



## EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Second only to parents, teachers are the single most influential agents of change in a child's life. Their understanding and mastery of pedagogy and subject matter, together with their ability to apply effective teaching practices, are the keys to learning for all students. Yet, students with learning disabilities (LD) are far less likely to have access to well-prepared and effective teachers. In many communities, students experience a revolving door of untrained and under-supported novice teachers in both general education and special education—teachers who cannot sustain a high-quality educational program for this vulnerable population of students.

The success of students with LD rests on well-prepared teachers—both in general and special education. This can be facilitated through establishing a number of key measures under ESEA:

- 1. Require that teachers be fully prepared and qualified, as well as effective.**
  - Maintain requirement that qualified teachers be assigned to all students. (Amend “highly qualified” designation to “qualified”.)
  - Ensure any highly qualified or qualified teacher must have completed a full preparation program and meet full state certification standards, including those required for the specific student groups and grade level he or she will teach, and have subject matter knowledge for the grade in which his or her students are enrolled.
  
- 2. Accurately identify teachers who are still in training and ensure that they are equitably distributed and adequately supervised.**
  - Clarify and ensure that parents will always be informed if their child's teacher has not completed preparation and has not yet fully met state certification standards. Current law has conflicting provisions.
  - Require states and districts to report on the distribution of such teachers by teaching field and school and take steps to equitably distribute these teachers.
  - Ensure teachers not yet certified are closely overseen by a fully qualified Supervising Teacher.
  
- 3. Hold alternate and traditional certification routes to the same rigorous standards.**
  - Provide funding only to high quality alternate route or traditional preparation programs that lead to full certification.
  - Do not deem individuals participating in alternate route programs as qualified until they demonstrate instructional competence through a performance assessment.
  - Require all alternate route and traditional preparation programs receiving federal funds to prepare teachers to implement evidence-based academic and social/behavioral practices with diverse learners.
  - Prohibit certification of special education teachers through fast-track preparation programs, regardless of the organization providing the preparation.



4. **Measure teacher performance and effectiveness with valid and reliable assessments of teacher knowledge and classroom performance that are linked to student learning.**
  - Include an evaluation system that incorporates how a student's achievement might be divided to account for the instruction received from a special educator and instruction received from the general educator. This is critical because usually students with LD spend most of their school day working on critical academic skills with support from both general education and special education teachers.
  
5. **Include professional development provisions that support collaboration and mentoring to new teachers.**
  - Ensure all teachers know how to provide classroom accommodations for all eligible students. Over 60% of students with LD spend more than 80% of their day in the general classroom.
  - Include provisions to train all teachers in the use of school-wide evidence-based strategies that increase achievement—including universal design for learning, multi-tier system of supports/response to intervention, and positive behavioral supports.
  - Promote and facilitate collaboration between general and special educators in working with diverse learners.

NCLD is part of the Teacher Quality Coalition, a collaboration of over 70 civil rights, disability, parent advocacy, and teacher union organizations.

**NCLD Resource:**

Teacher Effectiveness and Professional Development