

The State Title II Report

Title II – 1998 Higher Education Act

Illinois State Board of Education
October 2001

Illinois Teacher Preparation Report Card

Introduction

The quality of the classroom teacher is the most important factor in determining a student's academic success. Although many parents and students have reached this conclusion as a result of their own experiences, there is mounting evidence to show both the immediate and long-term impacts of teacher effectiveness. Studies are discovering, again and again, that teacher expertise -- what teachers know and can do -- affects student achievement in critical and often enduring ways.

Because teacher quality matters, and matters more than any other variable within policy-makers' sphere of influence, the State of Illinois has made a major commitment to assuring that all students, from pre-kindergarten through high school, are taught by competent, caring and highly-qualified teachers.

Beginning in 1996 with the State Board of Education's adoption of a policy framework, the State has been engaged in an ongoing campaign to reshape teacher preparation, certification and continuing professional development. That campaign has been guided by a belief in standards as the best way to articulate the knowledge and skills necessary for effective teaching in the 21st century

To strengthen teacher quality, Illinois has

- replaced course requirements for certification with rigorous core certification standards for all teachers and content-area standards for certification in each subject-matter area. All are based on the Illinois Learning Standards for students. A unique aspect of the new Illinois certification standards is the emphasis on language arts, technology and special education, all of which are addressed in the core standards for all teachers.
- aligned the requirements for teacher education programs with the standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and adopted a rigorous, performance-based institutional review process.
- adopted and administered in 2001 a more rigorous Basic Skills test for teacher candidates as part of a new, more comprehensive certification assessment system that will be implemented in 2003.
- created a three-tier certification system which differentiates between beginning, more experienced and master teachers.
- required continuing professional development focused on subjects taught and state priorities such as reading, mathematics, technology, and special education as a condition of certificate renewal.

Although some of these systemic changes are still in progress, we are developing additional strategies to address issues of continuing concern, such as the shortage of

teachers, the absence of a formal system of support for beginning teachers, and the disproportionate number of teachers without credentials specific to their assignment who are employed in districts with high percentages of low-income students. A plan for these next steps will be presented to the Illinois General Assembly this fall.

The Title II Teacher Preparation Report Card is a new component in these ongoing efforts to improve teacher quality in Illinois. It provides summary information about the state's teacher preparation system (see following "Overview of the Illinois Teacher Preparation Programs") and specific information about each of the 55 teacher preparation institutions operating in 1999-2000. The institutional information includes the institution's vision and mission, admission requirements, enrollment and student characteristics, the type of teacher certification programs available, and selected characteristics of the teacher education program (e.g., student teaching program). In addition, the information describes the institution's accreditation status, the best practices it has initiated, and other notable features or accomplishments.

Many of the required Title II Report Card elements focus on candidate performance on state teacher certification tests. This Report Card provides teacher candidate performance rates by test for each institution, as well as aggregate rates for each institution and statewide averages.

Using the federal criteria for calculation, this analysis indicated an aggregate statewide pass rate of 99% on the Basic Skills Test and 98% on the content tests. Future reports on pass rates are expected to be substantially different because the state has authorized administration of Basic Skills and content tests as a condition for program completion. Institutions that choose to adopt this procedure will have 100% pass rates.

The required ranking of institutions by quartile resulted in the following institutional designations:

- Quartile 1 - 100% mean pass rate
- Quartile 2 - 98.4% mean pass rate
- Quartile 3 - 95.9% mean pass rate
- Quartile 4 - 88.6% mean pass rate

For this reporting period, no Illinois institutions were designated as either "at-risk" or "low- performing." An "at-risk" institution has been defined in Illinois as one that has been placed on probation by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Teacher Certification Board. Probation means the program has not met one or more of the six NCATE standards and demonstrates severe weaknesses that can threaten the candidates' opportunity to meet certification requirements. An "at-risk" institution is declared to be "low- performing" if it fails to demonstrate significant remediation of the unmet standard(s) over a period of three years. "Low-performing" preparation programs may have their accreditation revoked by the State Board in consultation with the Certification Board. A conscious effort has been made to link these Title II definitions

with the state's new accreditation process, a link that will be strengthened in future reports.

The Title II Report Card requirements call for reporting of the number of individuals who are teaching on "waivers" and the number of those individuals who are employed in high-poverty schools. Illinois has seven certificates that have been officially authorized by the General Assembly for use in Illinois that fit the federal definition for "waivers." There were 3520 individuals teaching on these certificates in 2000-2001, with 71% teaching in high-poverty districts. Preparation of this Report Card has affirmed that low-income students, who often need the most highly-qualified teachers, are disproportionately taught by individuals with minimal credentials. High-poverty districts are more than twice as likely to employ teachers on "waivers" than non-high-poverty districts. This is an issue that will be given priority attention by Illinois policy-makers and educators during the year ahead.

As noted earlier, a new framework for teacher quality improvements in Illinois has been drafted by a partnership that includes the Governor's Office, the Board of Higher Education, the Community College Board, the State Board of Education and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. That "Unified Plan" will guide the next stages in our continuing efforts to ensure that Illinois education and Illinois teachers are "second to none."