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Contact: Gary Reinecke (510)465-6444, ext. 300 or greinecke@edtrustwest.org

New Report Reveals Deep Flaws in California’s Teacher Equity Plan

(Oakland, CA)- A new Education Trust—West analysis of California’s plan to address teacher quality distribution among poor and minority students, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act, finds that California not only fails to sufficiently analyze the state’s teacher quality gap, but also neglects to provide a clear plan for correcting the problem.

According to the report, *Too Little Thought, Too Little Action: California’s Teacher Equity Plan Falls Short*, California’s plan has several significant deficiencies:

- First, California’s plan only looks at highly qualified teacher distribution patterns in high- vs. low-poverty schools. NCLB requires states to analyze whether *minority* students are taught by a disproportionate number of highly qualified teachers as well. California fails to do so.
- Second, the plan fails to look at the distribution of *inexperienced* teachers, as required under federal law.
- Third, the plan, in its very limited analysis of teacher quality distribution by poverty level, shows small teacher quality gaps – a gap of only 3 percentage points at the elementary level, for example. This analysis understates the magnitude of the teacher quality gap, a problem that has been well documented by other research.

The report further criticizes California’s Equity Plan for lacking an effective strategy to close the teacher quality gap.

“California did a poor job of analyzing the distribution of unqualified and inexperienced teachers, and lacks a clear plan for resolving the problem.” said Camille Esch, Senior Data & Policy Analyst for the Education Trust – West.

Specifically, the report criticizes the lack of urgency, specificity, and innovation in California’s plan.

- While the state provides a detailed list of mostly existing policies and programs, it does not describe how those efforts would specifically help schools and districts struggling to hire and retain good teachers.
- The plan lacks a specific timeline with measurable benchmarks, leaving no way for evaluating the pace of improvement and signaling an overall lack of urgency.

“Ensuring equity in teacher assignments should have been a top priority for both the U.S. Department of Education and the states from the moment NCLB was enacted nearly five years ago,” said Congressman George Miller, D-California, 7th Congressional District. “While I am pleased to see the U.S. Department of Education finally moving forward in enforcing this provision, there is nothing more important to the future of California’s most vulnerable children than for California’s education leaders to make this a top and immediate priority,” concluded Congressman Miller.

California has until September 29, 2006 to resubmit its plan to the US Department of Education. The report makes clear recommendations for remedying the plan’s deficiencies. The Education Trust—West recommends:

- California should immediately comply with the USDOE’s request for more data. It should provide a better examination of the problem with analyses of teacher distribution based on poverty *and* minority student data, and include an analysis of the distribution of inexperienced teachers.
- The state should accelerate its efforts to build a comprehensive data system that includes longitudinal student and teacher data, and the capacity to link the two together. These improvements will dramatically improve California’s ability to assess the teacher quality gap and its impact on students.
- California should seize the opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for closing the teacher quality gap. Recommended actions include targeting resources, rethinking hiring and funding strategies, and improving workplace conditions in chronically hard-to-staff schools.
- As part of its plan, the state should also consider innovations in teacher preparation such as developing teachers from within the communities that most need them and compensating teachers throughout the course of their preparation.
- And any strategy that California chooses to pursue should include progress measures, and mechanisms of public reporting and monitoring.

“Finally, after decades of research have shown that teacher quality matters most in student achievement, California’s scandalous teacher quality gap is coming under increased scrutiny from both the federal government and the general public,” commented Russlynn Ali, director of the Education Trust – West. “But rather than responding to the charge of providing poor students and students of color with truly highly qualified educators, it appears that California merely aims for minimal compliance with the letter of the federal law – and fails even at that,” Ali concluded.

To download a copy of the report, *Too Little Thought, Too Little Action: California’s Equity Plan Falls Short*, please visit: www.edtrustwest.org.

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About the Education Trust—West

The Education Trust—West is the West Coast partner of the national policy organization the Education Trust. The organization works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, kindergarten through college with an emphasis on serving low-income, Latino, African-American and Native American students. The Education Trust—West works alongside policymakers, parents, education professionals, and business and community leaders, in cities and towns throughout California, who are trying to transform their schools and colleges into institutions that genuinely serve all students. To learn more about the Education Trust—West, visit www.edtrustwest.org.