

Association of Texas Professional Educators

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Supporting Your Freedom to TeachSM

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ATPE releases teacher quality study

A study recently released by the state's largest educators' group found that the teachers with the most experience and qualifications tend to be found in more affluent, higher-achieving schools.

In a report commissioned by the 115,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators, Dr. Ed Fuller, a research associate at the University Council for Educational Administration, explores the correlation between teacher quality (as defined by experience, training and other factors) and academic performance in Texas classrooms.

The research found there to be an inequitable distribution of teacher quality across a number of middle and high schools in Texas, with high-poverty, high-minority and low-performing schools having much lower teacher quality than more affluent, low-minority and high-performing schools. The study is expected to add to the debate over education policy in the upcoming legislative session.

"The study promises to add a new dynamic to the discussion on what impact the distribution of teacher quality has on the overall success of the schools within a district and throughout the state," said David de la Garza, ATPE state president. "It's shown that in many cases, lower-performing schools tend to have higher rates of turnover among teachers, higher rates of novice educators and higher rates of individuals teaching outside their field of certification."

The focus of the study quantifies teacher quality in four areas: teacher experience; whether educators are teaching in their fields of certification; a comparison of the quality of teacher preparation programs and teacher certification test scores; and teacher retention and turnover rates. In many larger school districts, the four areas of teacher quality tend to favor the more affluent schools.

"While there could be many reasons for the disparity in teacher quality, this study vindicates what many teachers in these hard-to-staff schools have said for a long time," said de la Garza. "There is a revolving door in many of these schools because there is no mechanism in place to attract and retain the most experienced, well-qualified teachers."

In addition to presenting the study to members of the Legislature, ATPE plans to provide copies to school boards across the state in order to help school districts reform their hiring practices and ensure all students have access to the same caliber of teachers.

“It’s more than just an issue for state officials, and it will take a long-term commitment from policymakers, educators, community members and parents in order to properly address the issue of teacher quality moving forward,” said de la Garza.

A copy of the study can be found online at
<http://www.atpe.org/Advocacy/Issues/teacherqualitystudy.asp>.

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The 115,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators is the largest educators’ group in Texas and the largest nonunion educators’ group nationwide. Its membership consists of classroom teachers, para-educators, administrators, college students and retired educators. ATPE is committed to advocating for better benefits for all educators, promoting a collaborative work environment and the right of educators to choose the association they feel represents their interests, and providing the best education possible for all Texas school children.