



NSBA conducted a survey to gauge school board members' views on the challenges their districts face in meeting the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements of NCLB. In total, 369 school board members responded to the survey. Of the respondents, a large majority are from more densely populated areas, with 40% labeling their school district suburban, 33% urban and 27% rural.

Respondents said the greatest challenge for districts in meeting HQT requirements is for **special education** teachers, with 64% selecting it as one of the most problematic requirements. **Recruitment** (52%), fulfilling HQT requirements for **multiple-subject teachers** (50%), **retention** (41%), and getting **veteran teachers** to meet HQT requirements (35%) were also requirements that school board members consider most problematic.

Difficulty in recruiting and retaining special education teachers was mentioned frequently in an open-ended question about specific local examples of the challenges districts are facing in meeting HQT requirements. Several respondents indicated their district had enough difficulty hiring and retaining these teachers even before NCLB, and that the requirements regarding **special education teachers of multiple core subjects** is especially problematic. Dozens of respondents also indicated difficulty in recruiting and retaining "highly qualified" **math and science teachers**. A sizable number of respondents also noted the challenges for small and **rural schools** where educators must teach **multiple core subjects**.

A large majority (68%) of respondents believe the HQT **definition needs to be amended**. When asked for specific amendments board members recommend, 4 areas elicited significant comments and all involved providing additional flexibility: 1) for teachers of multiple core subjects (perhaps by creating broader subject areas); 2) for veteran teachers; 3) for special education teachers, particularly those who teach multiple core subjects; and, 4) for teachers in rural school districts, particularly those who teach multiple core subjects.

In thinking about changes to the HQT definition, a large majority (72%) said they **support adding a "value added" component** that would recognize a teacher's impact in raising student achievement to help determine their HQT status. When asked for specific reasons for supporting or opposing a value added component, the majority who support the idea said they do so because **student achievement is the bottom line and is what high quality teaching is all about**. Some suggested it could be used as a last resort for meeting HQT requirements or that teachers with a documented record of raising student achievement should be given more time, if needed, to fulfill HQT requirements. Others recommended the federal government provide technical assistance and funding to assist states in developing data collection systems that would

be needed to measure and document value added results. Still others indicated the need to include criteria beyond just test scores in such a system.

Among the minority who said they opposed adding a value added component to the HQT definition, most noted the **complexities of creating a reliable system** and the number of variables beyond teachers that can impact student achievement. The bottom line among supporters and opponents of the concept is that the details of how to measure the value added by a teacher would be key to its success.

As far as the federal government's efforts to help school districts meet the HQT mandates, the greatest assistance according to respondents would be an increase in federal **funding for professional development** (75%). In addition to more funds, 68% suggested added flexibility in the use of federal funds for professional development, and 65% would like greater flexibility / opportunity for teacher candidates to seek **alternative certification** routes. Additional federal funding for teacher **retention** (56%) and **recruitment** (54%) also received support from more than half the respondents. More than a few respondents went beyond the provided choices and indicated that increasing overall NCLB funding (or fully funding it specifically) is needed to help districts meet HQT requirements.