State Policymakers Must Include Information About Teachers on Report Cards

DQC
DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN

To improve student learning, an effective teacher in the classroom is the most important factor. Every student, regardless of their zip code, deserves access to a good teacher. To make this access a reality, parents and school leaders need information about the teachers in their schools so they can make the best decisions about their students' education. However, school-level data about teachers is often difficult to find, especially on school report cards, which are a state's most prominent public-facing resource on school quality. State leaders must change this.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) emphasized the importance of strong teachers by requiring state education agencies to include in their state plans a description of what being an effective teacher means and the measures that the state will use to evaluate and publicly report on access to effective teachers for specific student groups (e.g., students from low-income families and students of color). Separately, ESSA also requires that school report cards include information about teachers, such as teacher experience or credentials (see sidebar). To provide the strongest picture of teacher quality in districts and schools, states should go beyond what is required in ESSA and include all of this information on report cards.

When families, communities, and local leaders have access to teacher information, they can answer questions such as the following:

- Do the teachers at my school have the experience they need to support my student?

- Do the schools in my district that serve large populations of low-income students have fewer effective teachers?

ESSA REPORT CARDS AND TEACHER DATA

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), school report cards must include the following information:
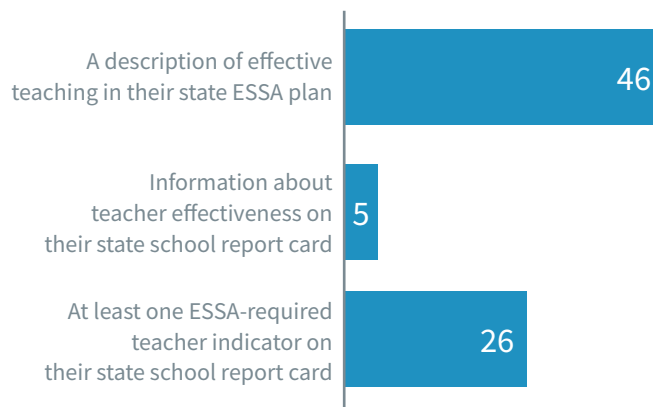
- The number and percentage of teachers who are inexperienced, teaching with an emergency or provisional credential, or teaching out of field; and

- The number of teachers with those qualifications disaggregated by low- and high-poverty schools.

How Does Your State Measure Up?

Forty-six states and the District of Columbia included a description of effective teaching in their ESSA plans, but only five states—Arkansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio—include teacher effectiveness data on their school report cards.[1] States aren't required to put this information on school report cards, but state leaders have already done the difficult work of defining teacher effectiveness and identifying relevant measures in their ESSA plans. This information loses its value if it's not made available to those who need it most.

Even when the data is required, it's still not making it onto report cards: in January 2019, only 26 states' report cards had at least one of the required teacher quality indicators. It is critical that information about teachers is available and easy for parents and school and district leaders to understand. Putting the data on school report cards is key as users are far more likely to dig into a report card than an ESSA plan.

NUMBER OF STATES THAT INCLUDED …

A description of effective teaching in their state ESSA plan	46
Information about teacher effectiveness on their state school report card	5
At least one ESSA-required teacher indicator on their state school report card	26

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1   As of January 2019.

Making Teacher Data Meaningful

The moment is ripe for states to go further to provide stakeholders with the data they need. As states include information about teachers on report cards, state leaders must ensure that the data is communicated in a way that makes sense and is actionable for a variety of stakeholders. To meet this goal, state leaders should take the following steps:

- **Make teacher data easier to understand** by providing simple definitions that avoid education jargon and overly technical language. Definitions should also help readers understand how this information is related to student performance.

- **Put the data in context** by providing relevant comparison data. For example, placing teacher data side by side with student performance data demonstrates its direct relationship. And in addition to being broken down by high- and low-poverty schools (as is required), this information should be looked at across different student groups. These different grain sizes of data can help users better understand the distribution of effective or highly qualified teachers and identify issues of equitable access.

- **Think beyond report cards** to ensure that a variety of stakeholders, such as local leaders and educator preparation program leaders, have access to this data to make better, more informed decisions.

Spotlight: Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) shares data about teachers in a variety of ways. For starters, on report cards, teacher licensure and experience data is immediately available on page one, and more detailed data is only one click away for those who are interested.

Secondly, DESE produces Student Learning Experience Reports that give district administrators information about the rates at which different groups of students are assigned to effective teachers to help identify potential equity gaps.

Lastly, DESE makes a variety of data on teacher performance available through its Educator Preparation Profiles. Not only can aspiring educators publicly review outcomes data by program, but school and district leaders can also monitor the outcomes of educator preparation program graduates to help inform their teacher recruitment strategies.

By making a variety of data about teachers available in different formats for different audiences, DESE goes beyond compliance to make sure stakeholders have the data they need to ensure that all Massachusetts students experience a high-quality teacher.
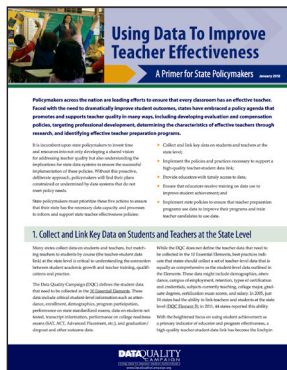
For more information on teacher data, visit Data Quality Campaign's *Using Data to Improve Teacher Effectiveness.*

The Data Quality Campaign is a nonprofit policy and advocacy organization leading the effort to bring every part of the education community together to empower educators, families, and policymakers with quality information to make decisions that ensure that students excel. For more information, go to www.dataqualitycampaign.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@EdDataCampaign).