

Quality Teachers Commission
Recommendations on a Teacher and Principal Identifier in Colorado
June 2008

With the passage of SB 07-140, the Quality Teachers Commission was appointed for two years to provide recommendations to the legislature on teacher and principal identifier systems and to examine the teacher gap in Colorado. This "end of the first year" report outlines the commission's recommendations for a teacher and a principal identifier system. The commission, which holds broad-based representation, voted unanimously in favor of these recommendations.

Task Summary: Provide a recommendation to the state legislature on whether to pilot a teacher identifier in Colorado. Create a policy for establishing an identifier protocol.

Recommendations on Pilot Teacher Identifier

In its first year, the Quality Teachers Commission (QTC) is responsible for "developing a set of recommendations for the general assembly to consider concerning whether to proceed with implementing a pilot identifier protocol, and if so how should it be structured. Prior to proceeding with the implementation of a pilot identifier protocol, the Commission shall obtain approval from the General Assembly through additional legislation authorizing the implementation of the protocol." (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(d))

The QTC recommends that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) move forward in establishing a pilot program for a teacher identifier system, once state legislation has been enacted. Furthermore, the commission recommends adding the principal identifier into the pilot at the same time. The act refers to the implementation of a principal identifier in several places (C.R.S. § 22-68-102(1)(f), C.R.S. § 22-68-104(d)), but does not specify details or timelines. QTC has included its recommendations for the principal identifier in conjunction with the teacher identifier system as noted throughout this document.

It is the firm belief of the QTC that the primary purpose of a unique teacher and principal identifier system is to enable Colorado to examine issues related to teaching and school leadership that will improve teacher quality. This includes strengthening teacher and principal preparation, providing effective training and support for educators throughout their careers, and closing the teacher gap statewide. The premise is that increased school and teacher effectiveness will increase student learning and achievement. An identifier is **not** a mechanism to punish or blame individuals.

Finally, the QTC recommends that an extension to the commission's timeline be given. Under SB 07-140, the QTC was expected to be appointed by July 2007 and begin meeting by August 2007. After a late appointment, the commission did not begin meeting until January 2008. The commission members worked diligently and met twice per month to prepare this report. The late start, however, meant that legislation to enact the pilot identifier was not introduced in the 2008 legislative session. Ideally the QTC would be extended until June 2010 to monitor and report on the pilot identifier.

Recommendations for Designing Identifier Protocol

According to SB 07-140, the QTC shall in its first year: Create “a well-designed policy for establishing an identifier protocol” (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)). In designing the identifier protocol, the commission was required to consider several key issues. The following sections are organized around those specific statutory requirements.

Consideration: *Clear parameters for where the identifier will be housed, how it will operate, what data will be collected, and how data will be accessed and disseminated (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)(l))*

Recommendations:

Where will the identifier be housed?

- The identifier should be housed at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

How will it operate?

- Building on its experience creating unique student identifiers through the Record Integration Tracking System (RITS), CDE has established that it has the knowledge and capacity to build and manage this type of data system. A similar approach should be taken in developing, rolling out, and managing a teacher and principal identifier system.
- If a statewide teacher and principal identifier system is established through future legislation, the following should be considered:
 - To protect individual concerns about use of Social Security Numbers (SSN), a unique and consistent identifier should be created by CDE that is not easily linked back to the SSN. This means that CDE should avoid the use of full or partial SSN in the unique identifier.
 - A crosswalk of the SSN and the identifier should be maintained in a secure location by CDE. This will enable CDE to match teacher and principal records with other data sets that are based on the SSN, such as data from Department of Labor.

What data will be collected to create and verify the identifier?

- To ensure accuracy of identification of the correct teacher, without creating a burdensome data collection, CDE should consider up to five variables. This may include teacher first name, middle name, last name, date of birth, gender, and/or SSN.
- This would be the only collection at CDE that would use teacher and principal social security numbers, unless otherwise required by legislation or approved by the State Board of Education.
- Similar to the State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) conversion to an Encrypted Student Identifier (ESID), an encryption process should be used that conceals and protects the SSN.
- To see a list of the variables to be linked to the teacher and principal identifiers, go to pages 3-5.

How will the data be accessed and disseminated?

The procedure for accessing data should be reviewed according to standards established by data review mechanisms currently in place at CDE or established as a result of future legislation. Data access should be monitored using a well-designed system that provides differentiated tiers of access based on use of the data and privacy concerns. For example:

- Tier one: Anyone can access this data (such as the licensing status check on the CDE website)
 - Tier two: Password protected with a process for reviewing and ensuring responsible data handling capabilities and appropriate use of data. Teacher education programs, for example, would be able to track their candidates. Districts would continue to have access to the licensing database for their employees.
 - Tier three: Time-limited access (limit to duration of access) with high level approval. This is similar to the current process used by CDE's Institutional Review Board to approve external data and research requests.
- Data that is publicly disseminated by CDE should not identify individual teachers or principals, unless otherwise required by legislation or approved by the State Board of Education.
 - The protocol must ensure that the data are clean and usable by a variety of stakeholders (to the extent specified by the tiered access system), including researchers, policymakers, educators, school administrators, institutes of higher education, and parents.

Consideration: *How to integrate the identifier into existing and emerging data systems, in particular the longitudinal growth model being developed as a result of HB07-1048, as seamlessly as possible while considering capacity, personnel, fiscal, and resource conditions (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)(II))*

Recommendations:

- The identifier can be integrated into systems when appropriate and at such time as resources allow. When this occurs, the protections identified on p. 6 must be taken into account.
- With the teacher identifier, the student longitudinal growth model will be able to include analysis at the classroom level. The intent of any resulting analysis should be to improve education for students and not to punish teachers and/or principals.
- Teacher and principal data systems and other related data systems should be linked to the unique teacher and principal identifier variable, including, but not limited to, current state level data collections:
 - Human resource collections (including general education and special education)
 - Licensing information
 - No Child Left Behind highly qualified teacher collection
 - Results from the Teaching and Learning survey (recently legislated through HB08-1384)
 - Student October count
 - Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) results, including the use of the longitudinal student growth model

- Student Unit Record Data System (SURDS) for teacher preparation programs
- When matching student level data to teacher or principal data, such as through the longitudinal student growth model, particular care should be taken at the secondary level. Generally, in elementary school, there is a clear teacher-student match; however the match at the secondary level is less clear because a student normally has several teachers each year.
- To get a better a sense of supports for teachers and principals, it would also be helpful to collect more comprehensive information about participation in professional development and induction programs.
- The following variables (many of which are already available in existing data systems) will be important to conduct analyses on teacher quality issues. Some variables can be linked directly to teachers and/or principals. Other variables may be better used to provide context at the school level. For example, dropout rates cannot be attributed to any one teacher or principal. But, the dropout rate for a school can help to paint an important picture.

Variable	For Teachers	For Principals	For School Context	Currently Available
Demographic information, including race/ethnicity	✓	✓		HR Collections
Professional background and employment history (e.g., paraprofessional that becomes a teacher, international teaching experience)	✓	✓		Not available at state level in a comprehensive collection
Educational level (including year of degree(s), type of degree(s), educational institution and state)	✓	✓		- HR Collections - SURDS
Teacher/Principal preparation program attended (e.g., in state, out of state)	✓	✓		- HR Collections - Licensing Database
Test scores on Praxis or Place, including subtest scores	✓	✓		Not available at state level
License type and endorsement, and renewal status	✓	✓		Licensing Database
Additional courses after completing BA and MA	✓	✓		Not available at state level in a comprehensive collection
Teacher/principal experience (including dates of entry into the profession and date of entry into the state's teaching corps)	✓	✓		HR Collections
Principal's experience as a teacher		✓		HR Collections
School assignments over time (to determine which schools and districts have high turnover, and where teachers and principals move when they leave an assignment)	✓	✓		HR Collections

Variable	For Teachers	For Principals	For School Context	Currently Available
Subject assignments and student course enrollment patterns	✓			- HR Collections - Student Course Taking Collection (future collection)
Administrative duties and responsibilities		✓		Not available at state level
Salary	✓	✓		HR Collections
Participation in professional development, including mentoring and induction	✓	✓		Not available at state level
Working conditions	✓	✓		Teaching and Learning survey
Administrator support and leadership	✓	✓		Teaching and Learning survey
Student/school profile (e.g., free and reduced price lunch, ethnicity, gender, mobility, special education, 504, ELL/ELA – migrant, Title I)	✓		✓	- Student October Count - End of Year
School Description (e.g., rural/urban, size)	✓	✓	✓	- CDE - NCES
Student achievement scores on state standardized tests (e.g., CSAP, College Readiness) with safeguards as stated on p. 6.	✓	✓		CSAP
Disciplinary Actions (e.g., student suspensions and expulsions)		✓	✓	Safety and Discipline Collection
Dropout and graduation/promotion			✓	End of Year
GED participation and passage			✓	End of Year, CDE (Info on Recipients of GED only)
Link student records between the P-12 and postsecondary system (how many continue to college)			✓	- Student October Count - SURDS

- To help identify questions and challenges (including fiscal implications) of implementing an identifier statewide, an initial pilot should be established.

Consideration: *The capacity of the department to implement an identifier protocol, including the staffing, external technical expertise, technology, and infrastructure necessary for successful implementation (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)(III))*

Recommendations:

- With additional resources -- namely funds for technology upgrades and FTE -- CDE has the necessary knowledge and capacity to house a teacher and principal identifier system.
- Based on its work with the RITS system, CDE projects that it would need approximately \$636,000 to update the data warehouse and make modifications to the RITS system to create the teacher and principal identifier system. While there would also be additional hardware costs, these are difficult to predict without knowing when the initiative may be implemented. The above estimate includes working with outside consultants.
- Once the system is functional, it would require approximately two FTE to maintain the data system, provide ongoing training, and provide case management. This would entail approximately \$100,000 per year, plus benefits.
- The above estimates are based on the following assumptions:
 - School districts and CDE (licensing office) should be the entities requesting the assignment of an identifier. Other entities (such as the Department of Higher Education) would then work with one of those two entities to request identifier assignments.
 - CDE would use current technology systems, such as RITS. Projected costs are based on the costs involved in creating the student identifier system infrastructure in 2002.
 - There will be a need for system updates (such as within the data warehouse), creation of the identifier system, rollout and training, and case management.
 - CDE's budget priorities are set a year in advance. For example, priorities for 2009-2010 will be finalized by July 2008. Funds are not currently available for this initiative at CDE and would need to come through grants, donations, or funding from the state legislature.
 - Once started, the initiative should operate from that point in time and forward, rather than trying to match up old records retroactively. This could be done, but would require additional resources.
 - The implementation of the identifier should occur in one year, and not use a multi-year phase-in process.

Consideration: *The identification of protections for individual teachers and principals in relation to how the identifier data will be used (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)(IV))*

Recommendations:

The teacher/principal identifier is **not** intended to sanction teachers or principals through decisions about salary, promotion, or evaluation. The commission feels strongly about ensuring that these protections are enacted. Therefore:

- Data linked with a unique educator identifier should be used to support required reports and research and support systems aimed at improving teacher and/or principal quality.

- Because school districts retain control of hiring, dismissal, salary decisions, and evaluation of individual educators, the state must not use data linked with an educator ID to penalize an individual teacher, principal, or group of educators.
- The state must not use the data linked with a teacher and principal identifier to penalize a district.
- The state must not use the data linked with a teacher and principal identifier to penalize a teacher or principal preparation program.
- When examining complex issues, such as teacher quality, principal quality, and school improvement, multiple data points should be used and the context should be provided. Quick assumptions should be avoided.
- To avoid identification of individual teachers, public reporting of data should be restricted when the reporting size is small. CDE should consider existing caps as a guide to protect individuals.
- Individuals' personal contact information should not be shared externally.
- Existing CDE committees, such as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Education Data Advisory Committee (EDAC), should recommend to the State Board of Education who can access various levels of specified data in the tiered system.

Consideration: *How to create a pilot identifier protocol during the commission's second year so the commission can monitor and study its operation before full implementation if the commission recommends proceeding with full implementation of an identifier protocol at the end of its second year. (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)(V))*

- Because section (5)(c) requires the QTC to monitor and study the pilot identifier protocol and make recommendations to prepare for statewide implementation, it is important that the QTC continue to operate through at least December 2009 -- ideally, through June 2010.
- CDE is the entity that should conduct the pilot. Contractors should be hired, as needed.
- Because CDE has established that it can create and maintain an identifier system, this should not be the focus of the pilot, as it would not be a good use of resources.
- The intent of the pilot should be to demonstrate how a teacher and principal identifier system can be a support tool in strengthening teaching and learning. Furthermore, the pilot should examine the policies recommended in this report. The QTC needs a way to ensure that its policies are understandable, feasible, and adequately protect individuals.
- Next steps:
 - Summer 2008: Draft legislation for a pilot identifier
 - The QTC (or a subcommittee of the QTC) will begin meeting with potential bill sponsors.
 - Fall 2008: Identify funding source(s) and prepare for a possible pilot
 - CDE and/or members of the QTC should explore potential funding sources (including state, federal, foundations) to cover the anticipated costs of establishing the data collection; hold joint meetings among districts participating in the pilot; and compile sample reports.
 - Winter 2008-09: District selection and recruitment
 - To the extent possible, selection criteria should be based upon available funding and represent the state. The following elements should be taken into consideration: geographic representation, district size, district setting (rural/urban/suburban), student population characteristics (such as poverty levels, race/ethnicity, academic achievement), teacher attrition, and teacher equity gaps.

- The commission acknowledges that districts must be willing to participate in the pilot and that this may influence the selection process.
- Fall 2009 (or earlier, if possible): Begin pilot implementation
- Ongoing during the pilot:
 - Progress reports should be submitted by CDE and participating districts to the QTC on a regular basis. This should include how the process is working and whether adjustments need to be made to the QTC's policy recommendations.
 - The QTC will pay particular attention to the positive uses of data to improve teacher quality, ensuring that individuals are protected and any potential misuses of data are avoided.
 - In addition to administering the pilot, CDE should be closely involved in the monitoring process to assess technical details.

Consideration: *Factors or problems that may arise as a result of implementing teacher and principal identifier protocols, including but not limited to state interference in the local bargaining process, public concern regarding the transfer of quality teachers away from high-performing schools, and factors that impact the productivity and morale of quality teachers in low-performing schools. (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(b)(VI))*

In considering the implementation of a teacher and principal identifier system, the QTC weighed the potential drawbacks. In addition to those listed in the legislation, the commission also considered:

- Accreditation effects
 - Salary implications
 - Effort and reporting burden on school districts
 - Time and capacity strains for CDE
 - Communication and training
 - Need for future variables to be collected
 - Data infrastructure
 - Alignment with other statutes
 - Cost to the state and districts
 - Potential drain of resources from students and schools
 - Consideration of the users and providers of this data
 - Moving too fast or too slow
 - Confusion between all of the “numbers” assigned to teachers (such as license number)
- Although CDE and users should be aware of these potential issues and work to avoid them, the commission did not consider these issues as barriers to implementation.

Consideration: *Identifying positive uses for the data gleaned from an educator identifier system to improve teaching and learning, including but not limited to improvement of teacher preparation programs, teacher induction, professional development, working conditions, and mentor programs. (C.R.S. § 22-68-104(4)(c))*

Positive Uses for Data

An identifier protocol would create opportunities for the state to gain unprecedented information about its state education workforce. It would enable policymakers and other leaders to have a more accurate picture of the education landscape and make more informed decisions on initiatives to raise student achievement; identify and replicate programs that improve educator quality; provide a better understanding of the teacher gap; and other factors that do or do not support teachers in classrooms. Specific opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Retaining and recruiting quality teachers and principals with experience in all regions of the state and in all content areas to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students
- Identifying what makes “great” teachers and principals and determining how to replicate those characteristics or conditions
- Identifying and building effectiveness in teacher/principal preparation, induction, and leadership programs
- Improving professional development efforts
- Allowing individuals and programs to inform their programs and develop their own plans for improvement
- Examining the relationship between teacher and principal characteristics and student outcomes, including, but not limited to, longitudinal student growth
- Peer assistance and review
- Identifying whether the state is losing teachers and principals, including their levels of experience and education, to other professions, what professions they come from, and to what professions they are going
- Identifying whether districts and schools are hiring or losing teachers and principals, including their levels of experience and education, to neighboring districts
- Identifying where experienced teachers and principals come from and why
- Finding out how a particular district is doing compared to districts with similar educator preparation and training programs
- Finding out where teachers and principals are prepared or if certain approaches are more effective
- Taking a deeper look at the teacher equity gap within schools within districts and between districts
- Determine whether there is a principal equity gap within districts and between districts
- Comparing the retention of teachers and principals who participated in traditional programs to the retention of teachers and principals who participated in alternative programs
- Identifying shortage areas in teacher preparation
- Examining the impact of teacher and principal induction and mentoring programs and identifying the characteristics of the support that influence retention and teacher and principal effectiveness

- Researching the effects of working conditions, hiring practices, induction, mentoring, turnover, experience, funding and resources available to schools, recruitment, teacher and principal preparation for high-need schools, educator supports during the first three years, administrator support, seniority, and diversity of teachers.
- Analyzing the composition of staff background “gap” and related distribution among schools by socio-economic and academic performance of their students
- Looking at teacher and principals characteristics and supports over time

Next Steps of the Quality Teachers Commission

The QTC has begun its review of the teacher gap in Colorado and will continue to work on this over the next year. The commission speculates that there is also a "principal gap," but there is little research that examines this issue. If the state legislature approves legislation on the teacher and principal identifier system, the commission will track the progress of the pilot and make recommendations to the legislature regarding full-scale implementation.

Commission Membership

- Chairman: Scott Groginsky, President of the Gilpin County RE-1 School Board
- Vice Chairman: Nate Howard, Principal of Smiley Middle School in Denver
- Members:
 - Nella Anderson, Director of Teacher Education at Western State College in Gunnison
 - Julie Carnahan, Chief Academic Officer for the Colorado Department of Higher Education
 - Maria del Carmen Salazar, Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at University of Denver
 - Matt Gianneschi, Senior Policy Analyst for Governor Bill Ritter
 - Bill Hodges, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources with Douglas County Schools
 - Evie Hudak, Member of the Colorado State Board of Education from Congressional District 2
 - Lisa Kramer, Parent in Littleton
 - Karen Mock, Deputy Commissioner of Colorado Department of Education
 - Jacqueline Paone, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Teaching
 - Deidre Roque, Teacher in Pueblo
 - Kim Ursetta, President of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association
- CDE Staff:
 - Jami Goetz, Director of the Office of Licensing and Professional Services
 - Lisa Medler, Coordinator of Title IIA and Highly Qualified Programs in the Consolidated Federal Programs Office