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## **Louisiana Outpacing Other States in Developing the Capacity to Assess University Education Program Effectiveness**

### **New teachers from some university programs found to be as effective as experienced teachers**

Louisiana continues to outpace all other states in developing the capacity to assess the comparative effectiveness of universities in preparing new teachers. LSU professor George Noell today detailed the state's steady progress toward that capacity for the Board of Regents. The Board funds the work of Noell's team on the Value-Added Teacher Preparation Model research project.

"The nation is closely following the new research being conducted in Louisiana by Dr. George Noell," said Kati Haycock, director of the Washington-based Education Trust. "No other state is as far along in creating a statewide system that examines the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs based upon the actual achievement of children."

Preliminary results from Noell's latest study indicate that 45-50% of Louisiana's teacher preparation programs are preparing new teachers whose contribution to their students' achievement is comparable to the effectiveness of experienced teachers in mathematics, English/language arts, and/or science. These results contradict widely-held beliefs in the education community that new teachers take four to five years to become as effective as experienced teachers.

"Dr. Noell's research is critically important to our continuing efforts to improve teacher effectiveness," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "When the research is complete we will be able to use our most effective programs as models for improving those that are lagging behind. The education community statewide is committed to seeing it through."

"This is an excellent example of how our state leaders and universities have been successful during the last five years in creating and implementing new policies that have been focused upon the creation of high quality new teachers," said Frances Henry, a member of the Board of Regents and co-chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission for Educational Excellence.

Dr. Noell's study used Department of Education student achievement data from in excess of 200,000 students in grades 4-9 who were enrolled in 66 school districts in Louisiana and

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examined the effectiveness of 16 universities that prepared new teachers who taught the students. Since only one year of comparison data was available, names of universities were not identified; however, universities will be identified next year once two years of data are available to verify the reliability of the results. An additional year of assessment data is also needed to provide more precise estimates of the university teacher programs' effects.

“When I first became Superintendent of Louisiana schools ten years ago, one of my top priorities was to create a first-class data system,” said State Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard. “We have received national recognition for our system, which was developed at the same time as School and District Accountability was being developed. It will now allow us to track how effective our teachers are in delivering instruction. It will provide us with an opportunity to identify, and to learn from our best teachers, to determine if teacher placement is having an impact on student achievement and to help us target teachers who need additional professional development.”

“I am extremely pleased that our system will allow us such an in-depth look at the quality of our teachers and the teaching programs in our state,” said Board of Elementary and Secondary Education President Linda Johnson. “My number one priority will be for us to use this data to help establish policies to ensure that children in the poorest school systems have the highest quality, effective teachers that they need and deserve.”

Dr. Noell's Value-Added Teacher Preparation Assessment Model predicts the academic achievement of students in grades 4-9 from the end of one year to the end of the next academic year, compares that achievement to the students' actual standardized test performance the next year, and estimates *teacher preparation effectiveness values* for universities, which reflect the impact of new teachers on the achievement of the children in their classes.

“The idea to examine growth of student learning to assess the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs came from the Blue Ribbon Commission in 2000-2001,” said Glenny Lee Buquet, a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and co-chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission. “It is very rewarding to be the first state in the nation to have a model that gives us the capacity to do this on a statewide basis.”

In addition to the success of the programs shown to be preparing new teachers comparable in teaching effectiveness to experienced teachers, the research has yielded other significant findings:

1. At all university teacher preparation programs there were varying results across different types of programs (undergraduate versus alternative certification) and across different content areas (e.g., mathematics versus social studies). If these findings are validated in the follow-up year, they demonstrate that universities can have both strengths and weaknesses among their own programs as well as in comparison to experienced teachers.
2. Louisiana's new teachers exhibited the greatest increases in teaching effectiveness during their first two years of teaching. Although growth was evident between teachers ranging out to 20 years experience, it was more gradual and uneven. A period of little if any increase in effectiveness was evident in mathematics and English Language Arts between third to eighth

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year teachers. This contradicts the expectations held by most scholars that significant increases in effectiveness continue to occur for the initial four or five years of teaching.

3. The differences between the weakest and strongest teacher preparation programs in specific subject areas have an important influence on the learning of students. It is imperative for universities with the weakest programs in specific subject areas to improve their effectiveness.

“We have in place a team of university researchers and Department of Education personnel who are working together to identify factors that may impact the differences between universities with high and low teacher preparation effectiveness values.” said Dr. Jeanne Burns, Associate Commissioner for Teacher Education Initiatives, Board of Regents. “It is not our intent to eliminate teacher preparation programs – our need for good teachers is too great. Instead, we want to learn from each other and help each other prepare highly effective new teachers at all universities.”

“Our College of Education deans at all our universities are committed to preparing highly effective new teachers,” said Dr. Gerald Carlson, College of Education Dean at University of Louisiana at Lafayette and President of the Louisiana Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. “We have all worked hard during the last five years to redesign all of our teacher preparation programs and will be supporting our university researchers in the future as they help us identify factors that truly impact the quality of our new teachers.”

A technical report containing the results of the study will be available on the Board of Regents web site on Wednesday, August 30, 2006 ([http://asa.regents.state.la.us/TE/value\\_added\\_model](http://asa.regents.state.la.us/TE/value_added_model)).