



# Special Education Teacher Shortages: A National Problem in Search of State/Local Solutions

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# The Problem is Chronic and Complicated

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- Currently, 45,000 special ed teachers are reported as non-HQT personnel - about 11% of the workforce ([www.ideadata.org](http://www.ideadata.org), Fall 2006) nation-wide.
- Designated high-need teaching field in almost every state (TEACH ACT, federal loan forgiveness programs).
- Historically, shortage has been more severe in urban and rural areas than suburban ones, along with a lack of diversity of personnel compared to student populations.
- HQT requirement has complicated an already convoluted system of preparation and licensure in many states.
- States' non-HQT percentages range from 0% to more than 50%.
- Lack of access to and dwindling numbers of preparation programs have exacerbated the problem.



# Shortages are Geographic and Disability Specific

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- Number of local districts within a state that have 50% or more of special education teachers reported as 'non-HQT' is staggering.
- Non-HQTs are concentrated in rural and urban settings - worse in rural.
- 'Hard to staff' teaching positions within school districts include teachers of the following students:
  - Emotionally Disabled
  - Severe/profound
  - Sensory (Vision and Hearing loss)
  - Secondary classes – 'single subjects'



# Pool of Interested Candidates is Shrinking

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- A professional 'image' problem.
- Lack of understanding or valuing of educational needs of students with disabilities.
- Debate regarding the 'economic value' of educating students with disabilities.
- Improvements needed in working conditions and supports
  - Facilities and materials
  - Paperwork
  - Challenging student behaviors
  - Administrative support
  - Faculty collegiality



# Pathway to Special Ed Teaching is a Long and Winding Road

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- State certification:
  - Often at post BA/BS level
  - In addition to general ed teacher requirements
  - Often is specific to individual disability areas
- Preparation programs
  - Loosing funding and candidates - closing down
  - Lacking meaningful relationships with needy school districts
  - Inaccessible to high need geographic areas
  - Course requirements can be inconsistent within a single state



# Solutions are State and Locally-Specific

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- Streamline and standardize state certification/preparation requirements.
- Launch state and local PR campaigns to improve the image of special education teachers.
- Increase accessibility of state preparation programs in high need areas.
- Increase funding to recruit in high need areas of state - stipends for hard to staff positions.
- Increase supports and address working conditions to retain those we want to stay.



# Contact Information

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