

DARRELL STEINBERG PRESS RELEASE

NINTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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**STEINBERG UNVEILS TEACHER QUALIFICATION INDEX:
Powerful New Interactive Tool Available To Parents And Policymakers**

SACRAMENTO -- Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) today unveiled a website containing the newly developed Teacher Qualification Index (TQI) for all 8,700 K-12 public schools in California. The TQI, available on the Internet at <http://www.edfordemocracy.org/tqi>, rates the qualifications of teachers at each school based on the credential status and the experience level of the school's faculty.

"This site provides a powerful new interactive tool to parents for evaluating the quality of their children's schools," said Steinberg. "I believe it is the first website in the nation to offer the index and enable users to rate each school."

Steinberg first proposed the creation of the TQI two years ago. His Assembly Bill 833 of 2001 was approved by the Legislature but vetoed by Gov. Davis, who said it would be too expensive for the state to compile the data and make it available on the Internet. The veto inspired Dr. Ken Futernick, a professor of education at California State University, Sacramento, to develop the TQI and website *at no cost to the state*.

"This accomplishes the goal of my legislation without costing a cent of taxpayer money," Steinberg said. "It provides an accurate and meaningful indicator of a student's opportunity to learn. This resource will be extraordinarily useful to us as policymakers because it will enable us to see more clearly where progress is being made and where problems still exist."

Steinberg was joined by Professor Futernick, who noted that the website includes additional information that addresses the challenge California faces in improving the qualifications of its teachers. Each school district receives a "spread rating" that reflects how evenly qualified teachers are distributed between its schools. Districts with a spread rating of "Very Uneven," are those in which some schools have very high percentages of underqualified teachers while other schools have very low percentages. According to Steinberg, "This rating system enables us to see whether all students within a school district have an equal opportunity to learn."

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The website also indicates whether each school is in compliance with the Federal No Child Left Behind Act which, in 2005-06, will require all schools receiving federal assistance to employ only those teachers who are deemed “highly qualified.”

“The No Child Left Behind Act prohibits districts from hiring teachers with emergency permits and waivers, which is certainly a step in the right direction,” said Futernick. “But it does not prevent them from staffing an entire school with interns and beginning teachers, because the federal law defines them as ‘highly qualified.’ One of the benefits of the TQI is that it factors in teacher experience. Schools with high concentrations of interns and beginning teachers receive lower TQI ratings.”

The website is also intended to be a resource to districts that are attempting to reduce their reliance on underqualified teachers. The site contains case studies of several urban districts that have succeeded in improving the qualification and experience levels of their instructors.

“Some districts have discovered very effective ways of attracting and retaining qualified and experienced teachers to schools that have been difficult to staff,” Futernick said. “We are pleased to be able to share their stories with other districts that face similar challenges.”

Steinberg chairs the Assembly Appropriations Committee and was founding chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Low Performing Schools.

In 2001, he authored AB 961, which created the High Priority Schools Grant Program for Low Performing Schools. The program provides grants of \$400 per student to schools that rank among the lowest-performing 10 percent in the state. To receive grants, schools must have plans to boost student achievement by improving the quality of teachers and principals, increasing parent involvement and improving the curriculum and facilities.

Last year, Steinberg authored AB 2531, the High School Pupil Success Act. The program will enable local school districts to work with community leaders to develop plans for improving their high schools. The bill requires that the plans promote community involvement, high expectations for students and development of civic-participation skills such as tolerance, inter-group communication and conflict resolution. It also encourages the creation of smaller learning communities, whether through smaller schools or schools within schools.

Futernick has written recently on California's response to the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. He is also the author of a school reform plan for low-performing schools titled “Leading Troubled Schools to the Tipping Point.”

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