

## **State outpacing others in preparing teachers**

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Baton Rouge - Louisiana continues to outpace all other states in developing the capacity to assess the comparative effectiveness of universities in preparing new teachers.

A study of comparative effectiveness is being conducted by LSU Professor George Noell. The project is being funded through the state Board of Regents.

"The nation is closely following the new research being conducted in Louisiana by Dr. George Noell," said Kati Haycock, director of the Washington-based Education Trust. "No other state is as far along in creating a statewide system that examines the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs based upon the actual achievement of children."

Preliminary results from Noell's latest study indicate that 45-50 percent of Louisiana's teacher preparation programs are preparing new teachers whose contribution to their students' achievement is comparable to the effectiveness of experienced teachers in mathematics, English/language arts, and/or science.

The study used Department of Education student achievement data from in excess of 200,000 students in grades four through nine who were enrolled in 66 school districts in Louisiana and examined the effectiveness of 16 universities that prepared new teachers who taught the students.

Since only one year of comparison data was available, names of universities were not identified. However, universities will be identified next year once two years of data are available to verify the reliability of the results. An additional year of assessment data is also needed to provide more precise estimates of the university teacher programs' effects.

Basically, Noell's Value Added Teacher Preparation Assessment Model predicts the academic achievement of students in grades four through nine from the end of the next academic year, compares that achievement to the students' actual standardized test performance the next year, and estimates teacher preparation effectiveness values for universities, which reflect the impact on new teachers on the achievement of the children in their classes.

All university teacher preparation programs had varying results across different types of programs, such as undergraduate vs. alternative certification, and across different content areas, such as mathematics vs. social studies.

These findings may eventually demonstrate that universities can have both strengths and weaknesses among their own programs as well as in comparison to experienced teachers.

The research shows that Louisiana's new teachers exhibited the greatest increases in teaching effectiveness during their first two years of teaching. A period of little, if any, increase in effectiveness was evident in mathematics and English language arts between third- and eighth-year teachers.

This contradicts the expectations held by most scholars that significant increases in effectiveness continue to occur for the initial four or five years of teaching.

The differences between the weakest and strongest teacher preparation programs in specific subject areas have an important influence on the learning of students.

It is imperative for universities with the weakest programs in specific subject areas to improve their effectiveness.

Sally Clausen, president of the University of Louisiana System and former president of Southeastern Louisiana University, said that the bottom line is that "we all want a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, one who demonstrates the ability to move student achievement. Now, we must produce more such teachers, support them and ensure that the classroom environment is conducive to learning."

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