A Primer On the Current Educational Reform Landscape

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Agenda

MONEY MATTERS
  • Within-district fiscal equity

TEACHERS MATTER
  • Performance evaluation and peer review
  • Diversity of the teacher workforce
Within-district fiscal equity

- Districts allocate teacher positions to schools, not dollars, but teachers are paid primarily based on experience.

- Highly experienced teachers are under-represented in high-poverty schools.

- Hard looks at actual expenditures in high-poverty schools reveals inequity.
Within-district fiscal equity

• A loophole in federal law condones this inequity

• Many membership groups (NEA) and reform-oriented organizations (TFA) support closing the so-called *comparability loophole* in Title I of ESEA (NCLB)

• Community demand for information about ACTUAL expenditures at the school-level sends the right signal to policymakers
Performance evaluation and peer review

- Traditional performance evaluation systems rate virtually all teachers the same.

- Current reform dynamics are dominated by the issue of folding student achievement information into the mix, far less attention is paid to the question of who conducts evaluations.

- Historically, the burden fell to principals, and much current policy hasn’t move past this.
Performance evaluation and peer review

- But maybe the teaching profession would be strengthened if teachers took the lead in performance evaluation of their peers.
- The 2011 NEA Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching report embraced this idea.
- Communities need to engage teachers and school boards on the issue of peer review, which is a bit counterintuitive.
Diversity of the teacher workforce

• We need a diverse teacher workforce

• Many sets of policies (e.g., compensation, licensure) shape the workforce, but they generally can’t promote diversity directly

• But how policies are seen from the perspectives of groups representing dimensions of diversity has to matter

• Teach For America offers lessons here
Diversity of the teacher workforce

• 2012 Teach For America corps comprised 35% people of color (10% Latino) compared to roughly 17% (7%) for teachers at large

• Research shows that Latina/o corps members are more likely to stay beyond the initial commitment

• And they’re driven by a social-justice goal: to improve educational opportunity in communities like the ones they come from
Diversity of the teacher workforce

- This means that policy should allow for selective alternate certification routes into teaching, an efficient way for diverse candidates to pursue their social justice goals.
- The real trick is for policymakers to bring attention to selectivity and student outcomes into the teacher preparation picture.
One day, all children will attain an excellent education.

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