



# Educator Equity in Pennsylvania's ESSA State Plan<sup>1</sup>

## Strengths

### Inexperienced Teacher Definition

Although Pennsylvania does not include a definition of inexperienced teacher in its state ESSA state plan, the state does include the term in its 2015 Educator Equity Plan (which is specifically referenced in Pennsylvania's ESSA state plan). Pennsylvania's strong definition of inexperienced teacher as a teacher with a year or less of teaching experience is supported by research that demonstrates that teachers experience the greatest increase in effectiveness in the first two years of teaching.<sup>2</sup>

### Inclusion of Additional Data

Pennsylvania's ESSA state plan refers specifically to its 2015 Educator Equity Plan, which includes educator equity gap calculations for turnover rates of educators, teacher pay, Pennsylvania's funding of districts, and charter and traditional school types, as well as of some for the statutory subgroups. By calculating and reporting the rates at which schools with large populations of low-income or minority students struggle to retain and pay teachers at levels comparable to schools with lower instances of poverty or fewer students of minority status, Pennsylvania illuminates additional educator equity gaps. Further, by examining access rates of high-minority and low-poverty students to traditional and district schools, and the funding those populations receive compared with more affluent, less diverse environments, trends can be identified and ultimately equitable access to quality education can be improved in the state.

### Promising Strategies

Pennsylvania intends to implement promising, potentially high-impact strategies designed to eliminate its existing educator equity gaps, including: 1) developing systems that improve opportunities for coordination between the state's teacher and principal preparation programs and human resource divisions of districts in order to better align the supply of educators with the needs of schools in Pennsylvania; and 2) convening teacher preparation programs and districts to identify and share effective strategies for supporting and retaining teachers in Pennsylvania's lowest-income and highest-minority schools.

1 <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/paconsolidatedstateplan.pdf>

2 See, e.g., Boyd, D., et al. (2008). The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high-poverty schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27(4), 793-818; Henry, G. T., Bastian, K. C., & Fortner, C. K. (2011). Stayers and leavers early-career teacher effectiveness and attrition. *Educational Researcher*, 40(6), 271-280; and Papay, J. P., & Kraft, M. A. (2015). Productivity returns to experience in the teacher labor market: Methodological challenges and new evidence on long-term career improvement. *Journal of Public Economics*, 130, 105-119.

3 <https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Pennsylvania-snapshot>

4 See, e.g., Kane, T. J., & Cantrell, S. (2013). Ensuring fair and reliable measures of effective teaching: Culminating findings from the MET Project's three-year study. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., & Rockoff, J. E. (2014). Measuring the impacts of teachers II: Teacher value-added and student outcomes in adulthood. *American Economic Review*, 104(9), 2633-2679; and Adnot, M., Dee, T., Katz, V., & Wyckoff, J. (2017). Teacher turnover, teacher quality, and student achievement in DCPS. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(1), 54-76.



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## Opportunities

### Ineffective Teacher Definition and Data

Pennsylvania does not provide a definition of an ineffective teacher in its ESSA state plan. Instead the state defines an effective teacher as, among other measures, a teacher who strives to grow and improve students. Pennsylvania indicates that it is working with stakeholders to further develop a definition around educator effectiveness. As Pennsylvania develops its definition of ineffective teacher, the state should include, among multiple measures, objective measures of student learning and growth, such as those that are included in Pennsylvania's educator evaluation system<sup>3</sup>, which research demonstrates are a critically important component of measuring teacher quality.<sup>4</sup>

Although, Pennsylvania includes data on the rates at which low-income and minority students are taught by out-of-field and inexperienced teachers in its 2015 Educator Equity Plan (which is specifically referenced in Pennsylvania's ESSA state plan), the state does not provide data demonstrating the rates at which low-income and minority students are taught by ineffective teachers compared with other students in either its ESSA state plan or its Educator Equity Plan. Pennsylvania indicated that it will report these data annually moving forward. Without these data, Pennsylvania cannot demonstrate that low-income and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by ineffective teachers, nor can it guarantee that where such educator equity gaps exist, it is targeting its resources to ensure that they do not persist.

### Timeline and Interim Target Transparency

Pennsylvania does not include timelines and interim targets for eliminating its identified educator equity gaps in its ESSA state plan. Although Pennsylvania's 2015 Educator Equity Plan (which is specifically referenced in Pennsylvania's ESSA state plan) includes some ordinal phases and steps by which to eliminate its identified equity gaps, the identified steps that do contain dates have already passed, and no interim targets for eliminating existing educator equity gaps are included. Pennsylvania should amend its ESSA state plan to include timelines complete with revised dates as well as interim targets so that the state and its stakeholders are able to ensure adequate accountability for eliminating educator equity gaps.

## State Response

Pennsylvania was helpful in providing facts necessary for this analysis, including that it has been engaged in ongoing activity explicitly designed to eliminate identified equity gaps.