

Position Paper
Oklahoma Teacher Supply and Demand
Oklahoma Association of Colleges for Teacher Preparation
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Background

For many years, policies and legislation have been enacted which affect both the market for and quality of teachers in our state. Each year, legislative leaders and leaders of state agencies must take action related to teacher certification requirements including those pertaining to alternative certification. More recently, the two major urban centers in our state have implemented the placement of teachers through the Teach for America program and several state teacher preparation programs have designed and implemented programs specifically designed to better prepare teachers for service in urban schools.

More recently, a clear focus on the quality of teachers has become the most prominent feature of the teacher preparation landscape. In light of the re-culturing of public education in our state including many initiatives related to how teachers are evaluated, how schools and districts are measured, and other related reform initiatives, it appears that the issue of teacher supply and demand is receiving less attention.

Clearly, serious shortages of teachers exist in some areas including special education, science, mathematics, foreign languages, and other areas. Currently, a task force that includes State Department of Education leaders, teachers and leaders of school districts, and university faculty members from special education are working to create recommendations to help inform future alternative pathways for teachers in the area of special education.

Several anecdotal reports would indicate that shortages in other areas including early childhood education also exist. While some data suggest that the number of teacher candidates being prepared in the state (both in early childhood education and other areas) has not changed drastically in recent years, a more thorough analysis is needed. Several factors related to the increasing demand for kindergarten and pre-kindergarten teachers; including schools and districts increasing the number of full-time kindergarten classes and full-time and part-time pre-kindergarten classes and projected large numbers of teachers nearing retirement age as part of the baby boom generation, need to be explored holistically. These factors make the need to more fully understand the market for teachers a serious and pressing matter in Oklahoma.

Proposed study

The last time any attempt was made to comprehensively study teacher supply and demand in Oklahoma was in April 2002 at which time a study commissioned by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and conducted by the Southern Regional Education Board was completed. A similar comprehensive study of teacher supply and demand by grade level and subject area is needed now. Such a study should include the following components:

- Trends related to education graduates in state university teacher preparation programs;
- Trends related to alternatively certified teachers;
- Trends related to anticipated teacher retirements by grade level and subject area;
- Trends related to school and district hiring patterns;
- Trends related to teacher retention in Oklahoma schools; and
- Other factors impacting the teacher market in Oklahoma including Teach for America and programs designed specifically for the preparation of teachers in urban schools.

Reports suggest an even more drastic increase in the number of English language learners in Oklahoma in the next several years (U. S. Department of Education, NCEES 2013-008). The proposed study should also seek to address trends related to this population of students and related supply and demand features of the teacher work force.

For such a study to be completed, it is recommended that the following state agencies and other organizations be involved in such a study:

- **American Federation of Teachers;**
- **Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School Administrators;**
- Oklahoma Association of Colleges for Teacher Education;
- Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation;
- Oklahoma Education Association;
- Oklahoma Employment Securities Commission;
- Oklahoma State Department of Education;
- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education;
- Oklahoma State School Boards Association;
- Oklahoma Teacher Retirement System;
- Professional Oklahoma Educators.

Additionally, it is recommended that Oklahoma Secretary of Education, Dr. Phyllis Hudecki, or a designee be involved in the study.

For many years, OACTE has embraced the idea of having in place a reliable system for evaluating the effectiveness of graduates from the respective universities included in OACTE. In the past two years ongoing dialogue has taken place between OACTE leaders and leaders of the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation, and Secretary of Education Hudecki. Once Oklahoma has the statewide longitudinal student data system in place, solid evidence will be available for determining the effectiveness of all teachers in the state including those graduating from each state university, those who are alternatively certified, and those who are prepared in specialized programs. However, without a clear understanding of the specific features of the teacher job market including aspects of supply and demand, a complete understanding of the environment that is necessary for state leaders to make sound policy decisions will not be possible. Another positive outcome from such a study and use of the data system will allow university leaders to be better able to advise and counsel prospective students, and graduates in terms of possible employment opportunities.