating, you can further the district's quality indicators in the classroom. **Page 4**

### Study: Teachers' attitudes don't match reform ideas

A survey found that teachers consider student engagement a good gauge of their impact on learning and don't mind comparisons of their students' performance with that of others, but they are not on board with much of the current thinking on teacher quality. **Page 5**

### Bill could expand principal recruitment, development

Education stakeholders say a principal recruitment and training bill introduced in Congress could go a long way toward helping districts recruit, train and support principals who choose to work in chronically low-performing schools. **Page 12**

## Report decries high-stakes exams, zero-tolerance policies

Zero-tolerance school discipline policies and NCLB's high-stakes testing regime have worsened learning opportunities for disadvantaged students and contributed to a declining graduation rate, according to a new report from the Advancement Project.

"We must not allow zero tolerance and high-stakes testing to continue to pit students and families against teachers and administrators, eroding the trust that is at the very heart of good schooling," according to the study, *Test, Punish, and Push Out: How Zero Tolerance and High-Stakes Testing Funnel Youth into the School to Prison Pipeline*.

"By placing students, parents, educators, and law enforcement in adversarial positions, these policies reinforce the 'us vs. them' pathology in which each group feels undervalued and under-respected and blames the others."

School officials should help create more caring learning environments that do not push students out of school, limit the use of law enforcement and security personnel in schools to the most serious conduct offenses, replace high-stakes testing with rich curricula, and ensure that every student is provided a quality preK-12 education.

The report comes as Congress begins to consider modifications to ESEA in an upcoming reauthorization of the law. Democratic legislators have suggested alternatives to high-stakes testing, such as portfolio assessments of students, and to zero-tolerance policies, such as positive behavior supports to intervene early

in the lives of problem students.

Judith Browne-Dianis, codirector of the Advancement Project, said that education groups face an uphill battle in the coming year to get ESEA reauthorized with needed changes and laid some of the blame at the doorstep of the White House.

"The Obama administration is leaning toward more testing unfortunately and cramming that down the throats of states and school districts throughout the country," she said. "Part of the problem with educational policy in this country is that so much has been determined by elected officials without the input of people in the classroom and administrators."

### By the numbers

The study notes that in Pennsylvania the number of school-based arrests has tripled in the last seven years and that in Florida 69 percent of the more than 21,000 school-based arrests and referrals of students to the juvenile justice system in 2007-08 were for misdemeanor offenses.

Nationally, expulsions increased 15 percent in the four years after the passage of NCLB, while 250,000 more students were suspended out of school in that time period, according to the study. High-stakes testing, for its part, has led to increased retention of students — "the single largest predictor of student dropout" — and to lower graduation rates, the report said.

To access the full report, visit [www.advancementproject.org/sites/default/files/publications/01-EducationReport-2009v8-HiRes.pdf](http://www.advancementproject.org/sites/default/files/publications/01-EducationReport-2009v8-HiRes.pdf). ■

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## Uniform grading system boosts school transparency

School leaders look at grades as being indicative of student knowledge. However, in many schools, grades can be mysterious and subjective measurements that vary greatly by teacher. By revamping grading and attendance, students, parents and teachers will have a better understanding of what a grade means — and what it doesn't mean.

### Key points

- Grading systems often vary teacher-to-teacher.
- Uniform grading system paints accurate picture to students, parents.
- Students are immediately accountable for unexcused absences. ■

"We wanted the same grading scale in all classes, because an A in one room would be a C in another room," said Jeffrey Erickson, assistant principal at Minnetonka (Minn.) High School. "We had no sense of protocol to determine grades."

Erickson's school changed its assessment, attendance, academic honors, and integrity policies. "The school board asked us to consider what should go into a grade because of the variance from teacher to teacher," he said. "We shifted from teacher autonomy to collaboration."

The school relies on summative assessments such as projects, papers, and tests for a percentage of the student's grade. However, it was unclear how nonacademic factors such as attendance impacted a grade. "We used to deduct grades for unexcused absences," Erickson said. "There was initial fear that students would show up whenever they wanted."

The school also eliminated class rank and went to the Latin model for graduation by using magna cum laude rather than a number ranking. "We did research with colleges and found they needed more than just a number to determine admissions," Erickson said. "Students compete against the standards and not each other."

### Results speak volumes

In the first year of implementation, the school saw a 55 percent reduction of unexcused absences. The school moved from a system that punished students nine weeks later with a lower grade to a system that had consequences within 24 hours, such as a

face-to-face intervention with a staff member or a phone call home.

A key ingredient of the change was the elimination of zero grades. The school instituted a series of consequences for late or missing assignments. For example, on the first violation, the student must complete an ethics assignment. The detention room still exists, but only for recurring cases.

On the athletics side, a student may have to sit out of a game for an unexcused classroom absence. "We emphasize recoverable mistakes so it doesn't affect the grade," Erickson said. "If the student receives a zero, it becomes the focus on any student or parent meeting. When we removed the zero, the meeting focused on the behavior."

Erickson provided the following tips when considering grading revamps:

■ **Educate your staff.** Meet with staff on a regular basis to lay out expectations and your argument why the change is needed. Conduct orientations with new teachers on grades and assessments. "We spent almost six months educating the staff," Erickson said. "You should discuss the reasons for the change." Remind teachers and students that the grading change is not a short-term experiment, but a valuable program for the long haul.

■ **Rely on teacher-leaders.** Find the teachers who are recognized as leaders among their peers. Assemble a small group of approximately 10 teachers to pitch the idea. Survey your staff about their grading practices. For example, do some teachers issue zero grades while others do not? Discuss uniform grading expectations with your staff and students. Both students and parents should understand how late assignments will be handled. "In the past, that was handled teacher by teacher, and it was a mystery," Erickson said. "Now I can open a grade book, look at a grade, and understand what went into it. Parents are no longer in the dark about how the final grade is created."

■ **Solicit student feedback.** Ask students for feedback on the grading system. Your students are attuned to grading and will learn quickly what goes into a grade. "I've had students ask why something was part of the grade," Erickson said. "They learn through teachers and principals sharing information. To reinforce the system, we put up posters that highlighted the key elements of grading. We held parent conferences to educate them about the need for change."

For more information, e-mail Jeffrey Erickson at [minnetonka.k12.mn.us](mailto:minnetonka.k12.mn.us). ■

## Classroom walkthrough spurs teacher quality improvement

Teachers typically look at classroom walkthroughs as an on-the-spot evaluation. Teacher improvement requires school leaders to avoid using the walkthrough as an evaluative tool. Instead, the walkthrough should be about coachable moments during the lesson. By providing effective feedback to the teacher without evaluating, you can further the district's quality indicators in the classroom.

### Key points

- Walkthroughs help further your district's quality indicators.
- Walkthroughs open dialogue between school leaders, teachers.
- Avoid making evaluative statements after walkthroughs. ■

School leaders conduct walkthroughs primarily to forward district goals, said Nancy Frey, professor of literacy at San Diego State University. "Although you may be observing and providing feedback for several different reasons, from the teacher's standpoint, it comes across only as evaluative because it's [their boss] in the room."

As such, the nuance in instructive feedback may be lost at the teacher's level. When you have an outline of quality indicators to look for, you can provide more effective feedback to the teacher.

"Walkthroughs shouldn't be about evaluating," Frey said. "Rather, they are about noticing." The goal of the walkthrough is to structure a conversation with the teacher.

Frey provided the following tips for school leaders when conducting walkthroughs:

■ **Develop quality indicators.** Work with your district to formulate quality indicators. For example, if you want to raise expectations for all students, what does that look like? What are the quality indicators to look for in the classroom that let you know about

**raised expectations?**

■ **Look for coachable moments.** When meeting with the teacher, define what you want her to do, and make suggestions for improvement. Be specific on what needs to be changed. "When the conversation is broader and less well-defined, the teacher doesn't know what they should do," Frey said. "When you say, 'You did a terrific job,' you're evaluating. Bring it down to what you noticed." For example, you can discuss the number of students

working on a problem for a period of time. Tell the teacher what you noticed rather than evaluative impressions.

■ **Don't wear out your welcome.** Avoid staying too long in the classroom during a walkthrough. The typical walkthrough should be 5 to 15 minutes in length. "The longer you stay, the higher the teacher's stress level will increase," Frey said.

■ **Give advance notice.** Tell the teacher at least one day in advance about your interest in conducting a walkthrough. This will help avoid walkthroughs on exam days. "Remember, the walkthrough shouldn't feel like a 'gotcha' situation," Frey said. Walkthroughs should occur frequently until you are satisfied the teacher is complying with the district's quality indicators.

■ **Leave detailed notes.** Take notes during the walkthrough and place the paper on the teacher's desk when you leave the room. Make sure to thank the teacher for allowing you to observe the class. School leaders should follow up with a structured conversation with the teacher either later in the day or the following day. "There's a lot of stress that can build up over a few hours from the time the observation is held until the principal sits down with the teacher," Frey said. It's important to have notes from the walkthrough to understand how you were feeling at the time.

■ **Consider peer walkthroughs.** "Teachers are equally receptive to feedback whether it comes from a school leader or their peers," Frey said. "However, they listen in a different way depending on the voice." For example, principals are disadvantaged in that no matter why they're in the room, they'll always be viewed as "the principal." Even though you're providing feedback, the teacher is taking it as a directive from their boss. On the other hand, peer feedback might not create a sense of urgency. The teacher may not use peer feedback to improve instruction. "Having a combination of both administrative and peer feedback is the recipe that needs to occur," Frey said.

Make sure the peer leader of the walkthrough can facilitate conversations outside the classroom. For example, you can have teachers in the history department conduct walkthroughs in science classes. The teachers aren't concentrating on content, Frey said, but rather on the teacher's instructional technique.

For more information, e-mail Nancy Frey at [nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu). ■

## Study: Teachers' attitudes don't match reform ideas

As states and teacher associations grapple with how to measure teacher effectiveness, a recent survey found that teachers consider student engagement an excellent gauge of their impact on learning and don't mind comparisons of their students' performance with that of other students. However, teachers are not on board with much of current thinking on teacher quality.

### Key points

- Survey finds class size, student discipline are teachers' top concerns.
- Educators' policy priorities not same as those outlined in federal policies.
- Study recommends support for research tying teacher reform strategies to effectiveness. ■

"A lot of the policy questions we've been talking about [at the national level] or see in the news were not high on the teachers' priority list," said Jane Coggshall, study author and researcher at Learning Point Associates.

As she explains in *Convergence and Contradictions in Teachers' Perceptions of Policy Reform*

*Idea*, "the widely publicized Race to the Top competition, increases in funding for the Teacher Incentive Fund program, and discussions regarding the next reauthorization of [ESEA] do not emphasize the policy options that seem most popular to teachers, namely class size reduction and addressing student discipline."

The 890 teachers surveyed for the study said moving students with severe discipline problems to alternative programs better suited to them and reducing class size by five students would help them deliver instruction more effectively, according to Coggshall and the report's coauthors from Public Agenda.

Lower on the teachers' list of preferred policy options were requiring new teachers to spend much more time teaching under the supervision of experienced teachers; making it easier to terminate ineffective teachers; eliminating teacher tenure; and tying teacher rewards to their students' performance.

### Matching priorities?

Sabrina Laine, chief program officer for educator effectiveness at Learning Point Associates, said that when teachers are randomly selected and asked their views about teacher quality, their opinions do not always match what research studies have found and that those opinions "rarely" end up in federal, state and local school policies. Stakeholders should consider

the implications of that "disconnect," she said, adding that "teachers don't have access to research so they can make [policy] decisions."

Coggshall said although there is growing research on teacher practices and student achievement, additional attention and funding should be devoted to understanding indicators of teacher effectiveness.

For instance, while studies have found that class size reduction in K-3 positively impacts student achievement, Laine said, "we don't know if it is a better investment than increasing supports for professional development."

The study, conducted in spring and summer 2009, asked teachers to rate indicators of effectiveness as excellent, good, fair or poor. Teachers were also asked whether they perceived themselves as effective.

Fifty-six percent of all teachers surveyed consider standardized test scores an excellent or good indicator of teacher effectiveness, but only 12 percent ranked it higher than the other indicators.

Novice teachers were more likely than veteran teachers to oppose the use of standardized testing, with half of all teachers with less than five years of experience citing assessment as a fair or poor indicator of teacher effectiveness, compared with a third of teachers with more than 20 years in the profession.

"These data suggest that as states and districts design teacher evaluation systems that incorporate student achievement outcomes, they may want to recruit their most experienced teachers to help communicate reform ideas to their less seasoned colleagues," the study authors said.

Laine and Coggshall explained that another survey of Generation Y teachers found that teachers younger than 32 are very receptive to continuous feedback from principals and mentor teachers, as well as analysis of student learning gains, but are less receptive to the use of standardized tests for accountability purposes.

Laine explained the cultural difference may be a result of veteran teachers with 20 or more years in the profession being "used to the test data," and not continuous feedback and observations.

Nonetheless, "teachers who perceive themselves to be effective are more likely to report working in an orderly, safe, and respectful school atmosphere as well as having a principal who does an excellent job providing useful instructional feedback. They also are more likely to report having smaller classes and lower numbers of special needs students in their classrooms," the study found.

To access the full study, visit [www.learningpt.org/expertise/educatorquality/genY/Convergence\\_Contradictions.pdf](http://www.learningpt.org/expertise/educatorquality/genY/Convergence_Contradictions.pdf). ■

## Character education can boost scores, cut discipline problems

A districtwide character education program in Missouri does more than create a positive school climate in all its classrooms. School leaders there also point to more tangible results: an increase in graduation rates, student scores and attendance, and a decrease in dropout rates and out-of-school suspensions.

The program at the 12,000-student Fox C-6 School District in Arnold isn't exclusive to classrooms, however. School bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and secretaries participate. Businesses and organizations throughout the community lend their support by promoting the "character word" of the month. The character education program is even the focus of an annual community parade.

It was the comprehensive nature of the program at Fox that was a major factor in its designation as the 2009 National District of Character, said Lara Maupin, associate director of the National Schools of Character Program. Most districts incorporate some form of character education in their strategic plans and goals, she said, and many states either mandate or encourage such programs. "But it's a matter of how deep and how they focus on it," she said.

At Fox and other districts that have received top honors for their programs, character education is infused into all activities. "It's not just posters on a wall, or, 'Today we're going to teach responsibility,'" she added. "It's very intentional," involving all stakeholders.

### Character infusion

The comprehensive character education program at Fox began eight years ago. Superintendent Dianne Brown, then an assistant superintendent, established a District Character Education Committee after seeing the benefits of a program in her own classroom as a teacher and later as a building principal. Here are key elements of the process and program that has evolved:

■ **Agreed-upon traits.** To devise a program that would be a good fit districtwide, a meeting of some 150 community stakeholders was convened to tackle discussions and definitions of the attributes central to good character. The dozen traits agreed upon in 2001 continue to provide the framework for character education activities in the district and in businesses, religious groups and other organizations throughout the year. For example, in February, the focus is integrity, and in March, honesty.

The extent to which the community is involved is evident when driving into Arnold, Brown said. A billboard on district property but visible from the highway not only displays school information, but a section is also reserved for a business to display a message about the character word of the month. By charging a \$500 monthly fee for the billboard space, Fox has money to augment the program, she added.

■ **Parent and principal buy-in.** It's particularly important to be certain that parents and principals understand the purpose, Brown said. Support is generally forthcoming with the realization that the program merely extends what is already being done at home or in the classroom and with the positive impact on test scores, she said.

■ **School character committees.** These allow activities to be tailored to specific concerns and ideas, and provide leadership opportunities for students.

■ **Professional development.** All administrators complete training in leadership of character education and develop a plan for their building, working with and providing training to their staff. Character education information is part of start-of-the-year districtwide meetings and reinforced in regular training sessions within departments throughout the year.

### Factors for success

Fox and other schools with exemplary character education programs share certain characteristics:

■ **Shared leadership.** All stakeholders, including students, have the chance for leadership and are then invested in the program, Maupin said. Superintendents and principals must champion the initiative, but it shouldn't be a top-down framework, she added.

■ **Intentional and comprehensive.** The program must be infused throughout the district, so that what is heard in classes, on athletic fields and in the cafeteria reflect the same message and values.

■ **Assessments.** Collecting data and using it to target areas for improvement is essential. Climate surveys from parents, teachers and students, as well as data on discipline, attendance and academics point out where changes might be needed.

■ **Community support.** Brown speaks often before service organizations and other venues in the community to keep a focus on the program. Businesses in particular find the program appealing, since they need future workers who exhibit the performance standards.

For more information, e-mail Dianne Brown at [superintendent@fox.k12.mo.us](mailto:superintendent@fox.k12.mo.us). ■

## Survey reveals increased teacher adoption of digital media tools

According to a new survey sponsored by PBS, preK-12 educators are increasingly adopting digital media and social networking tools, a finding that could aid decision-making among educators and policymakers.

The survey, *Digitally Inclined*, showed that more than 76 percent of preK-12 teachers used digital resources in 2009, up from 69 percent in 2008.

This is the first time in which data was collected from pre-K educators since the survey began in 2002.

The findings could herald "positive changes" in preK-12 education, including:

- New resources that support rigorous, inquiry-based learning.
- More individualized instruction.
- More flexible forums for

collaboration and professional development built around areas of interest and expertise, rather than location alone.

The survey results indicate that "teachers are increasingly positive in their use, acceptance and attitudes toward digital media and social networking," said Robert Lippincott, senior vice president of education for PBS.

Educators report the use of games, student-produced presentations and social media stimulates classroom discussion, increases student participation, and helps to expand on what they are teaching.

The annual survey is based on the responses of more than 1,400 teachers nationwide.

View the full survey at [www.pbs.org/teachers/\\_files/pdf/annual-pbs-survey-report.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/teachers/_files/pdf/annual-pbs-survey-report.pdf). ■

## NCTI seeks research proposals on new assistive technologies

The National Center for Technology Innovation is accepting proposals for the 2010 Tech in the Works competition. "This competition supports breakthrough technologies that enhance access, achievement, and inclusion of students with disabilities," NCTI Director Tracy Gray said in a statement. He added that the annual competition calls for "quick turnaround" collaborative research to study the effectiveness and feasibility of a particular intervention. Funds also can be used to expand existing research projects.

The NCTI request for proposals requires that applicants propose a collaborative study involving at least one researcher and one vendor who plan "to examine the effectiveness of a technology

product in improving educational results for all students, particularly those with disabilities."

The assistive technology product "should be innovative ... and have wide market appeal," according to NCTI, which is funded by OSEP.

Up to four awards of \$20,000 will be made this year, and collaborating teams are required to secure matching funds of at least \$20,000 to be eligible. The award amounts are an increase over last year's \$15,000 grants.

Letters of intent for the competition are due by March 23. Proposals are due no later than April 6. NCTI plans to announce awards May 4. The final reports are due next January.

For more information, visit [www.nationaltechcenter.org](http://www.nationaltechcenter.org). ■

## SAIC gives sponsorships to bolster K-12 STEM programs

The Science Applications International Corp. awarded two nonprofit organizations, For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology and Project Lead the Way, with \$600,000 and \$400,000 sponsorships, respectively, according to a statement.

The sponsorships are part of a new program to help inspire, engage and educate K-12 students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education — disciplines that will aid future technological innovations and the U.S. economy, said SAIC, a scientific, engineering, and technology applications company.

SAIC said it aims to bolster the STEM pipeline by providing new volunteer opportunities to encourage the development of problem-solving, critical thinking, and reasoning skills in students, and provide them with resources to succeed in college and careers in STEM-related fields.

"The number of students entering STEM disciplines is too low to meet future U.S. needs," said SAIC Chief Executive Officer Walt Havenstein. "Industry can play a critical role in helping address this shortfall." ■

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## Districts are embracing ed tech in schools

School districts have implemented education technology initiatives over the past decade to prepare students for the digital age in the workplace. That is among the findings contained in a recent report, *Educational Technology in Public School Districts: Fall 2008*, from the Institute of Education Sciences.

The report examines data on how public school districts are using technology. Nearly all of the

responding districts indicated they had an internal computer network and kept electronic student records. Of note for administrators was the finding that 95 percent of districts with an enrollment of at least 10,000 students employ an individual who is responsible for ed tech leadership.

More than 1,500 public school districts in the 50 states and the District of Columbia participated in the survey.

### Percentage of public schools with a local area (school-level) network, percentage connected to the district network and, of those with a district network, percentage with each type of connection to the district, by district characteristics: Fall 2008

District characteristic	Schools with a local area network <sup>1</sup>	Schools connected to the district network <sup>1</sup>	Type of connection from school to district <sup>2</sup>							
			Dial-up or ISDN <sup>3</sup>	DSL <sup>4</sup>	Broad-band cable	T1 or DS1	T3 or DS3	Direct fiber	Wireless	Other
All public schools	99	92	#	2	5	26	4	55	16	8
District enrollment size										
Less than 2,500	98	80	1!	5	7	35	4	48	21	2
2,500 to 9,999	99	96	#	1	5	22	4	60	16	7
10,000 or more	99	99	#	1	5	23	4	57	13	12
Community type										
City	99	98	#	1	4	25	6	57	11	9
Suburban	99	98	#	1	7	25	4	58	13	11
Town	99	92	#	2	3	20	5	67	18	4
Rural	98	81	1!	5	7	33	3	44	24	5
Region										
Northeast	100 <sup>5</sup>	88	#	2	9	23	6	57	15	6
Southeast	99	94	#	#	7	19	3	57	14	14
Central	98	90	1!	2	5	26	4	59	19	5
West	98	95	#	3	2	33	4	51	16	8
Poverty concentration										
Less than 10 percent	99	91	#	1	7	26	3	60	16	6
10 to 19 percent	99	93	#	2	6	24	5	55	18	9
20 percent or more	98	92	#	2	4	30	4	52	15	9

# Rounds to zero.

! Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation is greater than 50 percent.

1 Percentages are based on the total population of public schools.

2 Percentages are based on the 92 percent of public schools connected to the district network. A school may have more than one type of connection to the district.

3 Integrated Services Digital Network.

4 Digital Subscriber Line.

5 Rounds to 100 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Educational Technology in Public School Districts, Fall 2008," FRSS 93, 2008.

Among the findings in *Educational Technology in Public School Districts: Fall 2008*:

- 95 percent of districts offer professional development on integrating technology into the classroom curriculum.

- 91 percent of districts offer professional development on using Internet resources for instruction.

- 55 percent of districts require teachers to take professional development classes on Internet safety.

- 92 percent of districts offer access to online district resources to all elementary and secondary teachers.

To access the report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010003.pdf>. ■

**Percentage distribution of public school districts reporting whether they employ an individual responsible for educational technology leadership full or part time, by district characteristics: Fall 2008**

District characteristic	Yes, full-time devoted to this role	Yes, part-time devoted to this role	No
All public school districts	51	32	17
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	42	37	21
2,500 to 9,999	70	23	7
10,000 or more	83	12	5
Community type			
City	79	16	5
Suburban	67	22	11
Town	66	24	10
Rural	36	41	23
Region			
Northeast	66	24	10
Southeast	69	22	10
Central	43	34	23
West	43	40	16
Poverty concentration			
Less than 10 percent	60	26	13
10 to 19 percent	48	35	17
20 percent or more	47	33	20

NOTE: Detail may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Educational Technology in Public School Districts, Fall 2008," FRSS 93, 2008.

## Report: Teacher prep programs fail to make the grade

States' policies for teacher preparation, retention, compensation, and dismissal do not emphasize access to quality teachers, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality's 2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook.

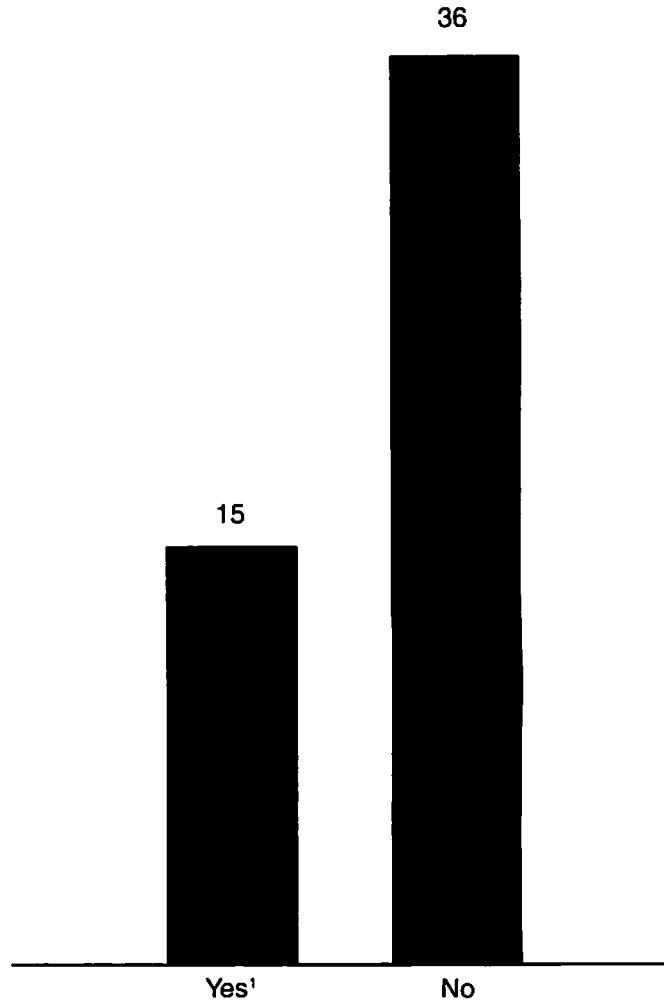
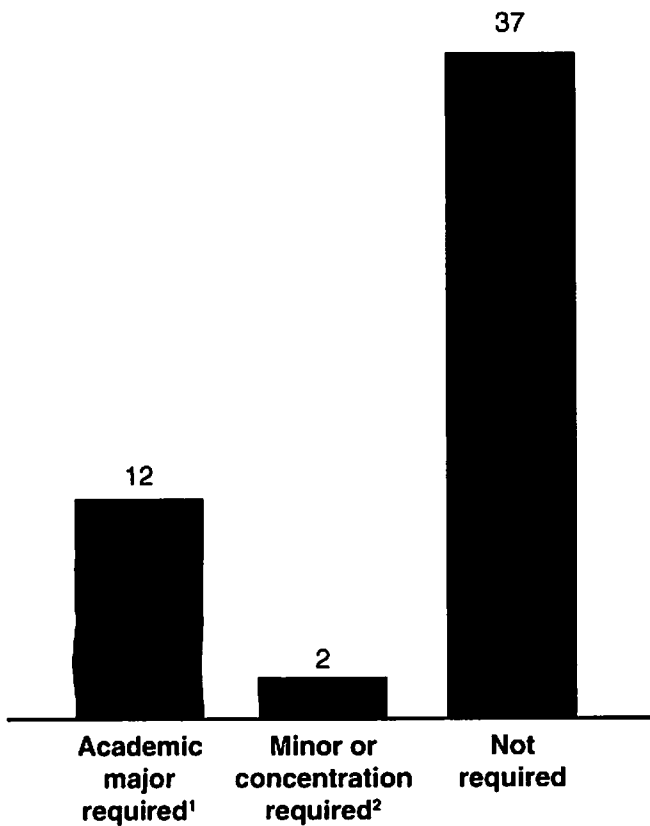
"Taken as a whole, state teacher policies are broken, outdated and inflexible," the report's authors said. States received the lowest grade of D- for policies on identifying effective teachers. The

highest average grades were for retaining effective teachers and expanding the teaching pool, each with an average grade of D+.

States got a D for policies on teacher preparation programs' ability to produce well prepared teachers and exiting ineffective teachers. States are particularly failing on training policies for elementary school, middle school, and special education teachers, according to the report.

**Do states expect elementary teachers to complete an academic concentration?**

**Do states require all out-of-state teachers to pass their licensure tests?**



1 California, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa<sup>3</sup>, Massachusetts, Michigan<sup>4</sup>, New Jersey, New Mexico, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia.

2 Mississippi, New Hampshire. Mississippi requires two content concentrations.

3 Although Iowa requires a subject-area major, it consists mostly of education courses.

4 Michigan also allows a group major with a minor, or three minors.

1 Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin.

Source: National Council on Teacher Quality.

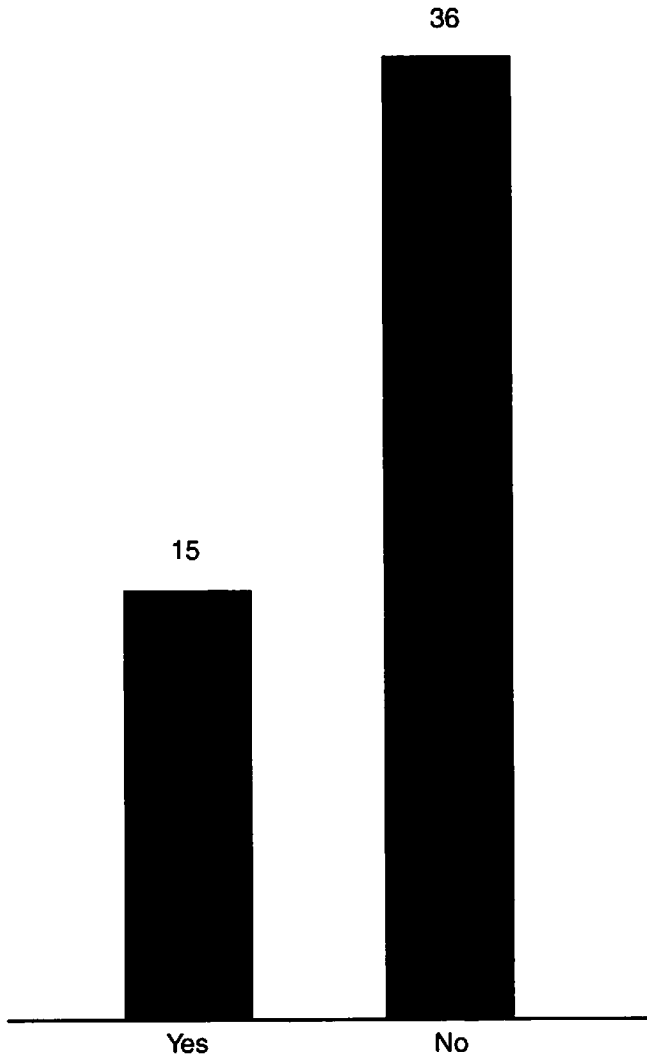
Among the findings in the *2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook*:

- Florida had the most comprehensive teacher quality policies, earning it a C, the nation's highest grade.
- Texas, which is not applying for the \$4 billion RTF competition, was ranked among the higher scoring states with a C-; other states with that grade include Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Tennessee.
- Maine, Montana and Vermont received failing grades. Vermont did not apply for the first round of

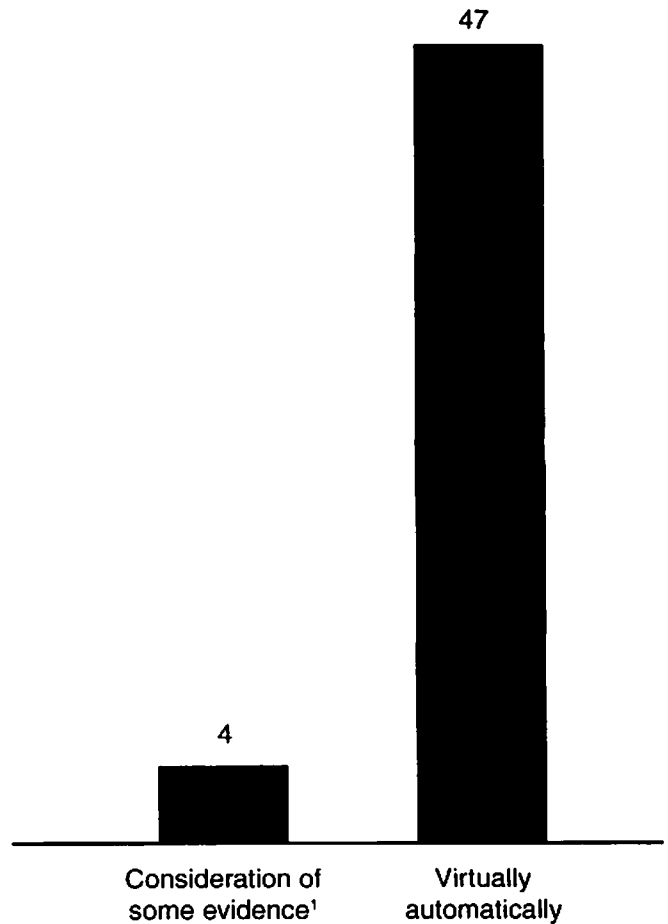
RTF because it had not yet changed its state law prohibiting linking teacher evaluations to student achievement.

- Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, and North Carolina require the consideration of any evidence of teacher performance as part of tenure decisions.
  - 13 states specify that teachers who have been rated "unsatisfactory" on multiple evaluations should be eligible for dismissal.
- To access the full report, visit [www.nctq.org/stpy09/reports/stpy\\_national.pdf](http://www.nctq.org/stpy09/reports/stpy_national.pdf). ■

**Do states require districts to evaluate all veteran teachers each year?**



**How are tenure decisions made?**



<sup>1</sup> Iowa, New Mexico and North Carolina require some evidence of teacher performance, although evidence of student learning is not the preponderant criterion. Minnesota requires a peer review process, but does not specify that the review include classroom effectiveness.

Source: National Council on Teacher Quality.

**LEGISLATION**

**Bill could expand principal recruitment, development**

Education stakeholders are applauding a principal recruitment and training bill introduced in Congress. They say the Principal Recruitment and Training Act, S. 2896, introduced by Sens. Al Franken, D-Minn., and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, in December could go a long way toward helping districts recruit, train and support principals who choose to work in chronically low-performing schools.

The bill would authorize a five-year renewable national principal recruitment and training grant. The grants will be awarded to school districts, as well as eligible nonprofits and universities that establish partnerships with school districts. The bill has been referred to the House and Senate education committees.

National Association of Secondary School Principals Executive Director Gerald N. Tirozzi threw his organization's support behind the legislation and its companion bill, H.R. 4354, introduced by Reps. Susan Davis, D-Calif., and Todd Platts, R-Pa.

NASSP, which worked with Franken's office over the past several months in crafting the bill, is pleased with the results of the final bill, particularly the attention it pays to the needs of struggling schools, Tirozzi said.

**Grant uses**

The grants would fund programs that provide mentoring and professional development, tailored to the needs of individual principals and their schools,

on instructional leadership, data usage and organizational management.

The grants would support sending principals to schools in which 40 percent or more of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and to high schools with a graduation rate of 65 percent or less and their feeder middle schools.

"Despite the importance of school leadership, the federal government has not devoted adequate attention and resources to improving the quality of principals in schools," Franken said. "We cannot expect schools to go it alone."

Under the proposed legislation, grantees could apply to renew their grants or scale up their efforts every five years based on performance. The primary factor in assessing each grantee's performance will be whether schools led by principals trained by the grantee's program have made greater student academic achievement gains than comparable schools.

The bill would make the Education Department the final arbiter of whether schools have made greater gains than similar schools not involved in the grant in such areas as student learning and outcomes, as evidenced by multiple measures, including secondary school graduation rates; academic assessments; Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate enrollment rates and test scores; and other student-level outcome data. ■

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