

The Problems with California's TQ Information

In 2002 the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, located in Santa Cruz, California, published a very important report on the problems with their state's teacher quality data system. While a great deal of data on teachers are collected by several different agencies — including the California Department of Education (CDE), the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), the California State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS), and universities that prepare teachers — these data cannot be used to answer many of policymakers' most important questions about the teacher workforce. In this report the authors identified:

Two major problems

1. *Fragmented responsibility for collecting and reporting teacher data.*
2. *The lack of a commonly used unique teacher identifiers to allow linkage across data systems.*

Several key issues:

1. A new TQ data system will need to include strong safeguards to keep any unique identifier out of the public domain and protect the identity of individual teachers.
2. Procedures should be established to ensure that the data are used appropriately and made available for legitimate research efforts.
3. A formal mechanism for coordinating the data collection and analysis must be established.
4. Measures are needed to check and improve the accuracy of data that feed into the system.

Recommendations

1. An independent organizational structure should be adopted at the state level to oversee the teacher data system and ensure accuracy, validity and appropriate access over time.
2. A common identifier, such as teacher Social Security Numbers (or alternately, another unique teacher identifier) should be used by all relevant agencies to enable longitudinal analysis and linkage across datasets.
3. Different data bases, most notably should be merged on a regular, timely basis.
4. Analyses of the merged dataset and longitudinal data should be performed annually on a specified time line and made available to policymakers and the public.
5. Steps should be taken toward including teacher preparation programs in analyses of the teacher supply pipeline.

6. Measures to ensure access to the data for legitimate research should be established.
7. A regular system of accounting for data accuracy should be established to ensure that data and subsequent analyses are reliable.
8. Standards should be developed and used across all involved agencies to protect teacher privacy and ensure appropriate uses of the data system.

THE CTQ RECOMMENDS THAT EVERY STATE CONDUCTS AN ANALYSIS OF ITS CURRENT TQ DATA SYSTEM.