

## DISTRIBUTING TEACHER QUALITY EQUITABLY: THE CASE OF NEW YORK CITY

### POLICY CONTEXT

Debate about how to improve the effectiveness of our nation's urban public schools has intensified over the past decade, and increasingly that debate centers on the quality of our nation's teaching force. Public perception of the urban teacher crisis focuses on three areas: the current and projected shortage of teachers; the drain, to the suburbs, of urban teachers, especially the most qualified; and the diminished quality of the remaining urban teaching force.

But as school districts and states struggle to address these areas, too little attention is paid to the distribution of teacher resources within cities. Evidence is accumulating about inequities in the distribution of teacher resources, particularly in urban settings, and how those inequities affect student academic outcomes (Haycock 2000, Betts, Reuben, and Danenberg 2000, Lankford 2000, BOE 2000).

Even if policies are implemented to increase the overall supply of teachers, reduce the drain of teachers from urban to suburban districts, and improve the quality of both new and experienced urban teachers, such policies may well not address the mal-distribution of quality teachers across schools and students in New York City.

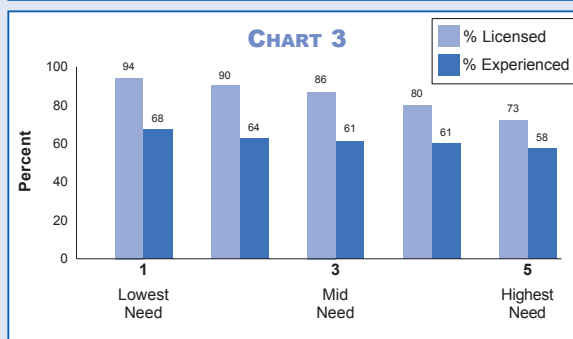
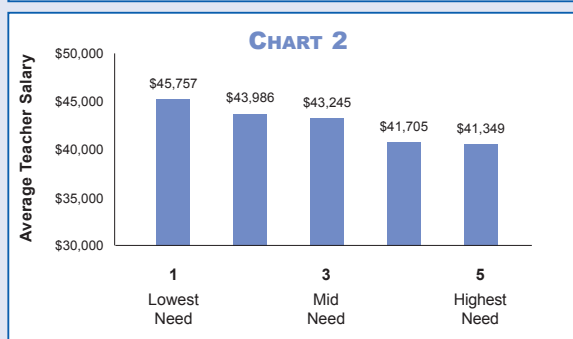
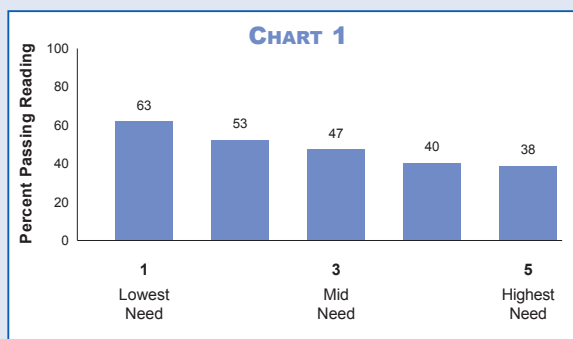
This policy brief discusses the distribution of teacher resources across NYC's community school districts and schools, and analyzes a range of proposed policies to assess whether they improve the distribution of teacher resources.

### COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS<sup>1</sup>

There is a stark discrepancy in student performance between the lowest and highest need<sup>2</sup> community school districts (CSDs) (Chart 1). Only 38% of students in the highest need CSDs are reading at or above grade level, compared to 63% of the students in the lowest need CSDs.

The highest need CSDs have the lowest average teacher salaries (Chart 2). The difference in average teacher salary between the lowest and highest need CSDs is approximately \$4,400, a quite large differential across a relatively compressed wage scale. To put this disparity in context, this gap is greater than the difference between the salary of a first-year teacher and one with seven years of experience.

The highest need CSD's have the lowest proportions of teachers who are licensed, as well as the lowest proportions of teachers who are experienced (Chart 3). In the highest need CSDs only 73% of the teachers are licensed and certified, whereas nearly all (94%) are licensed and certified in the lowest need CSDs. Only 58% of the teachers in the highest need CSDs are experienced, having taught for more than five years, compared to 68% in the lowest need CSDs.



<sup>1</sup> New York City's public elementary and middle schools are governed by 32 sub-districts known as community school districts. Each community school district has a superintendent and locally elected school board.

<sup>2</sup> We calculate CSD need based on the formula used by the BOE in its similar school analysis (2.36\*percent free lunch + percent English Language Learners).

**Note:**

This study draws on data from the New York City Board of Education's Annual School Reports and School Based Expenditure Reports for 1997-98 and supplemental data requests, unless otherwise noted.

## SCHOOLS

The same pattern of inequity exists in schools — higher need schools have lower average teacher salaries and lower proportions of licensed and experienced teachers than do lower need schools serving more advantaged students.

**Elementary and middle schools with greater proportions of students who are poor have lower average teacher salaries (Chart 4).** As the percent of students eligible for free lunch increases, the average teacher salary decreases.

The same inverse relationship exists with the percentage of teachers who are licensed; **the higher the need of the schools the lower the percentages of licensed teachers (Chart 5).**

Grouping schools by performance rather than need, as was done in another IESP study of New York City’s public elementary and middle schools (Stiefel, Schwartz, Iatarola and Fruchter 2000), further illuminates differences in teacher resources. The low performing schools have, on average, far higher proportions of students who are eligible for free lunch and are English language learners, as the CSD analysis also suggests.

**Low performing elementary and middle schools have lower average teacher salaries than their high performing counterparts (Chart 6).**

**Low performing elementary and middle schools have lower proportions of licensed teachers, 75% and 72% respectively, than do their high performing counterparts, 96% and 90% (Chart 7).**

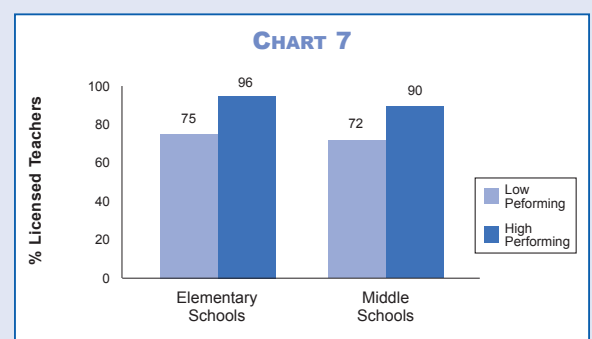
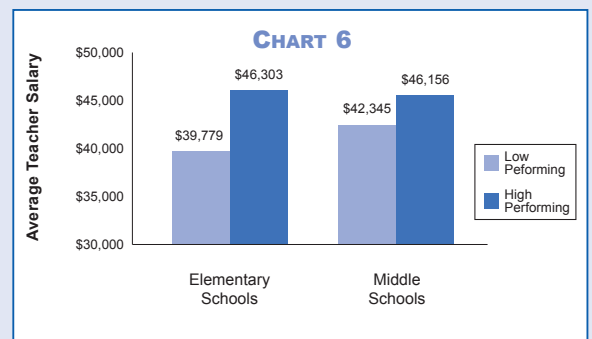
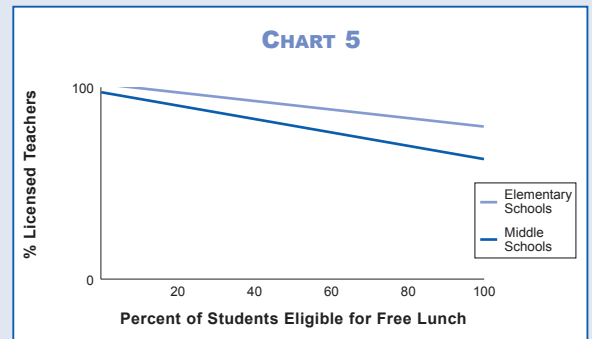
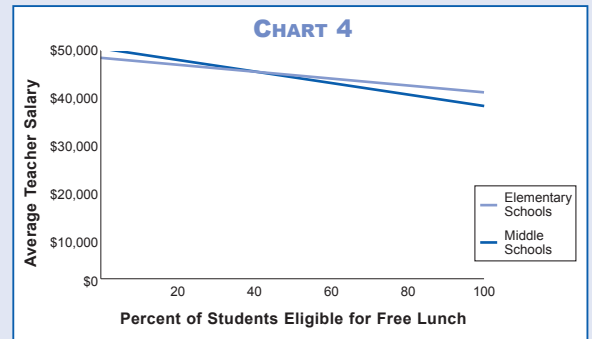
## SUMMARY

Whether we analyze the distribution of teacher resources at the community school district level or at the school level, the same findings emerge: schools and districts with higher need students receive lower quality teacher resources.

Given the growing evidence of the importance of high quality teachers to children’s academic development (BOE NYC 2000a, 2000b, Sanders and Horn 1998, Ingersoll 1999, Ferguson and Ladd 1996, Ferguson 1998), we cannot hope to improve the quality of schooling for disadvantaged students, raise their academic outcomes, and reduce the achievement gap between more advantaged and less advantaged students, unless education policies address the inequities in the distribution of teacher resources across the New York City school system.

## EQUITY IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT TEACHER POLICIES

Do current policies and proposals help reverse the inequitable distribution of teacher resources demonstrated above? Distributing teacher quality equitably is often an afterthought, because current policy debates focus primarily on the shortage of teachers, the drain of teachers from urban to suburban districts, and the diminishing quality of teachers. In the table that follows, we report recent policy changes and policy proposals put forward by the New York State Education Department (SED), the New York City Board of Education (BOE), New York State’s Governor, and the New York State Legislature. The check marks indicate whether the policy addresses the distribution of teacher resources, as well as the other key issues.



### Notes:

Charts 4 and 5 are drawn from regression analyses. The regression lines are graphed based on the estimated relationship between average teacher salary (or percent licensed) and the percentage of students eligible for free lunch, assuming all other need variables, such as English Language Learners, are zero.

Charts 6 and 7 are drawn from Stiefel, L., A. E. Schwartz, P. Iatarola and N. Fruchter. *Academic Performance, Characteristics and Expenditures in New York City Elementary and Middle Schools*, a Condition Report prepared for the Education Finance Research Consortium sponsored by the New York State Education Department, 2000.



## POLICIES AND PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE TEACHER RESOURCES

	Shortage	Drainage	Quality	Distribution
New York State Education Department	<b>LICENSURE</b> Limit on the issuing of temporary licenses, with no temporary licenses issued as of September 1, 2003. As of September 1, 1999 (extended to September 1, 2000 for New York City) schools under registration review (SURR) are not allowed to hire new teachers who have temporary licenses.			
	<b>CERTIFICATION</b> Revision of SED certification categories: initial certificates replace provisional certificates and teachers are required to earn a master's degree within three years for professional certification, and transitional certificates for career changers with no prior teaching experience or teacher education.			
	<b>ACCREDITATION</b> Tightening of SED's accreditation standards by refusing to re-accredit teacher education programs with high proportions of graduates who fail licensing and certification tests.			
	<b>RECIPROCITY</b> Increase in the number of states for which reciprocity is granted and easing of the requirements for teachers with licensing from other states so that these teachers can teach immediately.			
New York City Board of Education	<b>NEW YORK CITY TEACHING FELLOWS</b> Program to pay tuition at CUNY or a private college, towards master's degree in education and provide intense one-month training session. Fellows must agree to teach in one of the SURR schools.			
	<b>TEACHERS OF TOMORROW PROGRAM SERIES</b> Grants of up to \$3,400 for loan repayment and educational expenses such as tuition for advanced study or test preparation for certification. Teachers must serve in SURR or hard to staff schools. The following are eligible; newly hired certified teachers, incumbent certified teachers, and provisionally certified teachers. The later must take the coursework or preparation for permanent certification.			
	<b>TEACHING OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (TOPS)</b> Training and incentive scholarships to college graduates who have majored in mathematics or an area of science and who want to teach			
	<b>BONUS</b> \$10,000 bonus for teachers from private or parochial schools choosing to teach in the Chancellor's school district for low performing schools.			
	<b>TRANSFER BONUS</b> Fifteen percent pay increase for certified teachers who choose to transfer into one of 39 SURR schools and agree to work an extra 40 minutes per day.			
	<b>TRAINING</b> Program to provide \$50 million to train uncertified teachers now in the SURR schools.			
	<b>LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM 2000-20001</b> In shortage areas*, some amount of a certified teacher's educational loans will be forgiven.			
Governor's Office	<b>TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW</b> Funding for a wide range of initiatives to increase the supply of qualified teachers include:			
	• \$3,400 per year tuition grants or loan repayments to new teachers willing to teach in shortage areas in mathematics and sciences			
	• Stipends of up to \$2,000 per year for teachers with temporary licenses, to cover costs of test preparation or coursework towards permanent certification			
	• "Summer in the City," an internship program designed to provide college students with classroom experience in inner city districts			
	• Teacher training programs for new teachers willing to teach in shortage areas and attain permanent certification			
	• Program to provide master teachers up to \$10,000 for up to 3 years to work in shortage areas			
State Legislature	• Grants of up to \$2,100 per year for two years to provisionally certified teachers seeking permanent certification and will serve in a shortage area			
	<b>SENATE BILL S00029, SPONSORED BY SEN. SCHNEIDERMAN ET AL</b> Tax exemption of up to \$30,000 from federal adjusted gross income for full-time licensed teachers.			
	<b>ASSEMBLY BILL A-2890, SPONSORED BY ASSEMBLY-PERSON GREENE ET AL</b> Teacher preparation program for training or re-training teachers for assignment in areas with concentrations of low-income families.			

\* Shortage areas are instructional areas such as mathematics and science that, systemwide, have a shortage of qualified teachers.

### SHORTAGE:

A shortage occurs when the demand for labor exceeds the supply. Many factors may contribute to this imbalance, such as a low teacher salary scale that has not kept pace with the minimal rates of inflation over the past 15 years, the case in many urban districts. Other contributing factors, such as federal, state and local initiatives to reduce class size, escalate the demand for teachers, as did California's class size initiative. In addition, an aging teaching force, other financially viable opportunities for college graduates, and steady growth in school age children, all exacerbate the extent of the teacher shortage. The Board of Education estimates that, within the next four years, it will need to fill 46,000 teaching positions because of initiatives to reduce class size as well as the natural cycle of attrition and retirement.

### DRAINAGE:

The drain of the supply of teachers out of urban systems exacerbates the shortage of teachers. The pay differential between urban and suburban districts, especially in New York City, is significant, particularly at the higher end of the pay scale where an experienced teacher stands to make \$15,000 more per year than she would by remaining in an urban district. Moreover, the experience gained in urban classrooms makes New York City teachers with three to five years experience attractive to suburban systems. The environmental conditions and the stark levels of urban student need that challenge and often depress young teachers generate an ongoing exodus to less stressed, and less stressful, suburban schools.

### QUALITY:

Teacher quality depends on a teacher's inherent ability, undergraduate and graduate education, successful training and pre-service placement, development of interpersonal skills, and effective on-going professional development opportunities. Teacher quality is also dependent on the "organizational structure of schools and the occupational conditions and characteristics of teaching." (Ingersoll 1999) Moreover, teachers are often forced to teach outside their field of training, which can limit their instructional effectiveness. Finally, the effects of the overarching status of the teaching profession cannot be over-emphasized; Ingersoll contends that "[w]ell paid, well-respected occupations that offer good working conditions rarely have difficulties with recruitment or retention."

### Notes:

According to supply and demand data reported by the NYSED, New York City is facing a teacher shortage. Surrounding geographic regions, Long Island (Nassau-Suffolk) and Mid-Hudson, are not facing teacher shortages. The average salary for these Long Island and Mid-Hudson regions are \$63,727 and \$59,444, respectively, compared to an average of \$45,675 for New York City. Astoundingly, even though the NYSED guidelines suggest that anything over 10% "should be highlighted" the percentage of temporary licensed teachers is 16% in New York City. Then compare this number to those of Long Island and Mid-Hudson, 2% and 4%, respectively. College recruits are not filling the needs of New York City, but are filling and overfilling the needs in Long Island and Mid-Hudson.



## TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH ON TEACHER DISTRIBUTION

Evidence of the inequities in the distribution of teacher resources across New York City public schools has been accumulating over the past two decades. IESP's recent analyses confirm a number of previous findings.

### 1987

The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) reported that poorer CSDs received a disproportionately smaller share of the Board of Education's annual allocation, even when funding was supposed to specifically target poor students. *Promoting Poverty*, analyzed the results of the allocation of enrichment and remediation funding such as Title I and the state's compensatory education stream, and examined the allocation of funds from the New York City Board of Education to the 32 community school districts (CSD).

### 1994

NYU Wagner School researchers Robert Berne and Leanna Stiefel found that the CSD average teacher salary is inversely related to poverty; CSDs and schools with higher poverty have lower average teacher salaries.

### 1999

The NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy (IESP), found that the poorer the school's students, the lower the quality of the school's teachers. In its study of New York State's Schools Under Registration Review (SURR), *Schools in Context*, IESP found that teacher quality – measured in terms of licensure and assignment, teacher experience and education, teacher turnover, and teacher salary – is inversely related to student need.

### 2000

SUNY Albany researcher Hamilton Lankford found that teachers in high need schools have lower pass rates on state certification exams, graduate from less competitive colleges or universities, and are more likely to teach outside their field of study (Lankford 2000). The evidence was submitted in the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. v. New York State 86 N.Y.2d 307*.

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