United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Committees

December 2002

HIGHER EDUCATION

Activities Underway to Improve Teacher Training, but Reporting on These Activities Could Be Enhanced

GAO-03-6

December 2002

HIGHER EDUCATION

Activities Underway to Improve Teacher Training, but Reporting on These Activities Could Be Enhanced

GAO
Accountability • Integrity • Reliability

Highlights

Highlights of GAO-03-6, a report to the Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, United States Senate, and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 1998, the Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA) to enhance the quality of teaching in the classroom by improving training programs for prospective teachers and the qualifications of current teachers. This report focuses on two components of the legislation: one that provides grants and another, called the "accountability provisions," that requires collecting and reporting information on the quality of all teacher training programs and qualifications of current teachers.

What GAO Recommends

In order to effectively manage the grant program, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Education

- further develop and maintain a system for regularly communicating program information with grantees and
- establish a systematic approach for evaluating all grant activities.

To improve the information collected under the accountability provisions, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Education

- define key terms from the legislation clearly and
- allow sufficient time for the verification of the required information.

GAO's report also includes a matter for consideration by the Congress.

In commenting on a draft of GAO's report, Education generally agreed with the findings.

http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-6

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia M. Ashby (202-512-8403).

What GAO Found

The Department of Education has approved or awarded 123 grants to states and partnerships totaling over $460 million. Education awarded grants to applicants according to the legislation, but failed to maintain an effective system for communicating with grantees. Grantees have used funds for activities they believe will improve teaching in their locality or state. While HEA allows many activities to be funded under broad program goals outlined in the legislation, most grantees have focused their efforts on reforming requirements for teachers, providing professional development to current teachers, and recruiting new teachers. The extent to which these activities will affect the quality of teaching in the classroom will be difficult to determine because Education does not have a systematic approach to evaluate all grant activities.

Early Exposure to Teaching is a Recruitment Strategy Used by Several Grantees.

Source: Department of Education archives.

The information collected as part of the accountability provisions did not allow Education to accurately report on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers in each state. The accountability provisions require all institutions that enroll students who receive federal student financial assistance and train teachers to provide information to their states on their teacher training programs and program graduates. In order to facilitate the collection of this information, HEA required Education to develop definitions for terms and uniform reporting methods. Education officials told GAO that they made significant efforts to define these terms so that the terms reflected the uniqueness of teacher training programs, state reporting procedures, and data availability. In doing so, Education defined some terms broadly. The officials also told GAO that this gave states and institutions discretion to interpret some terms as they wished, resulting in the collection and reporting of information that was not uniform and thereby making it difficult to assess accountability.

Contents

Letter		1
	Results in Brief	3
	Background	5
	Education Awarded Grants in Accordance with Legislative Requirements, but Failed to Maintain an Effective System for Communicating with Grantees	9
	Grantees Used Funds for a Range of Activities, but Their Effectiveness Will Be Difficult to Determine	15
	The Extent to Which Grant Activities Will Affect the Quality of Teaching in the Classroom Will Be Difficult to Determine	21
	Information Collected and Reported for the Accountability Provisions Does Not Accurately Portray the Quality of Teacher Training Programs And the Qualifications of Teachers	24
	Conclusions	28
	Recommendations	29
	Matter for Congressional Consideration	29
	Agency Comments	29
Appendix I	**Objectives, Scope, and Methodology**	31
Appendix II	**Overview of Teacher Quality Grants under the Higher Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act**	33
Appendix III	**Summary Information on Grant Activities**	36
Appendix IV	**Accountability Provision Description**	41
Appendix V	**Comments from the Department of Education**	44
Appendix VI	**GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments**	47
	Contacts	47
	Acknowledgments	47

Tables

Table 1: Grant Type, Funding Amounts, and Activities of Grantees We Visited 16
Table 2: Legislative Requirements for Annual Reports 23
Table 3: Selected Definitions for the Collection of Accountability Provision Information 25

Figures

Figure 1: Diagram of an Eligible Partnership 6
Figure 2: Allocation of Grant Funds Available by Legislation 7
Figure 3: Grant Applications Reviewed and Awarded the First Year of Grant Funding—1999 11
Figure 4: Range of Funding for Grants by Grant Type 12
Figure 5: States That Have Not Yet Received a State Grant 13
Figure 6: Early Exposure to Teaching is a Recruitment Strategy Used by Several Grantees 21
Figure 7: Criteria for Waiver Calculations Varies among Three Neighboring States 27

Abbreviations

HEA	Higher Education Act
SITE SUPPORT	School Immersion Teacher Education and School University Partnership to Prepare Outstanding and Responsive Teachers

G A O
Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

December 11, 2002

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
House of Representatives

The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics recently reported that most teacher training programs leave new teachers feeling unprepared for the classroom. Because recent research reports that teachers are the most important factor in increasing student achievement, the quality of teacher training is critical. In 1998, the Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA) to enhance the quality of teaching in the classroom by improving training programs for prospective teachers and the qualifications of current teachers. This legislation is scheduled for reauthorization in 2003.

This report focuses on two components of the legislation: one that provides grants and another, called the "accountability provisions," that requires collecting and reporting information on the quality of teacher training programs and qualifications of current teachers. The grants are given on a competitive basis to states or partnerships between higher education institutions and local school districts to fund activities that recruit and prepare new teachers, and develop and retain current teachers. Since 1998, Education has awarded or approved 123 grants to states[1] and partnerships totaling over $460 million. The accountability provisions require all institutions that enroll students who receive federal student financial assistance and train teachers to provide information to their states on their teacher training programs and program graduates. States are required to consolidate some of this information into a report,

[1]All 50 states, Washington D.C. and eight territories—the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau—are considered states for the purposes of HEA.

supplement it with additional statewide education data, and submit it to Education. Using this information, Education is required to report annually to the Congress on the nationwide quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers.

To prepare for the reauthorization of this legislation, the Congress wants to know whether the grants and reporting requirements are contributing to improving the quality of teaching in the classroom. This report addresses the following issues:

- how Education awarded grants and administered the grant program;
- what activities grantees funded and what results can be associated with these activities; and
- whether the information collected under the accountability provisions allows for an accurate report on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers.

In October 2002, we reported our preliminary results to the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, House Committee on Education and the Workforce.[2]

To learn about the implementation of this legislation, we surveyed 91 grantees, the total at the time of our survey, and conducted 33 site visits[3] in 11 states—California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. Grantees in these states were selected because they represented almost half of the total grant funding at the time of our site visits, were providing a range of grant activities, and were geographically dispersed. We also interviewed Education officials and experts on teaching and teacher training. In addition, we reviewed relevant literature, regulations, and department documents. We conducted our work between December 2001 and November 2002 in accordance with generally accepted

[2]See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Teacher Training Programs: Activities Underway to Improve Teacher Training, but Information Collected To Assess Accountability Has Limitations* GAO-03-197T (Washington, D.C.: October 9, 2002).

[3]In addition to the site visits, we conducted a brief interview with the director of another grant, the Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality, which consists of 30 institutions of higher education located in 10 different states.

government auditing standards. For details on our scope and methodology, see appendix I.

Results in Brief

The Department of Education awarded grants to applicants in accordance with legislative requirements, but the new office set up to administer the grant program failed to maintain an effective system for communicating with grantees. The legislation outlined certain program requirements, including that states may receive a state grant only once, grant selection must be competitive, 45 percent of total grant funding be available for state grants, and that Education shall broadly disseminate information on successful and unsuccessful practices. However, the implementation of the grant program was left to Education. The department established the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Office to determine the procedures by which the grants were to be awarded and administered. To ensure that the grants were awarded competitively, the office developed grant applications, advertised the grant opportunity to potential applicants, provided technical assistance to applicants, and convened panels to judge the applications. Once the grants were awarded, the office was charged with administering the grant program and, to do so, it developed some operating procedures for the program, such as the annual reporting mechanisms. However, we found that Education failed to maintain an effective system for communicating with grantees about reporting deadlines and successful and unsuccessful practices. Furthermore, 45 of 59 eligible states have already been approved for or awarded state grants, and because the authorizing legislation specifically requires that these grants can only be awarded once, only 14 states will be eligible to receive future state grants under the current authorizing legislation. Given this, and because the legislation requires that 45 percent of total grant funding be available for state grants, it is possible that some funding the Congress appropriates for teacher quality enhancement grants will remain unspent.

Grantees are using the flexibility the grant program allows to support activities they believe will improve teaching in their locality or state, but the extent to which these activities will affect the quality of teaching in the classroom will be difficult to determine. While the legislation allows many activities to be funded, most grantees have focused their efforts on reforming requirements for teachers, providing professional development to current teachers, and recruiting new teachers. However, within these general areas, grantees' efforts varied. For example, to address teacher shortages, the Los Angeles Unified School District targeted high school students and developed a program to attract young people to the field of teaching; whereas Southwest Texas State University, another grantee addressing teacher shortages, offered scholarships to mid-career

professionals. The extent to which these activities will affect the quality of teaching in the classroom will be difficult to determine because Education does not have a systematic approach to evaluate all grant activities.

The information collected as part of the accountability provisions did not allow Education to accurately report on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers in each state. The accountability provisions require all institutions that enroll students who receive federal student financial assistance and train teachers—not just those institutions receiving teacher quality enhancement grants—to provide information to their states on their teacher training programs and program graduates. In order to facilitate the collection of this information, the legislation required Education to develop definitions for key terms and uniform reporting methods, including the definitions for the consistent reporting of "pass rates"—the percentage of all graduates of a teacher training program who pass the state teacher certification examinations. Education officials told us that they made significant efforts to define these terms so that the terms reflected the uniqueness of teacher training programs, state reporting procedures, and data availability. In doing so, Education defined some terms broadly. Education officials told us that this gave states and institutions discretion to interpret some terms as they wished, resulting in the collection and reporting of information that was not uniform and thereby making it difficult to assess accountability. In addition, time spent verifying the information from states and institutions was limited, which contributed to the inclusion of inaccurate information in Education's report to the Congress.

In this report, we make recommendations to the Secretary of Education to further develop and maintain an effective system for communicating with grantees and to evaluate all grant activities. To improve the information collected as part of the accountability provisions, we also recommend that the Secretary provide clear definitions of terms associated with the collection of required information and allow sufficient time for verification of information collected. Additionally, if the Congress decides to fund these grants as part of the reauthorization of HEA, it may want to clarify whether all 59 states will be eligible for future state grant funding or whether eligibility would be limited to only those states that have not previously received a state grant.

In written comments on a draft of this report, the Department of Education generally agreed with the reported findings. Education did state, however, that our report does not acknowledge the change of administration in 2001 and that it should identify the changes implemented

by the current administration to address deficiencies. While our work covered questions and found problems with implementation under the current and prior administrations, a comparison of management under the two administrations is not within the scope of our work. Education also provided technical comments, which were incorporated when appropriate.

Background

Over $460 million has been awarded or approved in grants under the 1998 HEA amendments to enhance the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers. The legislation requires that states may receive a state grant only once and that the grants must be competitively awarded. Three types of grants were made available:

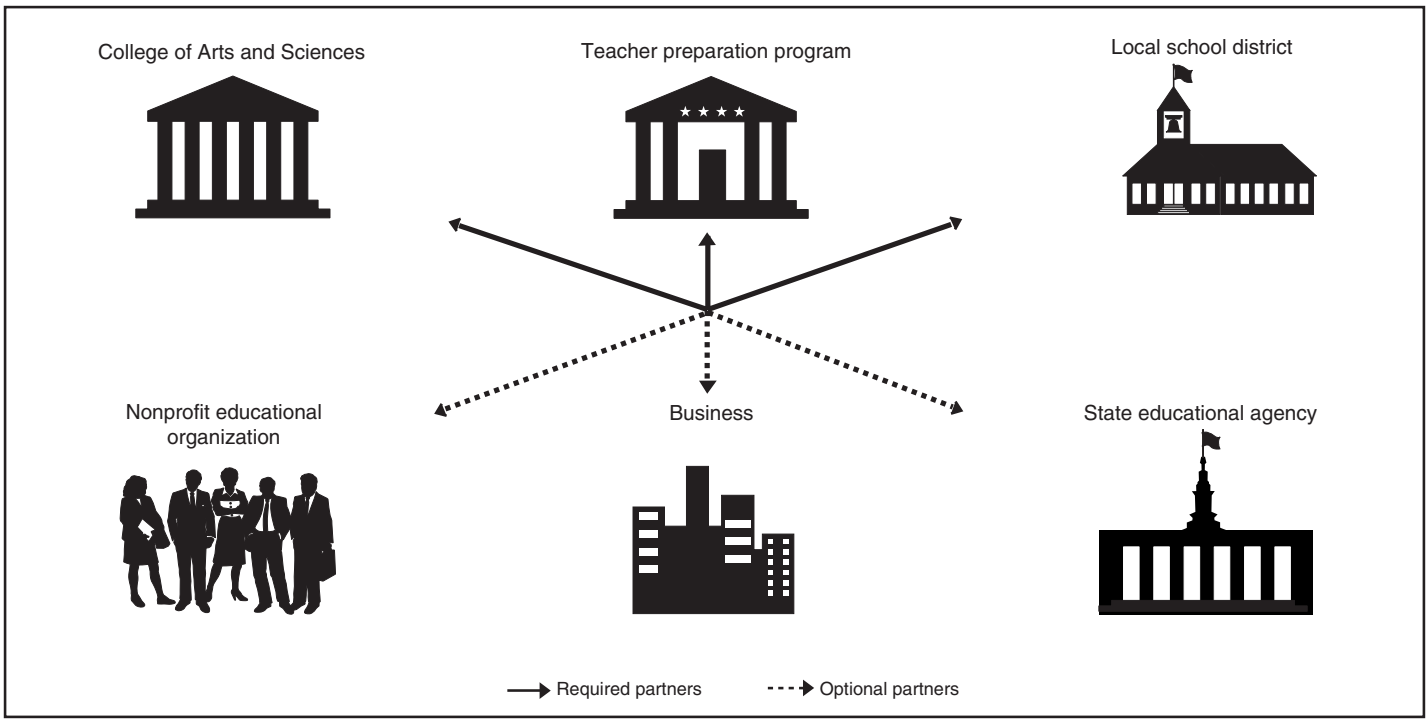
(1) State grants are available for states to implement activities to improve teacher quality in their states.

(2) Partnership grants are available to eligible partners to improve teacher quality through collaborative activities. Eligible partnerships must include at least three partners—teacher training programs, colleges of Arts and Sciences, and eligible local school districts.[4] Partnerships may also include other groups, such as state educational agencies, businesses and nonprofit educational organizations as partners (see fig. 1).

(3) Recruitment grants are available to states or partnerships to use their funding for activities to help recruit teachers.

[4]School district eligibility is limited to those with (1) a high percentage of students whose families fall below the poverty line and (2) a high percentage of secondary school teachers not teaching in the content area in which the teachers were trained to teach, or a high teacher turnover rate.

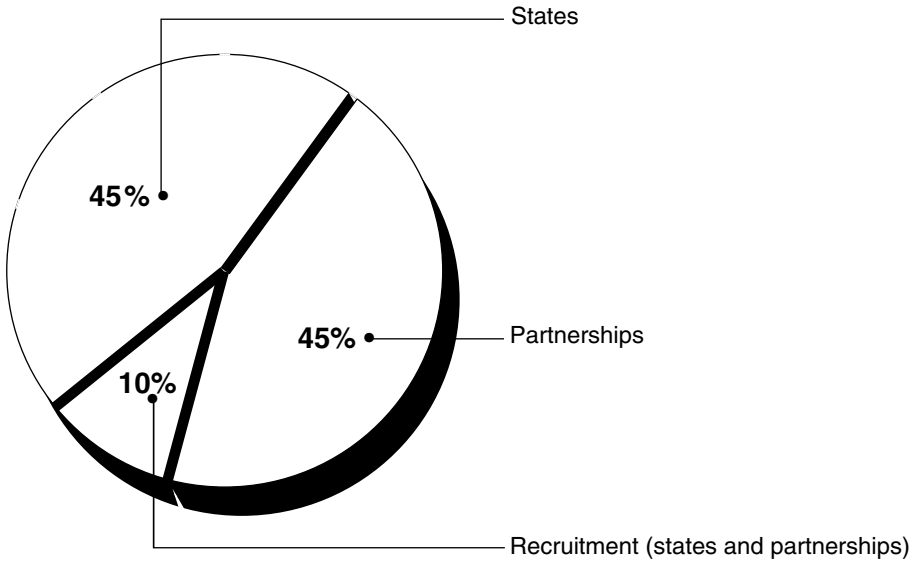
Figure 1: Diagram of an Eligible Partnership



Source: GAO's analysis of HEA.

Because the legislation sets out broad program goals for which grant funds can be used—such as reforming state teacher certification requirements and recruiting new teachers—it allows grantees to support activities under these program goals they believe will improve teaching in their locality or state. The grants are flexible enough to allow grantees to use the funding for a wide range of activities aimed at improving the quality of teaching in the classroom. For example, grantees are allowed to provide scholarships and stipends as a recruitment effort for teacher candidates as well as provide laptop computers to new teachers in order to integrate technology into the classroom. Figure 2 shows the funding allocation provided by the legislation for the three types of grants.

Figure 2: Allocation of Grant Funds Available by Legislation



Source: Higher Education Act.

The legislation requires monitoring and evaluation of activities supported by these grants. Each grantee is required to submit an annual report to Education on its progress toward meeting program goals specified in the legislation, which must include performance objectives and measures to determine if grant activities were successful. The legislation also required Education to evaluate all grant activities and to broadly disseminate information about successful and unsuccessful practices.

In addition to the grants, the 1998 HEA amendments include an annual reporting requirement on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers. This component of the legislation, called the "accountability provisions," requires an annual three-stage process to collect and report information in a uniform and comprehensible manner. The reporting requirements under the accountability provisions mandated, for the first time, that colleges and universities who train teachers be held accountable for how well they prepared teachers. The legislation requires that Education, in consultation with states and teacher training institutions, develop definitions for key terms—including definitions for the consistent reporting of pass rates—and uniform reporting methods related to the performance of teacher training programs. Education officials told us that they made significant efforts to define key terms so that the terms reflected the uniqueness of teacher training programs, state reporting procedures, and data availability.

In the first stage, nearly every institution that prepares teachers—not just those receiving teacher quality enhancement grants—is required to collect and report specific information to its state, including the pass rate of the institution's graduates on state teacher certification examinations. Then in the second stage, states are required to report to Education the pass rate information institutions reported in the first stage, supplemented with additional statewide information, including a description of state certification examinations and the extent to which teachers in the state are allowed to teach without being fully certified. The third and final stage is comprised of a report to the Congress from the Secretary of Education on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers. The first round of institutional reports were submitted to states in April 2001; subsequently, state reports were submitted to Education in October 2001. Using this information, the Secretary of Education reported to the Congress in June 2002.[5]

How one determines the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers has long been debated. The debate is currently centered on the best way to train teachers: the traditional approach, which typically includes extensive courses in subject matter and pedagogy,[6] or alternative training methods that either (1) accelerate the process of training teachers by reducing courses in pedagogy or (2) allow uncertified teachers to teach while receiving their training at night or on weekends. This debate is further complicated because the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications for current teachers varies by state. Every state sets its own requirements for teacher certification, such as which certification examination(s)[7] a teacher candidate must take, what score is considered passing on this examination, and how many hours teacher candidates must spend student teaching—practice teaching during their teacher preparation program—in order to become a fully certified teacher in that state. In this way, a teacher who is fully certified in one state may not meet the qualifications

[5]U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge: The Secretary's Annual Report on Teacher Quality*, June 2002.

[6]Pedagogy is defined as the study of teaching methods. Courses on pedagogy include training on how to best instruct students but may also include course work on classroom management skills—such as how to maintain order in the classroom.

[7]Most states require teachers to take multiple state certification examinations in order to become certified to teach in certain subject areas.

for certification in another state. For example, in Virginia, Minnesota and Mississippi, teacher candidates are required to take the same test to be certified to teach high school mathematics. But teacher candidates in Virginia must score 178 (50th percentile of all test takers) to pass the examination, whereas in Minnesota and Mississippi teacher candidates must score 169 (20th percentile of all test takers).

While the 1998 HEA amendments provided grants and reporting requirements to improve the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of teachers, it was not until the recent No Child Left Behind Act that the Congress defined a highly qualified teacher.[8] For the purposes of that act, the legislation defines highly qualified teachers as those who demonstrate competence in each subject they teach, hold bachelors degrees, and are fully certified to teach in their state. See appendix II for more information on HEA and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Education Awarded Grants in Accordance with Legislative Requirements, but Failed to Maintain an Effective System for Communicating with Grantees

Education awarded grants to applicants according to the legislation but failed to maintain an effective system for communicating with grantees. The legislation outlined certain program requirements, such as the requirement that states may receive a state grant only once, that 45 percent of total grant funding be available for state grants, and that Education shall broadly disseminate information on successful and unsuccessful practices. However, it left the implementation of the grant program to Education. The department established the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Office to determine the procedures by which the grants were to be awarded and administered. Once the grants were awarded, the office was charged with administering the grant program and, to do so, it developed some operating procedures for the program. However, Education failed to maintain an effective system for communicating with grantees about reporting deadlines and successful and unsuccessful practices.

New Office Awarded Grants According to the Legislation

Soon after the legislation was passed in 1998, Education created a new office, the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Office, that set the grant program in motion by developing applications, advertising the grant opportunities, and convening technical review sessions for potential

[8]Section 9101(23) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-110.

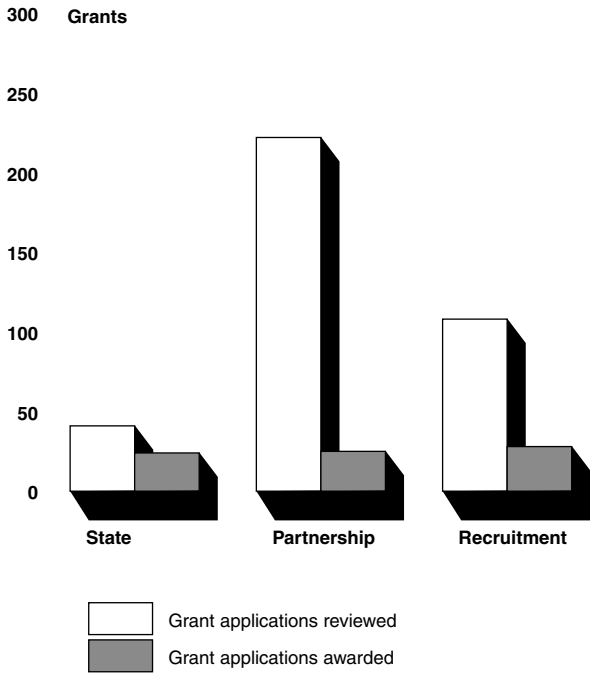
applicants. When the office was first established, it conducted focus groups with representatives from different areas—states, local school districts, institutions that train teachers, and community groups—to decide how to implement the legislation. Education officials used this input to develop applications for the state, partnership, and recruitment grants. Education officials advertised the grants and provided opportunities for potential applicants to receive technical assistance on the application procedures. These technical assistance sessions, which grantees told us were helpful, were offered across the country and allowed Education officials to answer questions and explain the criteria by which applications would be judged.

In accordance with the legislation, the office provided funding to state agencies and partnerships between higher education institutions and local school districts with three types of grants—state, partnership, and recruitment—through a competitive process. The legislation required Education to use peer reviewers to determine which applicants would receive grant funding. The office convened panels of peer reviewers to judge the applications. Each peer review panel consisted of representatives from local school districts, states, community groups, teacher training programs, and colleges of Arts and Sciences. In 1999, the first year grants were available, the peer review panel reviewed 371 applications: 41 for state grants, 222 for partnership grants, and 108 for recruitment grants. Of these applications, the office awarded 24 state grants, 25 partnership grants, and 28 recruitment grants (see fig. 3). Since then an additional 21 state, 8 partnership, and 17 recruitment grants have been awarded or approved using the same process.[9] Between 1999 and 2002, the office awarded or approved a total of 123 grants.[10]

[9]Education funded a total of 45 state grants, 33 partnership grants, and 45 recruitment grants.

[10]Alabama State University was awarded a recruitment grant in 1999 but refused funding after the first year, leaving a total of 122 grants.

Figure 3: Grant Applications Reviewed and Awarded the First Year of Grant Funding—1999



Source: U. S. Department of Education, Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Office.

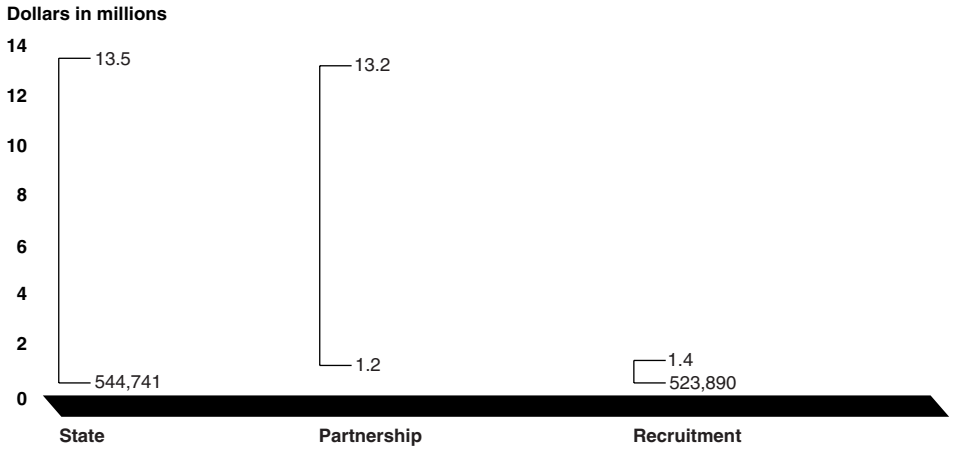
Grant duration and funding amount vary depending on the type of grant. According to the legislation, grants can be awarded to states and partnerships only once, though the funding is dispersed over several years.[11] State and recruitment grantees receive funding for three years, whereas partnership grantees receive funding for up to five years.

State grants ranged from just over $500,000 awarded to Idaho to $13.5 million awarded to Virginia. Partnership grant awards ranged from $1.2 million awarded to Graceland University in Iowa to over $13.2 million awarded to Arizona State University. Recruitment grants ranged from $523,890 awarded to Norfolk State University to $1.4 million awarded to the San Diego University Foundation (see fig. 4). When we divided total

[11]Some entities could become eligible for another partnership or recruitment grant by changing the makeup of the partnering group. For example, a college that is part of a current partnership grant could partner with other entities to form a new partnership and become eligible for another partnership or recruitment grant.

grant awards by the duration of the grants, the average annual award for state grants ($1.6 million) was larger than the average annual award for partnership grants ($1.2 million), and the average annual award for recruitment grants ($340,054) was the smallest.

Figure 4: Range of Funding for Grants by Grant Type



Source: U. S. Department of Education, Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Office.

Forty-five of 59 eligible states have already been approved for or awarded state grants, and because the legislation specifically requires that these grants can only be awarded once, only 14 states will be eligible to receive future state grants under the current authorizing legislation (see fig. 5). Given this, and because the legislation requires that 45 percent of total grant funding be available for state grants, it is possible that some funding the Congress appropriates for teacher quality enhancement grants will remain unspent.

Figure 5: States That Have Not Yet Received a State Grant

Source: GAO analysis of Education's documents.

Note: Unshaded 14 states have not received a Teacher Quality Enhancement State Grant. The District of Columbia and eight territories are considered states for the purposes of HEA.

Education Failed to Maintain an Effective System for Communicating with Grantees

Grantees reported that Education failed to maintain an effective system for communicating with them about reporting deadlines and successful and unsuccessful practices. Communication from Education to the grantees, specifically the frequency and accuracy of Education's efforts, was problematic. Education officials and grantees reported that in the beginning of the grant program, staff assigned to assist grantees communicated with them regularly, informing them of reporting deadlines and answering specific questions related to the grant program. However, the office experienced several disruptions in staff and management, and grantees told us that this level of communication with Education was not maintained. Since the grant program began 4 years ago, the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Office has had five different managers, and staff in the office has fallen from nine to two. Several officials at Education told us that the constant changes in the office led to a lack of program continuity, which affected the communication with grantees. Almost 75 percent of the grantees reported that the management and staff turnover at Education had been a problem.

In addition, grantees reported that some information received from Education was inaccurate, which led to additional work for the grantees when they were eventually informed of the right information. For example, grantees needed to be informed of what information to include in their required annual report and when to submit it to Education. Many grantees we visited told us that because Education failed to maintain an effective system of communicating this information, they were given incorrect information on what data to include in their annual reports, making it necessary for the grantee to collect and analyze data twice.

Further, the legislation requires Education to broadly disseminate information about successful and unsuccessful practices, but we found that Education did not adequately carry out this requirement. Grantees told us that having access to information about successful and unsuccessful practices would save them time and money in administering their grants. Although a national conference of grantees has been held each year since the grants began and some grantees have been able to participate in a few multigrantee telephone conference calls, grantees reported that these efforts did not adequately allow them to share ideas on successful and unsuccessful practices. For example, some grantees told us that requiring teacher candidates to attend classes on the weekends was an unsuccessful strategy, because few candidates could attend at that time. However, because Education did not broadly disseminate this information, several grantees told us that they wasted time and money

learning this on their own by offering Saturday courses only to have them sparsely attended.

Grantees Used Funds for a Range of Activities, but Their Effectiveness Will Be Difficult to Determine

Grantees are using the flexibility the grant program allows to support activities they believe will improve teaching in their locality or state, but no system is in place to determine if these activities will affect the quality of teaching in the classroom. While the legislation allows many activities to be funded under broad program goals outlined in HEA, most grantees have focused their efforts on reforming requirements for teachers, providing professional development to current teachers, and recruiting new teachers. The extent to which these activities will affect the quality of teaching in the classroom will be difficult to determine because Education does not have a systematic approach to evaluate all grant activities.

Grantees Used Funds for a Variety of Activities

The legislation outlines broad program goals for improving the quality of teaching with grant funds but provides grantees with the flexibility in deciding the most suitable approach for improving teaching. Our survey and site visits showed that most grantees focused on three types of activities: (1) reforming requirements for teachers, (2) providing professional development and support for current teachers, and (3) recruiting new teachers. Grantees could focus on only one activity, but all grantees responding to our survey focused on a combination of activities. In our survey, we found that 85 percent of the respondents were using their grant funds to reform the requirements for teachers, 85 percent of the respondents were using their grant funds for professional development and support for current teachers, and 72 percent of the respondents were using their grant funds for recruitment efforts. Table 1 shows the activities grantees we visited told us they provided.

Table 1: Grant Type, Funding Amounts, and Activities of Grantees We Visited

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Reforming requirements for teachers	Providing professional development	Recruiting new teachers
State grants				
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing	$10,588,598	X	X	
Connecticut State Department of Education	$1,764,447	X	X	X
Georgia Board of Regents	$9,949,480	X	X	
Illinois Board of Higher Education	$4,068,086	X		
Maryland State Department of Education	$5,632,049	X	X	
Massachusetts Department of Education	$3,524,149	X	X	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	$8,379,462	X	X	X
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	$3,358,502	X	X	
Tennessee Department of Education	$1,745,465	X	X	
Texas State Board for Teacher Certification	$10,751,154	X	X	
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	$3,283,720	X	X	
Partnership grants				
Northern California Partnership Grant (California State University- Sacramento)	$1,277,426	X	X	
The Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program (GSTEP) (University of Georgia)	$6,492,635	X	X	
Illinois Teacher Education Partnership (National Louis University)	$6,308,245	X		X
Illinois Professional Learners' Partnership (Illinois State University)	$12,611,607	X	X	
Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (Western Kentucky University)	$5,711,847	X	X	
Project SITE SUPPORT (The Johns Hopkins University)	$12,660,901	X	X	X
Project Learning in Communities (LINC) (University System of Maryland)	$4,187,912		X	X
Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement (Boston College)	$7,168,926	X	X	X
Teaching Matters, Quality Counts (North Carolina Central University)	$3,781,980	X	X	X
Innovating to Motivate and Prepare Able Classroom Teachers for the Urban Setting (Urban IMPACT) (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga)	$3,270,959		X	X
Project Collaboration, Mentoring and Technology (CoMeT) (Our Lady of the Lake University)	$5,604,478		X	X
Institute for School-University Partnerships (Texas A&M University)	$11,623,979	X	X	X

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Reforming requirements for teachers	Providing professional development	Recruiting new teachers
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	$8,456,364	X	X	X
Recruitment grants				
Los Angeles Unified School District	$956,261			X
Oakland Unified School District	$1,026,168	X		X
San Diego State University Foundation	$1,412,828			X
University of California—Los Angeles (University of California Regents Office)	$1,213,295	X		X
Connecticut State Department of Education	$938,428			X
Teacher Recruitment Initiative in Tennessee (TRI-IT!) (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga)	$1,193,297		X	X
Teacher Recruitment and Induction Project (TRIP) (Southwest Texas State University)	$1,051,241		X	X
Milwaukee Public Schools	$844,357	X		X

Note: Shading is used to show how the grants differ.

Source: GAO's analysis of grant activities from site visits and documents from the U.S. Department of Education.

Reforming Requirements for Teachers

Most grantees reported using their funds to reform requirements for teachers. Since every state sets its own requirements for teacher certification, such as how many hours a teacher candidate must spend student teaching to become a fully certified teacher in that state, some state grantees reported using their funds to reform the certification requirements for teachers in their state. Grantees also reported using their funds to allow teacher training programs and colleges of Arts and Sciences to collaborate with local school districts to reform the requirements for teacher training programs to ensure that teacher candidates are trained appropriately. Some examples of these reforms include the following:

- Requirements for teacher certification—During our site visits, we found that many state grantees are reforming their state certification requirements to ensure that new teachers have the necessary teaching skills and knowledge in the subject areas in which they will teach. For example, Illinois does not currently have a separate middle school (grades 5 through 9) certification. Most middle school teachers in Illinois are instead certified to teach elementary or high school. However, recognizing that this does not adequately address the preparation needs of middle school teachers, state officials intend to use the grant to create a new certification for middle school teachers. This new certification would require middle school teachers to

demonstrate specialized knowledge on how to best instruct adolescents.

- Requirements for teacher training programs—To improve the quality of teachers, states reported reforming their requirements for teacher training programs. For example, Wisconsin used some of its grant funds to develop a strategy to hold institutions accountable for the quality of the preparation they provide their teacher candidates. This strategy ensured that teacher candidates in every teacher training program receive instruction that prepares them to meet state standards.[12] To begin this effort, the state developed a handbook of standards, procedures, and policies for teacher training programs. In addition, the state plans to enforce these requirements by conducting a thorough review of each teacher training program. Wisconsin and other states we visited are also ensuring that training provided through alternative routes—routes to certification that are not provided by regular teacher training programs—are meeting similar requirements.

- Requirements for teacher candidates—Many teacher training programs reported that they were reforming the requirements for teacher candidates by revising the required coursework. For example, the grant officials from the Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement reported that they wanted to provide teacher candidates with exposure to schools earlier than was typical in training programs. To do so, they revised their curriculum so that some of their required teacher preparation courses were set in public schools, giving teacher candidates an opportunity to experience the school environment prior to student teaching. Grant officials expressed that this strategy would increase the chances that these teachers would be successful because the teachers would be better prepared for the realities of the classroom.

Providing Professional Development and Support for Current Teachers

Many grantees reported having high teacher turnover and saw a need for providing professional development and other support in order to retain current teachers. The primary goal of professional development activities is to provide training and support for current teachers with the intention of improving their skills and retaining them in the classroom. Grantees used their funds for a variety of activities that provided professional development and support, such as providing coursework towards an advanced degree and assigning mentor teachers to new teachers.

[12]Wisconsin has 10 standards, such as demonstration of technological knowledge, that teachers must meet to be certified.

During our site visits, we found that mentoring was the most common professional development activity. Of the 33 grant sites we visited, 23 grants were providing mentoring activities. Many of the grantees we visited reported that mentoring programs are beneficial to the mentor teacher as well as the new teacher. The mentor can coach the new teacher on how to best instruct students and adjust to his or her job. In return, a mentor teacher may benefit from additional training and compensation. Some grantees used their funds to establish a mentor training program to ensure that mentors had consistent guidance. For example, Rhode Island used its grant funds to allow two experienced teachers to tour the state to provide training to future mentor teachers and help schools set up mentoring programs. Officials in Rhode Island believed this was an effective way to ensure that new teachers receive quality support.

Recruiting New Teachers

Many grantees reported having a teacher shortage in their area and used the grant funds to develop various teacher-recruiting programs. Of the grant sites we visited, many grantees were using their funds to fill teacher shortages in urban schools or to recruit new teachers from nontraditional sources—mid-career professionals, community college students, and middle and high school students.

The following are examples of grantees using their funds to fill shortages in urban areas or to recruit new teachers from nontraditional sources:

- Recruiting for urban school districts—Grantees that were experiencing a teacher shortage in their urban schools often provided various incentives for teacher candidates to commit to teaching in urban environments. For example, "Project SITE SUPPORT"[13] housed at the Johns Hopkins University recruits teacher candidates with an undergraduate degree to teach in a local school district with a critical need for teachers while, at the same time, earning their masters in education. The program offers tuition assistance, and in some cases, the district pays a full teacher salary. As part of the terms of the stipend, teachers are required to continue teaching in the local school district for 3 years after completing the program. Grant officials told us that this program prepared teacher candidates for teaching in an urban environment and makes it more likely that they will remain in the profession.

[13]The acronym SITE SUPPORT stands for "School Immersion Teacher Education and School University Partnership to Prepare Outstanding and Responsive Teachers."

- Recruiting mid-career professionals—Many grantees targeted mid-career professionals by offering an accelerated teacher training program. For example, the Teacher Recruitment and Induction Project at Southwest Texas State University offered scholarships to mid-career professionals to offset the cost of classes required for teacher certification. The scholarships paid for a 1-year, full-time program that results in teaching certificates and 18 hours of graduate level credits for teacher candidates. Grantee officials told us that because the grant covers the Austin, Texas, area—an area with many technology organizations—they have been able to recruit highly skilled individuals who can offer a variety of real-life applications to many of the classes they teach.

- Recruiting from community colleges—Some grantees have used their funds to recruit teacher candidates at community colleges. For example, National Louis University, one of the largest teacher training institutions in Illinois, has partnered with six community colleges around the state of Illinois so that the community colleges can offer training that was not previously available. The grant pays for a University faculty member to teach on each of the community college campuses. This program allows community colleges in smaller, rural communities to provide teacher training without teacher candidates incurring the cost of attending National Louis University—a large private university. A grant program official told us that school districts in these areas will have a greater chance of recruiting new teachers trained at one of these community colleges because they were most likely to be from that community.

- Recruiting middle and high school students—Other grantees target middle and high school students. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District develops programs to attract high school students to the field of teaching. The majority of its grant resources has been used to fund a paid 6-week high school internship for students to work in the classroom with a teacher.[14] The high school intern spends most days with a teacher in the classroom (see fig. 6). The intern's activities could include helping the teacher correct papers and plan activities. Once a week, interns have a class with a grant-funded teacher on curriculum and lesson planning. The grant official told us that the internship

[14]The Los Angeles Unified School District operates on a year-round basis, with staggered vacation schedules for students. Internships occur during scheduled student vacations, allowing some students to participate as interns during their vacation in other schools that are in session.

introduces younger people to teaching as a profession and, therefore, may increase the chances that they will become teachers in the future.

Figure 6: Early Exposure to Teaching is a Recruitment Strategy Used by Several Grantees

Source: Departme6nt of Education archives.

The Extent to Which Grant Activities Will Affect the Quality of Teaching in the Classroom Will Be Difficult to Determine

The extent to which grant activities will affect the quality of teaching in the classroom will be difficult to determine. Although the legislation mandates that Education evaluate all grant activities, we found that Education does not have a systematic approach to do so. Education does have one study underway to evaluate some grant activities; however, this study is limited to only one type of grant—partnership grants. In addition, grantees told us that they were given little guidance from Education on what types of information to collect in order to determine the effects of their grant activities. Even though Education has not determined the extent to which these activities affect the quality of teaching in the classroom, grantees told us that they have used grant funds to improve the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers.

When the Congress amended HEA in 1998 to provide grants to states and partnerships, it required that Education evaluate all activities funded by the grants. Education began a study in 2000 of state and recruitment grants awarded in 1999. However, this study was cancelled by Education before it was completed, and no preliminary findings were released. Education officials cited the change in the department's administration when explaining why the evaluation was abandoned. Education has also been conducting a 5-year study of some grants. Although this evaluation is

designed to take a comprehensive look at grant activities, it is only looking at partnership grants awarded in 1999, making this study too limited for its result to apply to all grant activities. Because the grants last only 3 to 5 years, Education may have lost its only opportunity to collect the necessary information to determine if some grant activities have affected the quality of teaching in the classroom.

In addition, Education did not provide adequate guidance to grantees on what types of information to collect in order to determine the results of their grant activities. For example, in order to determine results, a grantee would need to collect information before and after the activity for the group benefiting, as well as for a comparison group. Many grantees told us that they did not collect this information because Education did not provide them guidance on what types of information to collect. The legislation required grantees to submit an annual report on their progress toward meeting the program's purposes—such as increased student achievement—and its goals, objectives, and measures (see table 2). Education officials provided only limited guidance—through brief descriptions in the application packet and intermittent conversations with grantees that requested assistance—on what information to include in the annual report. Thus, the information that most grantees reported did not allow Education to adequately determine the results of their grant activities.

Table 2: Legislative Requirements for Annual Reports

	State grants	Partnership grants	Recruitment grants
Annual reporting requirements	States and partnerships receiving a grant must report annually on their progress toward meeting the purposes and the goals, objectives, and measures.		
Purposes	(1) Improve student achievement; (2) Improve the quality of the current and future teaching force by improving the preparation of prospective teachers and enhancing professional development activities; (3) Hold institutions of higher education accountable for preparing teachers who have the necessary teaching skills and are highly competent in the academic content areas in which the teachers plan to teach, such as mathematics, science, English, foreign languages, history, economics, art, civics, Government, and geography, including training in the effective uses of technology in the classroom; and (4) Recruit highly qualified individuals, including individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force.		
Goals, objectives, and measures	(1) Increase student achievement. (2) Raise the state academic standards required to enter teaching. (3) Increase success in the pass rate for initial state teacher certification or licensure or increase numbers of those certified or licensed through alternative programs. (4) Increase the percentage of school classes taught by teachers with academic backgrounds related to their teaching assignment. (5) Decrease shortages of qualified teachers in poor areas. (6) Increase opportunities for professional development. (7) Increase the number of teachers prepared to integrate technology in the classroom.	(1) Increase student achievement. (2) Increase teacher retention in the first 3 years of a teacher's career. (3) Increase success in the pass rate for initial state certification or licensure of teachers. (4) Increase the percentage of school classes taught by teachers with academic backgrounds related to their teaching assignment. (5) Increase the number of teachers trained in technology.	None listed.

Source: GAO's analysis of HEA.

Even though Education has not determined the extent to which all grant activities affect the quality of teaching in the classroom, grantees told us that they have used grant funds to improve the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers. For example, some grantees have been able to increase the number of teacher candidates served through their grant programs. Many grantees also told us that the partnerships and alliances formed through the grant program have had and will continue to have positive effects on their ability to address the quality of teaching in the classroom. For more information on grant activities, see appendix III.

Information Collected and Reported for the Accountability Provisions Does Not Accurately Portray the Quality of Teacher Training Programs And the Qualifications of Teachers

The information collected as part of the accountability provisions did not allow Education to accurately report on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers in each state. The accountability provisions require all institutions that enroll students who receive federal student financial assistance and train teachers—not just those institutions receiving teacher quality enhancement grants—to provide information to their states on their teacher training programs and program graduates.[15] In order to facilitate the collection of this information, the legislation required Education to develop definitions for key terms and uniform reporting methods, including the definitions for the consistent reporting of pass rates. Education officials told us that they made significant efforts to define these terms so that the terms reflected the uniqueness of teacher training programs, state reporting procedures, and data availability. In doing so, Education defined some terms broadly. Education officials told us that this gave states and institutions discretion to interpret some terms as they wished—resulting in the collection and reporting of information that was not uniform and thereby making it difficult to assess accountability. In addition, time spent verifying the information from states and institutions was limited. This limited verification led to the inclusion of inaccurate information in Education's report to the Congress.

The Definitions of Some Key Terms Allowed for Inconsistent Reporting

Education defined some key terms broadly, resulting in inconsistent reporting by states and institutions. The accountability provisions required states and institutions to report information, such as the percentage of an institution's graduates who pass the state certification examination, also known as the pass rate. In order to gather information on the pass rate, Education first needed to define graduate. Education officials told us that in many teacher training programs, candidates do not graduate with a degree in teacher training, but rather receive a certificate. Therefore, Education did not define graduate but rather created the term "program completer" to encompass all those who met all the requirements of a state-approved teacher preparation program. Table 3 explains our analysis of the information HEA required to be collected, the way that Education defined selected terms to collect the information, and the reporting

[15]Institutions are required to report to their states on the following: (1) pass rates, (2) program information—number of students in the program, average number of hours of supervised student teaching required for those in the program, and the faculty-student ratio in supervised practice teaching; and (3) a statement of whether the institution's program is approved by the state.

implications of Education's definitions. Our survey indicated that 41 percent of respondents found compliance with reporting requirements a challenge due to ambiguous definitions.

Table 3: Selected Definitions for the Collection of Accountability Provision Information

Term	Legislative requirements	Education's definition	Reporting implications
Graduate	To identify the percentage of all graduates at a teacher training institution who successfully passed the state certification examination(s).	Education did not define the term graduate, but rather used the term "program completer" and defined it as someone who has met the requirements of a state-approved, teacher-training program.	Some institutions only reported candidates who completed all course work and passed the state certification examination. In calculating the pass rate, these institutions did not include those students who passed the course work but failed the examination. As a result, these institutions reported a 100-percent pass rate, which is not informative to the Congress or the public on the quality of the teacher training programs at those institutions.
Waiver	To identify the number of teachers who are teaching without state certification.	Any temporary or emergency permit, license, or other authorization that permits an individual to teach in a public school classroom without having received an initial certificate or license (as defined by the state) from that state or any other state.	Some states defined an initial certificate or license so broadly that it allowed them to report few or no teachers as teaching on waivers.
Alternative route to certification or licensure	To identify a route to certification that is not a regular teacher training program.	As defined by the state.	Some states defined alternative route so narrowly that it allowed them to report that few or no teachers had taken an alternative route to certification.

Source: GAO's analysis of HEA, Department of Education regulations, and state Title II reports.

Thus, using definitions provided by Education, states and institutions could report information that made their programs seem more successful than they might have been. Institutions could inflate their pass rate by reporting only on those teacher candidates who completed all coursework and passed the state teacher certification examination without including any information on teacher candidates who completed all coursework but failed the examination—thus ensuring a 100-percent pass rate. During our review, we found that a few states and many institutions are inflating their pass rates to 100-percent. For instance, we found that in at least three state reports to Education, every institution reported 100-percent pass rates. Those institutions included in their calculations only those teacher candidates they determined to be program completers—those who passed the state certification examination and met the state's other requirements—excluding those who failed the examination. While

requiring teacher candidates to pass the state certification examination as part of a teacher training program is not a problem, in and of itself, reporting on only those candidates who pass the test does not provide the basis to assess the quality of teacher training programs. For example, some institutions in Georgia reported 100-percent pass rates in their institutional report to the state, and Georgia, in turn, included these 100-percent pass rates in its state report to Education. However, as part of a state effort—separate from the federal accountability provisions—to hold institutions accountable for how well they prepare teachers, Georgia requires institutions to submit pass rates that include those who fail the examination to the state each year. This resulted in lower institutional pass rates than those included in the report to Education but is a calculation closer to what the Congress intended Education to collect as part of the accountability provisions.

In other instances, Education allowed states to define some key terms from the legislation in a way that was applicable to their state because of the variability in how states defined terms and collected information. This allowed states to define terms so that they could cast the quality of their teacher training programs and the qualifications of their current teachers in the most positive light. For example, the accountability provisions required that states report on the number of teachers on waivers—defined by Education as those teachers currently teaching without having received an initial certificate or license. Because Education allowed each state to define initial certificate or license for itself, each state reported different information in its waiver count. Figure 7 presents information from three neighboring states—Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.—with different definitions of certification leading to variations in who was included in their waiver count. The degree of this variation from state to state is unknown. Thus, the data collected for the Congress does not present an accurate account of teachers who are not fully certified.

Figure 7: Criteria for Waiver Calculations Varies among Three Neighboring States

Maryland

- Waiver count includes individuals who are issued a provisional certificate or an alternative certificate.
- Waiver count includes long-term substitute teachers.
- Reported 13% of individuals teaching on waivers in Maryland.

Washington, D.C.

- Waiver count does not include individuals who are issued a provisional certificate.
- Waiver count does not include long-term substitute teachers.
- Reported 0% of individuals teaching on waivers in the District of Columbia.

Virginia

- Waiver count includes individuals pursuing an alternative route to licensure and individuals issued a local eligibility license.
- Waiver count includes long-term substitutes.
- Reported 7% of individuals teaching on waivers in Virginia.

Source: GAO's analysis of school year 2000 state Title II reports.

The Data Collection Process Contributed to Inaccurate Information

In addition to the problems with the definitions, the fact that the information collected was not adequately verified led to the inclusion of inaccurate information on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers. The contractor hired by Education to collect the information allowed states to submit their information in different computer formats. The contractor told us that this was done to make the reporting process easier on the state agencies. Once received, this information was put into a standard format in order to report to the Congress. Although states were required to certify the information they reported was accurate, errors occurred because of the way the information was collected. Therefore, it was even more important that the information be verified. However, the contractor stated that because it did not have enough time to verify the information from states and institutions, inaccurate information was included in the report to the Congress. The contractor stated that 2 to 3 months would have been sufficient to verify the information submitted to Education. Because it was only given 3 weeks to verify, analyze, and report the information, a thorough job could not be done. Alternatively, an audit of the data that states submit would replace the need for additional time for data verification, but department officials told us that they lack the resources for such an audit.

Additionally, it was not always obvious to the contractor which information was inaccurate—for example, what a "typical" range of pass rates might be—and the contractor acknowledged that this also led to the

inclusion of some inaccurate information. When we contacted eight states to check the accuracy of the information, we found errors in the information for three of these states. In addition, a recent study found that the information collected from South Carolina was not accurate.[16] South Carolina reported that 5.4 percent of its teachers were not fully certified but, according to this study, this information—which was reported to Education—included only 57 of 86 school districts in the state.

Education officials told us that the data collection process has been changed for the second round of collection of information. (For more information on HEA's accountability provisions, see appendix IV.)

Conclusions

In recognition of the importance of the quality of teaching in the classroom, the Congress amended HEA to provide grant funds to improve training programs for prospective teachers and the qualifications of current teachers, but certain aspects of the administration of those grant funds may make the legislation less effective than it could be. For example, because Education has not always disseminated information to grantees effectively, grantees without knowledge of successful ways of enhancing the quality of teaching in the classroom might be wasting valuable resources by duplicating unsuccessful efforts. In addition, because Education does not have a system to thoroughly evaluate grant activities—including providing guidance to grantees on the types of information needed to determine effectiveness—information on what activities improve the quality of teaching in the classroom will not be available. Also, due to the lack of clearly defined key terms by Education and adequate time for verification of data by its contractor, the information Education collected and reported to the Congress under the accountability provisions provided an inaccurate picture of the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers.

Furthermore, 45 of 59 eligible states have already been approved for or awarded state grants, and because the authorizing legislation specifically requires that these grants can only be awarded once, only 14 states will be eligible to receive future state grants under the current authorizing legislation. Given this, and because the legislation requires that 45 percent of total grant funding be available for state grants, it is possible that some

[16]The Education Trust, *Interpret With Caution: The First State Title II Reports on the Quality of Teacher Preparation*, Washington, D.C.: June 2002.

funding the Congress appropriates for teacher quality enhancement grants will remain unspent.

Recommendations

In order to effectively manage the grant program, we recommend that the Secretary of Education further develop and maintain a system for regularly communicating program information, such as reporting deadlines and successful and unsuccessful practices.

To provide information about the effectiveness of grant activities, we recommend that the Secretary of Education establish a systematic approach for evaluating all grant activities, including providing guidance to grantees on the types of information needed to determine effectiveness.

To improve the information collected under the accountability provisions, we recommend that the Secretary of Education

- define key terms from the legislation clearly and
- allow sufficient time for verification of the required information.

Matter for Congressional Consideration

If the Congress decides to continue funding teacher quality enhancement grants in the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, it might want to clarify whether all 59 states will be eligible for state grant funding under the reauthorization or whether eligibility would be limited to only those states that have not previously received a state grant. If the Congress decides to limit eligibility to states that have not previously received a state grant, it may want to consider changing the funding allocation for state grants.

Agency Comments

In written comments on a draft of this report, the Department of Education generally agreed with the findings presented in the report. Education did state, however, that we do not acknowledge the change of administration in 2001 and that our report should identify the changes being implemented by the current administration to address deficiencies. While our work covered questions and found problems with implementation under the current and prior administrations, a comparison of management under the two administrations is not within the scope of our work. However, grantees reported that communication continues to be a problem. For example, as we discuss in this report, at the beginning of the grant program grantees' reported that they received regular communication from Education, but that this level of communication was

not maintained due to Education's management and staff turnover in recent years. Because Education's new efforts to address deficiencies have just begun, it is too early to assess their impact on operations.

With respect to the accuracy of the Title II accountability report, Education noted one particular instance of state reporting error—Maine's teacher certification information. According to Education, the mistake was due to a third-party reporting error and not due to a lack of time for data verification. However, we report on more widespread problems of data reporting and verification. Among other things, we found that when we contacted eight states to check the accuracy of the Title II information, we found errors in the information for three of these states—Maine was not one of the states contacted during this review. Of the problems that we cited, additional time for data verification would be needed to improve the accuracy of the information reported to the Congress.

Education also provided technical comments, which we incorporated when appropriate. Education's comments appear in appendix V.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Education, appropriate congressional committees, and other interested parties. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at http://www.gao.gov. Please call me at (202) 512-8403 if you or your staff have any questions about this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VI.

Cornelia M. Ashby
Director, Education, Workforce
and Income Security Issues

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

To better understand whether the grants and reporting requirements are contributing to improving the quality of teaching in the classroom, we were asked to provide information on how the Higher Education Act has been implemented. Specifically, we provide information on the following: (1) how the Department of Education awarded grants and administered the grant program, (2) what activities grantees funded and what results can be associated with these activities, and (3) whether the information collected under the accountability provisions allows for an accurate report on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers.

We conducted 33 site visits in 11 states, which accounted for almost 50 percent of the total grant funding at the time of our review. We visited California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. Grantees in these states were selected because they provide a range of grant activities and were geographically dispersed. At each grantee, we interviewed grant officials to obtain comprehensive and detailed information about how the grant program has been used to promote the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers.

To learn about the implementation of these grants, we surveyed 91 grantees, the total at the time of our review. The response rate for this survey was 87 percent. We also collected information on Education's administration of the grants—specifically the monitoring, evaluation, and communication efforts—through our survey, site visits, and interviews with Education officials. We rounded out this information with interviews with experts on teaching and teacher training. The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, difficulties in how a particular question is interpreted or in the sources of information that are available to grantees can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We took steps in the development of the questionnaires, the data collection, and the data editing and analysis to minimize nonsampling errors. For example, we pretested the questionnaire with a small number of grantees to refine the survey instrument, and we called individual grantees, if necessary, to clarify answers.

To determine if the information collected under the accountability provisions allows for an accurate report on the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current teachers, we interviewed officials from institutions and states who had collected and reported information as a part of the accountability provisions. Our survey gathered

information from institutions and states on the process of collecting and reporting accountability provisions information. We also reviewed reports and other research related to the accountability provisions. In addition, we interviewed teacher quality experts and Education officials responsible for all phases of the information collection, analysis, and reporting process.

We reviewed Title II of the Higher Education Act and analyzed guidance pertinent to the program. This review provided the foundation from which we analyzed the information collected. In conducting the data collection, we relied primarily on the opinions of the officials we interviewed and the data and supporting documents they provided. We also reviewed, for internal consistency, the data that officials provided us, and we sought clarification where needed. We conducted our work between December 2001 and November 2002 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Overview of Teacher Quality Grants under the Higher Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act

Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants under Title II of the Higher Education Act			
	State grants	**Partnership grants**	**Recruitment grants**
Who is eligible	States, including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau	Partnerships, including a teacher training program, a college of Arts and Sciences, and a high-need local educational agency	States or partnerships
Purpose	(1) Improve student achievement; (2) Improve the quality of the current and future teaching force by improving the preparation of prospective teachers and enhancing professional development activities; (3) Hold institutions of higher education accountable for preparing teachers who have the necessary teaching skills and are highly competent in the academic content areas in which the teachers plan to teach, such as mathematics, science, English, foreign languages, history, economics, art, civics, Government, and geography, including training in the effective uses of technology in the classroom; and (4) Recruit highly qualified individuals, including individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force.		
Funding method	**Competitive funding**	**Competitive funding**	**Competitive funding**
	45 % of total grant funding shall be made available	45 % of total grant funding shall be made available	10 % of total grant funding shall be made available
Use of funds	**Required—one or more of the following activities** (1) implementing reforms that hold institutions of higher education accountable; (2) reforming teacher certification or licensure requirements; (3) providing prospective teachers with alternatives to traditional preparation for teaching; (4) carrying out programs that include support during the initial teaching experience and establish, expand, or improve alternative routes to State certification of teachers for highly qualified individuals; (5) developing and implementing effective mechanisms to recruit highly qualified teachers, reward high-performing teachers and principals, and remove incompetent or unqualified teachers; (6) developing and implementing efforts to address the problem of social promotion; and/or (7) other specified teacher recruitment activities.	**Required** (1) implementing reforms to hold teacher training programs accountable; (2) providing sustained and high-quality preservice clinical experience; and (3) creating opportunities for enhanced and ongoing professional development **Allowable** (1) preparing teachers to work with diverse student populations; (2) broadly disseminating information on effective practices used by the partnership and coordinating with state entities as appropriate; (3) developing and implementing proven mechanisms to provide principals and superintendents with effective managerial and leadership skills; and (4) other specified teacher recruitment activities.	**Required** (1) awarding scholarships to help students pay the costs of tuition, room, board, and other expenses of completing a teacher preparation program; providing support services to scholarship recipients, if needed; and providing follow-up services to former scholarship recipients; **or** (2) developing and implementing effective mechanisms to ensure the high-need local educational agencies are able to effectively recruit highly qualified teachers.

Teacher and Principal Training and Recruitment Grants under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act			
	State grants	**Partnership subgrants**	**Local education agency subgrants**
Who is eligible	States, including the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and the Secretary of the Interior for programs operated or funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs	Partnership, consisting of a teacher training program, a college of Arts and Sciences, and a high-need local educational agency	Local education agencies (LEA)
Purpose	The purpose of this part is to provide grants to state educational agencies, LEAs, state agencies for higher education, and eligible partnerships in order to (1) increase student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools; and (2) hold LEAs and schools accountable for improvements in student academic achievement.		
Funding method	**Formula funding through application**	**Competitive grants from states**	**Formula funding through application**
	2.5 % of total funding available	2.5 % of total funding available	95 % of total funding available
Use of funds	**Required—One or more of 18 listed activities, including** reforming teacher and principal certification or licensing requirements; carrying out programs that establish, expand, or improve alternative routes for state certification of teachers and principals; developing and implementing mechanisms to assist LEAs and schools in effectively recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers.	**Required** (1) providing professional development activities in core academic subjects to ensure that teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals, and if appropriate, principals have subject matter knowledge, including the use of computer related technology; and that principals have instructional leadership skills and/or; (2) developing and providing assistance to LEAs, their teachers, highly qualified paraprofessionals, or principals for professional development activities that ensure that individuals are able to use state standards and assessments in order to improve instructional practices and student achievement. These may include programs to prepare those who may be providing this instruction, and activities of partnerships between LEAs, and institutions of higher education to improve teaching and learning at low-performing schools.	**Required—One or more of nine listed activities, including** developing and implementing mechanisms to assist schools in effectively recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, developing and implementing initiatives to assist in recruiting highly qualified teachers, and carrying out various professional development activities designed to improve the quality of principals and superintendents and to improve the knowledge of teachers and principals in various areas.

Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants under Title II of the Higher Education Act			
	State grants	**Partnership grants**	**Recruitment grants**
Accountability for grants	States and partnerships receiving grants must report annually on their progress toward meeting the purposes of the legislation and the goals, objectives, and measures described below.		
	(1) Increasing student achievement; (2) Raising the state academic standards required to enter teaching; (3) Increasing success in the pass rate for initial state teacher certification or licensure or increasing numbers of those certified or licensed through alternative programs; (4) Increasing the percentage of school classes taught by teachers with academic backgrounds related to their teaching assignment; (5) Decreasing shortages of qualified teachers in poor areas; (6) Increasing opportunities for professional development; and (7) Increasing the number of teacher prepared to integrate technology in the classroom.	(1) Increasing student achievement; (2) Increasing teacher retention in the first 3 years of a teacher's career; (3) Increasing success in the pass rate for initial state certification or licensure of teachers; and (4) Increasing the percentage of school classes taught by teachers with academic backgrounds related to their teaching assignment; and (5) Increasing the number of teachers trained in technology.	None listed.

Teacher and Principal Training and Recruitment Grants under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act			
	State grants	**Partnership grants**	**Local education agency subgrants**
Accountability for grants	None listed.	None listed.	Every year the state requires that LEAs must report on the annual progress of the LEA and each of their schools in meeting the state's annual measurable objectives in increasing the number of highly qualified teachers. If the state determines that an LEA has failed to make progress in meeting these objectives for 2 consecutive years, the LEA must develop an improvement plan. If the state determines that an LEA has failed to make progress in meeting these objectives for 3 consecutive years, then the state must enter into an agreement with the LEA on the use of the subgrant funds.

Source: GAO's analysis of Title II of the Higher Education Act and Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Appendix III: Summary Information on Grant Activities

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Grant activities include	Years funded
State Grants			
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing	$10,588,598	The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing is using some of its funds to help support the development of shorter teacher training programs. Some of the grant funds are also being used to develop new requirements for teacher training programs, providing them with assistance in making the transition, and providing professional development to new teachers.	1999-2001
Connecticut State Department of Education	$1,764,447	The Connecticut State Department of Education is using its grant funds to reform the certification requirements for teachers statewide and develop alternate routes to certification for recruiting new people into the field of teaching. They are able to provide scholarships, stipends, and professional development to some participants.	1999-2001
Georgia Board of Regents	$9,949,480	The Georgia Board of Regents grant funds provide universities and school districts with smaller subgrants. Among other things, some of these subgrantees are using their grants to attract academically talented high school students into teacher training programs. Also, some are designing programs to attract mid-career professionals into the field of teaching by offering courses at convenient times and locations, and in some cases online. The grant is also being used to reform requirements and provide professional development for teachers.	1999-2001
Illinois Board of Higher Education	$4,068,086	The Illinois Board of Higher Education is using grant funds to develop preliminary requirements for a middle school teaching certificate and is partnering with four universities in the state that serve high-poverty students. The four partner universities are redesigning their coursework to recruit and better prepare teacher candidates for the middle grades.	2000-2002
Maryland State Department of Education	$5,632,049	The Maryland State Department of Education is using most of its funds to provide subgrants to help teacher training programs implement new state requirements of providing professional development to teacher candidates.	1999-2001
Massachusetts Department of Education	$3,524,149	The Massachusetts Department of Education is using its grant funds to create a database system that tracks teachers who are prepared, licensed, and employed in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Education is also designing a mentor training program and reforming its requirements for teachers.	1999-2001
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	$8,379,462	The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is using its grant funds to implement a new teacher training program for mid-career professionals. The program begins with a full-time summer course, followed by seminars that are conducted during the following school year. The grant is also being used to develop new requirements and provide mentoring services for beginning teachers.	1999-2001

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Grant activities include	Years funded
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	$3,358,502	The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is using its grant funds to implement new requirements for teacher training programs and provide technical assistance to teacher training programs so that they will comply with the new state requirements. The funds are also being used to develop a mentor training program and a professional development demonstration site.	1999-2001
Tennessee Department of Education	$1,745,465	The Tennessee Department of Education is using its funds to provide financial support to universities so they can improve their teacher training programs by partnering with a K-12 school. Grant funds are also helping to provide mentors to new teachers and develop a tool-kit for school administrators to learn how to provide professional development opportunities in schools. The grant is also supporting the development of a new alternate route to certification.	1999-2001
Texas State Board for Teacher Certification	$10,751,154	The Texas State Board for Teacher Certification is using its grant funds to reform the requirements and design a program that provides systematic support for first and second year teachers. To do this, the board is developing an array of models for providing support to new teachers and has disseminated these models to the wider educational community. The board is also providing some of the state's beginning teachers with support teams.	1999-2001
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	$3,283,720	The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is using its funds to develop new requirements for teacher training programs, an alternative certification model to recruit new teachers that meets the same requirements as traditional teacher training programs, and a statewide mentor-training model.	1999-2001
Partnership grants			
Northern California Partnership Grant (California State University-Sacramento)	$1,277,426	The Northern California Partnership Grant is focusing its grant activities in two areas: (1) creating a blended elementary teacher education program so that teacher candidates can meet their credit requirements faster and (2) establishing a network with six school districts so that the program is providing teacher training and professional development that is synchronized with the needs of K-12 schools.	2000-2004
The Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program (GSTEP) (University of Georgia)	$6,492,635	GSTEP is a partnership among three universities and 11 school districts that aims to develop a six-year teacher training experience. The six-year experience would consist of four years of teacher training at a university program and two years of support and supervision by university faculty after they become teachers.	2000-2004
Illinois Teacher Education Partnership (National Louis University)	$6,308,245	Illinois Teacher Education Partnership is a partnership of 10 school districts, six community colleges, and National Louis University to bring teacher-training programs to three underserved regions in Illinois. Classes are taught by National Louis faculty in local community colleges during evening and weekend hours to accommodate working students' schedules. Illinois Teacher Education Partnership is also using funds to provide professional development for teachers.	2000-2004

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Grant activities include	Years funded
Illinois Professional Learners' Partnership (Illinois State University)	$12,611,607	The Illinois Professional Learners Partnership consists of representatives from universities, community colleges, school districts, business partners, and other educational agencies. The partnership is focusing its efforts on improving the quantity and quality of beginning teachers in schools that had a teacher shortage by implementing various activities at each partner university, including re-designing the teacher training curriculum and providing support for new teachers.	1999-2003
Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (Western Kentucky University)	$5,711,847	The Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality is an initiative by 11 teacher training programs in 10 states to improve the quality of their graduates and teachers in local partner schools by focusing attention on P-12 student learning. The partnership is focusing on seven activities, such as mentoring teacher candidates and requiring teacher candidates to provide work samples as evidence of their classroom abilities.	1999-2003
Project SITE SUPPORT (The Johns Hopkins University)	$12,660,901	Project SITE SUPPORT is a partnership among several school districts and three universities that are working together to recruit, prepare, support, and retain new teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of K-12 students in high-need urban schools.	1999-2003
Project Learning in Communities (LINC) (University System of Maryland)	$4,187,912	The Project LINC grant program is focusing its efforts in three areas: mentoring new teachers, partnering its teacher preparation program with local schools for professional development, and providing technology. This project is also funding some stipends and paid internships.	2000-2004
Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement (Boston College)	$7,168,926	The Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement is partnering with seven universities and public schools in three cities around the state in an effort to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge they require in order to be successful educators in Massachusetts' urban public schools. The Coalition is using its funds to reform requirements for teachers, provide professional development, and recruit for urban schools.	1999-2003
Teaching Matters, Quality Counts (North Carolina Central University)	$3,781,980	The Teaching Matters, Quality Counts grant at North Carolina Central University is funding scholarships to talented high school and community college graduates who promise to teach in partner schools. The grant is also funding a mentoring program for new teachers.	1999-2003
Innovating to Motivate and Prepare Able Classroom Teachers for the Urban Setting (Urban IMPACT) (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga)	$3,270,959	Urban IMPACT is a partnership consisting of two universities and two school districts. The goal of Urban IMPACT is to increase the quantity and quality of urban teachers by providing professional development activities and redesigning the coursework at the teacher training programs to aid in the recruitment for urban schools. Urban IMPACT also provides new teachers with mentors and peer group meetings to help ensure they are receiving adequate support in their first three years of teaching.	1999-2003

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Grant activities include	Years funded
Project Collaboration, Mentoring and Technology (CoMeT) (Our Lady of the Lake University)	$5,604,478	Project CoMeT is a partnership consisting of a 4-year university—Our Lady of the Lake University—two community colleges, several school districts, and one PK-12 school. The partnership is focusing on reforming the curriculum for teacher candidates at the University to recruit mid-career teacher candidates, providing competitive grants to schools and school districts so that they may have more funds for instructional materials, and mentoring new teachers.	1999-2003
Institute for School-University Partnerships (Texas A&M University)	$11,623,979	The grant at Texas A&M University provides funding for a partnership consisting of all nine A&M universities in Texas and 87 high-need schools that aim to increase the number of teachers prepared in the Texas A&M system. The grant provides funding for college scholarships to high school graduates committed to teaching as well as professional development and mentoring to new teachers. Some grant funds are also being used to reform the requirements for teachers graduating from the A&M system.	1999-2003
Partnership for Quality Education (University of Houston)	$3,945,239	The Partnership for Quality Education is a partnership of four universities, six school districts, a community college, and a nonprofit agency. The goal of the grant is to prepare teachers for urban schools by redesigning the teacher training programs and providing professional development.	2000-2004
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	$8,456,364	The University of Wisconsin –Milwaukee grant is focusing its efforts on creating new curriculum and recruiting individuals to teach in urban schools. This program is also funding a teacher leadership program for veteran teachers to assist and mentor new teachers.	2000-2004
Recruitment grants			
Los Angeles Unified School District	$956,261	The Los Angeles Unified School District is using grant funds to target high school students interested in a teaching career by providing paid internships for high school students to assist current teachers in the classroom. The grant also funds the development of public service announcements to encourage people to become teachers.	1999-2001
Oakland Unified School District	$1,026,168	The Oakland Unified School District targets current teacher assistants providing tuition assistance to enable them to become certified teachers. The grant is also reforming the curriculum at a local university and is providing tutoring and preparation courses for state certification examinations to teacher candidates.	1999-2001
San Diego State University Foundation	$1,412,828	The goal of the grant program at the San Diego State University Foundation is to recruit teachers for high-poverty schools. Grant activities include promoting early awareness of teaching as a career at the middle school and high school levels and providing scholarships and support to students at three community colleges and San Diego State University.	1999-2001
University of California—Los Angeles (University of California Regents Office)	$1,213,295	The majority of grant funds at the University of California-Los Angeles are being used for scholarships to first and second year students in their master-level teacher training program, as well as teacher candidates majoring in mathematics. The grant is also funding a program that encourages middle and high school students to become teachers.	1999-2001

Grant awarded to	Amount funded	Grant activities include	Years funded
Connecticut State Dept of Education	$938,428	The focus of the Connecticut State Department of Education recruitment grant is the coordination of various statewide efforts to address the shortage of minority teachers in the state. Specifically, this grant is supporting efforts to recruit minority students from Connecticut middle and high schools to become teachers in subject areas identified as shortage areas in the state. Additionally, grant funds are being used for scholarships and workshops.	1999-2001
Teacher Recruitment Initiative in Tennessee (TRI-IT!) (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga)	$1,193,297	The TRI-IT! grant program is a partnership between two universities and two school districts. The program activities vary on the two university campuses, but include a recruitment strategy for increasing the number of teachers in mathematics, science, foreign languages, and special education. Scholarships are given to teacher candidates who are enrolled in the teacher training programs and are interested in teaching these subjects. The grant also funds professional development for teachers.	1999-2001
Teacher Recruitment and Induction Project (TRIP) (Southwest Texas State University)	$1,051,241	TRIP is an accelerated teacher training program for mid-career professionals. The majority of grant funds pay for tuition assistance for the program, and the salaries for four full-time master teachers—who are on loan from the local school district—to serve as mentors. These mentors supervise the student-teaching component of the program, as well as support new teachers.	1999-2001
Milwaukee Public Schools	$844,357	The focus of the Milwaukee Public Schools grant is to reduce teacher shortages by recruiting mid-career professionals who already have a bachelor's degree and are committed to working in an urban setting. In addition, the grant funds recruitment efforts by providing introductory education courses on high school campuses. University faculty teach these courses, and the high school students earn college credit if they pass the course.	1999-2001

Note: Shading is used to show how the grants differ.

Source: GAO's analysis of grant activities from site visits and documents from the U.S. Department of Education.

Appendix IV: Accountability Provision Description

Title II, Section 207 of the Higher Education Act requires the annual preparation and submission of three reports on teacher preparation and qualifications: a report from institutions to states, a report from states to the Secretary of Education, and a report from the Secretary of Education to Congress and the public. The legislation also requires that the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (Department of Education), in consultation with the states and institutions of higher education, develop definitions for key terms, and uniform reporting methods (including the definitions for the consistent reporting of pass rates), related to the performance of teacher preparation programs.

The reports mandated in the legislation are required of the following:

1. Institutions of higher education. Institutions that conduct teacher preparation programs enrolling students who receive federal assistance under the Title IV of HEA must submit timely and accurate reports or risk imposition of a fine up to $25,000.

2. States. States receiving HEA funds must submit the reports as a condition of receiving HEA funding.

3. The Secretary of Education. The Secretary of Education must compile the information into a national report.

Institutions are required to report annually to their state:	• A comparison of the program's pass rate with the average pass rate for programs in the state. • For the most recent year for which the information is available, the pass rate of the institution's graduates on the teacher certification or licensure assessments of the state in which the institution is located, but only for those students who took those assessments within 3 years of completing the program. • In the case of teacher preparation programs with fewer than 10 graduates taking any single initial teacher certification or licensure assessment during an academic year, the institution shall collect and publish information with respect to an average pass rate on state certification or licensure assessments taken over a 3-year period.[a] • In states that approve or accredit teacher education programs, a statement of whether the institution's program is so approved or accredited. • Whether the program has been designated as low-performing by the state. • The number of students in the program, the average number of hours of supervised practice teaching required for those in the program, and the faculty-student ratio in supervised practice teaching.

States are required to report annually to the Secretary of Education:	• The percentage of teaching candidates who passed each of the assessments used by the state for teacher certification and licensure and the passing score on each assessment that determines whether a candidate has passed that assessment. • The percentage of teaching candidates who passed each of the assessments used by the state for teacher certification and licensure, disaggregated and ranked, by the teacher preparation program in that state from which the teacher candidate received the candidate's most recent degree, which shall be made available widely and publicly. • Information on the extent to which teachers or prospective teachers in each state are required to take examinations or other assessments of their subject matter knowledge in the area or areas in which the teachers provide instruction, the standards established for passing any such assessments, and the extent to which teachers or prospective teachers are required to receive a passing score on such assessments in order to teach in specific subject areas or grade levels. • The standards and criteria that prospective teachers must meet in order to attain initial teacher certification or licensure and to be certified or licensed to teach particular subjects or in particular grades within the state. • For each state, a description of proposed criteria for assessing the performance of teacher preparation programs within institutions of higher education in the state, including indicators of teacher candidate knowledge and skills. • A description of the teacher certification and licensure assessments and any other certification and licensure requirements used by the state. • A description of the extent to which the teacher certification, licensure assessments, and requirements are aligned with the state's standards and assessments for students. • Information on the extent to which teachers in the state are given waivers of state certification or licensure requirements, including the proportion of such teachers distributed across high- and low-poverty school districts and across subject areas. • A description of each state's alternative routes to teacher certification, if any, and the percentage of teachers certified through alternative certification routes who pass state teacher certification or licensure assessments.
The Secretary of Education is required to report annually to the Congress:	• A report on teacher qualifications and preparation in the United States, including all of the information reported by the states and make the report available to the public. • A comparison of states' efforts to improve teaching quality, and regarding the national mean and median scores on any standardized test that is used in more than one state for teacher certification or licensure. • In the case of teacher preparation programs with fewer than 10 graduates taking any single initial teacher certification or licensure assessment during an academic year, the Secretary shall collect and publish information with respect to an average pass rate on state certification or licensure assessments taken over a 3-year period. • The Secretary, to the extent practicable, shall coordinate the information collected and published under this title among states for individuals who took state teacher certification or licensure assessments in a state other than the state in which the individual received the individual's most recent degree.

[a]Education guidance states that in order for data on an assessment to be reported, there must be at least 10 program completers taking that assessment in an academic year.

Source: GAO's analysis of the Higher Education Act.

The following are additional state functions required by the legislation:

- A state shall have in place a procedure to identify, and assist, through the provision of technical assistance, low-performing programs of teacher preparation within institutions of higher education. Such state shall provide the Secretary an annual list of such low-performing institutions that includes an identification of those institutions at risk of being placed on such list. Such levels of performance shall be determined solely by the state and may include criteria based upon information collected pursuant to this title.

- Any institution of higher education that offers a program of teacher preparation in which the state has withdrawn the state's approval or terminated the state's financial support due to the low performance of the institution's teacher preparation program based upon the state assessment described shall be ineligible for any funding for professional development activities awarded by the Department of Education; and shall not be permitted to accept or enroll any student that receives aid under Title IV of this act in the institution's teacher preparation program.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Education

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

NOV 15 2002

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Ms. Cornelia M. Ashby
Director, Education, Welfare,
and Income Security Issues
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Ashby:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on your draft report, "Activities Underway to Improve Teacher Training, But Reporting on These Activities Could Be Enhanced." Your report identifies a number of important mutual concerns regarding the teacher quality improvement programs authorized by Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) that should be considered by Congress during the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 established an ambitious agenda for improving teacher quality. The Act authorized, and Congress subsequently provided, substantial sums for competitive grants to states and partnerships (between institutions of higher education and local school districts) to improve the quality of teacher preparation programs. It also required all institutions of higher education participating in the federal student financial assistance programs and states to provide information to the public and to the Department of Education on the quality of teacher preparation programs and teachers.

One major shortcoming of your report is that it does not acknowledge the change of Administration in 2001 and the increased emphasis on improving program management that has occurred under Secretary Paige. We believe that the report should clearly identify the policies and procedures followed in implementing the program by the previous Administration. We also believe that the report should identify the changes that are being implemented by the current Administration to address deficiencies.

The report found that the Department did not establish an effective system for communicating with Title II grantees. In particular, the report suggests that the Department has not had an effective system for communicating reporting deadlines and sharing information about successful -- and unsuccessful -- practices. Over the past year, we have improved communications with grantees and potential grant applicants, and increased our overall communication efforts. Direct contacts have been made with a number of states and more information is being put on the Department's web site.

1990 K STREET, N.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

Our mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.

You also found that the Department has not had a systematic approach to evaluate its Title II grant activities. We agree about the need for a systematic approach to evaluate Title II activities and that this need was neglected in the initial implementation of the program. Over the past year, we have been taking steps to strengthen evaluation of Title II and the other discretionary grant programs administered by the Office of Postsecondary Education. The Department expects that these efforts will strengthen weaker projects and identify especially effective ones.

Your report also says that the information collected by the Department under Title II does not permit us to accurately report on the quality of teacher preparation programs and the qualifications of current teachers in each state. Specifically, you identified as a significant problem that the terms used in data collection were too broadly defined. This allows institutions of higher education and states to interpret them as they wish. As a result, the information that institutions and states report is not uniform, making it difficult to assess accountability. In addition, your report states that the time spent verifying information from states and institutions was limited, resulting in the inclusion of inaccurate data in the Secretary's Title II report to the Congress. Your recommendation is that the Department provide clear definitions of terms for collecting data and allow sufficient time to verify the data collected.

As required by Title II, the Department consulted with states, the higher education community, and other interested parties during the previous Administration to define these terms. The proposed definitions and reporting methods were reviewed by the public before the Office of Management and Budget approved the collection of the Title II data. After collecting data through two reporting cycles based on these definitions, the Department recognizes that the quality of the data collected must be improved. In addition to the three key terms identified in your report as needing better definitions—"graduate" of a teacher preparation program, "waiver" to standard initial teacher certification requirements, and "alternative route" to certification—the Department believes that other parts of the data collection system should also be strengthened. The need for this change was recognized last April in objective 5.2 of the Department's strategic plan for 2002-2007, which set a goal to "Refine the Title II accountability system."

The Department is currently improving the Title II accountability system in two ways. First, we are aligning the HEA Title II data collection system with the requirements in Title II of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This requires making the definition of waiver in the HEA Title II system complement the definition of highly qualified teacher in the Title II of NCLB. This alignment will reduce overall data burden on states in reporting data on teachers and their qualifications. Second, the Department is developing legislative proposals on the Title II accountability provisions for Congress to consider during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

The Department believes that data accuracy is key to the successful implementation of the Title II accountability provisions. Thus, we regret that erroneous data on Maine's teacher certification requirements were contained in the first annual Title II report on

teacher quality, and we took responsibility for the error. However, it is important to note that the time to review those data was not a factor in causing this problem. The problem occurred because the actual source of the information was a document from an external agency that the Department relied upon in calculating the statistics required by the law. The Department also provided state officials with an opportunity to examine their Title II data before they were released. States are required to certify the accuracy of the Title II information they submit to the Department, and we believe your report should note the centrality of the state role in ensuring the accuracy of the accountability data.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on your draft report. We are also attaching a list a technical corrections for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally L. Stroup

Sally Stroup

Enclosure

Appendix VI: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

Contacts

Kelsey Bright, Assistant Director, (202) 512-9037
Sonya Harmeyer, Analyst-in-Charge, (202) 512-7128

Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, the following individuals made important contributions to this report: Tamara Harris, Anjali Tekchandani, Corinna Nicolaou, Richard Burkard, Jonathan Barker, Paul Chapman, Jeff Edmondson, Stuart Kaufman, and Bonita Vines.

GAO's Mission

The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through the Internet. GAO's Web site (www.gao.gov) contains abstracts and full-text files of current reports and testimony and an expanding archive of older products. The Web site features a search engine to help you locate documents using key words and phrases. You can print these documents in their entirety, including charts and other graphics.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence. GAO posts this list, known as "Today's Reports," on its Web site daily. The list contains links to the full-text document files. To have GAO e-mail this list to you every afternoon, go to www.gao.gov and select "Subscribe to daily E-mail alert for newly released products" under the GAO Reports heading.

Order by Mail or Phone

The first copy of each printed report is free. Additional copies are $2 each. A check or money order should be made out to the Superintendent of Documents. GAO also accepts VISA and Mastercard. Orders for 100 or more copies mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent. Orders should be sent to:

U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street NW, Room LM
Washington, D.C. 20548

To order by Phone:	Voice:	(202) 512-6000
	TDD:	(202) 512-2537
	Fax:	(202) 512-6061

To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact:

Web site: www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm
E-mail: fraudnet@gao.gov
Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7470

Public Affairs

Jeff Nelligan, managing director, NelliganJ@gao.gov (202) 512-4800
U.S. General Accounting Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149
Washington, D.C. 20548

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER