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Teaching in a Challenging World

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading and studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Summarize the views and perspectives held by teachers, policy makers, and the general public that affect today's teachers. (InTASC Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration)
2. Discuss the skills and dispositions needed to pursue teaching as a profession. (InTASC Standards 9 and 10: Professional Responsibility)
3. List and define the requirements, agencies, and systems in place to assure quality teaching. (InTASC Standards 1-10)
4. Articulate the purpose, importance, and opportunities to use reflection to improve teaching performance. (InTASC Standard 1-10)
5. Identify strategies specific to beginning and developing a teaching career. (InTASC Standards 1-10)
6. Outline current and likely future challenges to becoming a great teacher. (InTASC Standards 1-10)

EDUCATION in the NEWS

HEROES EVERY ONE

BY REG WEAVER

NEA Past President

We read about them every month in the pages of this magazine. We rub shoulders with them in our schools. We team up with them to make our communities better places.

Heroes.

The single mom who, after working hard all day as a high school custodian, trudges off to the local elementary school to meet with her child's teacher, instead of staying home and putting her feet up.

The retired music teacher who spends his mornings using music to teach language to preschool children with special needs. His students often learn to sing first and then to speak.

The middle school math teacher who stays late four days a week to tutor students in geometry and algebra so someday they will be able to attend college.

The cafeteria worker who, while dishing out the food she's cooked, keeps a vigilant eye on her diabetic students so they don't eat too much sugar and starch.

The elementary school teacher who goes to school at nights to learn Spanish so she can communicate with her students' parents.

The special education assistant who helps the special education teacher with children with the most severe disabilities—changing their diapers when they need changing.

The science teacher whose enthusiasm and preparation makes the subject come alive in her students' minds, lighting a fire that will glow for a lifetime.

The high school teacher who starts a chess club as an outlet for his most restless, high energy students—and then hauls them off to every chess tournament in the state.

The school bus driver who every year organizes a skiing weekend for inner city kids who otherwise would never get to ski or play in the snow.

The community college instructor who teaches English as a second language to immigrants at four different campuses and spends so much time in her car that her colleagues have dubbed her "the road scholar."

Heroes every one.

It is easy to take these folks for granted, though, because they don't toot their own horn. They're everyday people, not celebrities. I like to call them "unsung heroes." In fact, they don't think of themselves as heroes at all, and when someone like me sings their praises, it kind of embarrasses them. But that doesn't stop me.

Our unsung heroes are the exception to the rule that when all is said and done, more is said than done. Their actions speak louder than words. And in a society that rewards getting rather than giving, they give of themselves for the good of others, and then they give some more.

Yes, it is easy to take our unsung heroes for granted, but we must not. For they are the heart and soul of our Association. These are the folks who, when you come to them with a problem, always say: "What are we going to do about it?" They think in terms of possibilities rather than impossibilities, solutions rather than setbacks, and dos rather than don'ts.

Of course I am aware that a hero is often defined as somebody who does something dangerous to help somebody else. The firefighter

who rushes into a burning building to save a child is definitely a hero. For me, however, the burn unit nurse who tenderly and skillfully cares for that firefighter's wounds through his long and agonizing recovery also qualifies as a hero. And so, too, do the many public school and college employees and retired and student educators I have had the privilege of meeting and knowing as president of NEA.

As educators and Association members, we are in the hope business, and these unsung heroes of ours, above all else, give us hope even during the times when hope seems ready to freeze over.

Unsung heroes of NEA, I am your number one fan!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is your perspective on the ideas about heroes suggested in this news item? Why?
2. What heroes would you add to those mentioned? Why?
3. What are some of the heroes that parents might have? Students? The general public?
4. What educational heroes would you expect to find mentioned in this chapter dealing with the education profession? Why?

Source: Heroes Everyone from *NEA Today* by Reg Weaver. Copyright © 2005 by National Education Association. Used by permission of National Education Association.

We live in a very challenging and rapidly changing world in which there are many differing perspectives on education. These realities will greatly affect your work as an educator, and are therefore developed in various ways and used as themes throughout this book. Each chapter approaches these topics by sharing pertinent information and posing thought-provoking questions regarding the challenges educators face, the countless perspectives on education, and our constantly changing world. Our goal in this book is to help you learn more about these important realities, to enable you to make informed progress toward developing your own professional perspectives on education, to better understand our changing world, and to develop effective ways to meet the challenges you will face as an educator.

We also hope to remind you throughout this book that the major job of all educators is to help students learn. In fact, teachers, school support personnel, school administrators, school boards, educational policy makers, and all others involved in educational endeavors ultimately exist only to help students learn.

Finally, at the very beginning of this book, we want to congratulate you for enrolling in this course and for considering a career as an educator. As you work your way through this course, through this book, and through the rest of your teacher preparation program, you will find that contemporary educators face many challenges. However, when you are thinking about, and maybe even worrying about, the many challenges you will face as an educator, we want you to know and remember that successful educators generally feel that their careers are rewarding, dynamic, exciting, important, essential, personally fulfilling, very worthwhile, and yes, sometimes frustrating, but rarely dull or boring. So if you become tired or a bit discouraged, we sincerely hope you will not give up, but rather "hang in there." Good luck!

TODAY'S TEACHERS

Teaching is a profession that generally attracts the best and brightest college students into its ranks. Today's new teachers must meet rigorous national and state standards that did not exist long ago for entering the profession. Requirements for entering teacher education programs in colleges and

universities are now more stringent than admission requirements for most other professions. Grade point averages of 3.0 and higher are common requirements for admission; tests and other assessments must be passed before admission, at the completion of a program, and for state licensure. Clearly, not everyone can teach—only the best and the brightest.

Teacher candidates today are diverse in age and work experience. Some of you are eighteen to twenty-two years old, the traditional age of college students, but others of you are nontraditional students who are older and have worked for a number of years in other jobs or professions. Some of you might have worked as teachers' aides in classrooms. Others may be switching careers from, for instance, the armed forces, engineering, retail management, or public relations. Some of you may even be enrolled in nontraditional teacher preparation programs.

Whatever your particular background, we want to welcome you to this exciting profession in which new teachers represent such wonderfully diverse work experiences as well as varying educational, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

The Importance of Teachers to Society

Society has great expectations for its teachers. In addition to guiding students' academic achievement, teachers have some responsibility for students' social and physical development. They are expected to prepare an educated citizenry that is informed about the many issues critical to maintaining a democracy and to improving our world. They help students learn to work together, and they try to instill the values that are critical to a just and caring society. Teachers are also asked to prepare children and youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to work in the **information age**; information and its management are critical to education and society. Educators play a large and important role in this *information age*.

Given these challenging and rapidly changing responsibilities, teaching is one of the most important careers in all societies, especially in a democratic society. Although critics of our education system sometimes give the impression that there is a lack of public support for schools and teachers, most people believe that teachers play a very important critical role in our society.

This public trust should be encouraging and perhaps a bit frightening to you as a future educator—encouraging because you will be entering a highly regarded and trusted professional group and frightening because you will be responsible for helping to uphold this public trust.

The Public View of Teachers and Schools

Teachers and parents agree that the quality of the teaching staff is of primary importance in selecting a school for their children. Parents, guardians, and families generally know who the most effective teachers are in a school and will do everything possible to ensure that their children are in those teachers' classes. At the same time, they know the teachers who are not as effective, and they steer their children into other classes if possible. They know the value of an effective teacher to the potential academic success of their children.

The extent to which parents should even have a say in picking their child's teachers is debated by two educators in the accompanying "Differing Perspectives" feature.

Each year, for nearly fifty years, an extensive national poll of the "Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools" has been conducted in the United States. This poll is published annually by *Phi Delta Kappa* (PDK), a highly respected professional organization for all types of educators. Among other things, this recent 46th annual poll* asked people to assign a letter grade to the public schools. About one-half of them assigned grades of A or B to the public schools in general. (Actually, 12% assigned an A and 38% assigned a B.) But interestingly, these same people assigned a considerably higher grade to the schools their own children attended.

Why do you think parents might tend to rate their own children's schools higher than public schools in general? I wonder if it is because maybe, unfortunately, the new media often tends to report education in a negative light; for instance, often reporting the more sensational things such as law suits, crime, drugs, bullying, shootings, etc. And maybe, on the other hand, parents might tend to see the good things first hand at their own child's school. Interesting to ponder, huh? What grade(s) would you give the schools that you attended?

Information age

The current age in which information and its management are critical to education and societal advancement.

*The 46th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll, Phi Delta Kappan, Sept., 2014, p. 17.

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

SHOULD PARENTS HAVE A SAY IN PICKING THEIR CHILD'S TEACHER?

Yet another challenge for schools and for some teachers is the situation wherein a parent requests that her or his child be assigned to a certain teacher's class. The dilemma is debated by two contemporary teachers in the following article.

YES

Clyde Hodge teaches eighth-grade English in Stockton, California; is a chair of the SUSD Title VII/Johnson O'Malley Indian Education parent/student advisory committee; and is a member of both NEA's and CTA's American Indian/Alaska Native Caucuses (at the time this article was published.)

"I believe there are times when parents should have the right to request certain teachers under certain circumstances. I teach at a school district where the American Indian student population is approximately 8 percent, yet American Indian teachers represent only about 1 percent. I feel that American Indian students have a right to choose to attend the classes of American Indian teachers. If not, a large number of these students won't have an opportunity to be taught by demographically representative educational role models. Such modeling has proved to raise both academic testing outcomes and grades, as well as improving student quality of life.

While I believe that students should have the opportunity to achieve educational and intellectual multiculturalism, and that students need to interact with teachers of all demographic backgrounds, I believe parents should be able to request that their children have at least one teacher who represents their cultural or ethnic background. One of the best practices in teaching American Indian students is using native language and culture to promote success, which is often best achieved when at least one teacher shares the student's background."

NO

Daniel Fonder teaches fifth grade at Hillside Intermediate School in Bridgewater, New Jersey (at the time this article was published.)

"It's natural for parents to want to have input into who educates their child. Children are a parent's most prized possession, and every parent wants what's best for their child. That basic and understandable parental instinct is precisely the reason why parents should not have a say in who will be their child's teacher.

Teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and other educators see the larger pictures. These professionals don't see what is best for one student without also seeing how it would impact the rest of the school community. Teachers who know the students and have experience creating successful classes in the previous years' work very hard to make sure each student in the school is in an optimal learning environment.

To ensure the decisions being made in a school are made to benefit all students, there cannot be special interest voices for a particular student or group of students. Placing a student in the requested teacher's class in some cases, but not in others, leaves a school open to criticism by disenfranchised parents. Parental involvement should begin when the family receives notification of the student's teacher for the year—not before."

WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THIS ISSUE?

Source: Differing Perspectives: Should Parents Have a Say in Picking their Child's Teacher? from *NEA Today*. Copyright © 2007 by National Education Association. Used by permission of National Education Association.

At any rate, in spite of the occasional bad press, these PDK surveys, as well as other indicators, show that our schools and our teachers are generally well regarded by the public; which should be encouraging to those of you who are contemplating an education career.

These same annual PDK surveys also ask people what they consider to be our schools biggest problems. What would you guess parents picked, in the 46th annual poll, as the biggest school problem in recent years? If you guessed something like the lack of financial support, you would be a very good guesser. Some of the other less cited problems parents picked included things that you might expect, like student drug use, lack of discipline, gangs, need for more good teachers, etc.

Do any of these school problems selected by the public surprise you, or are they what you might have expected? Do you agree with these parents? What other school problems might you add to the list?

Incidentally, we highly recommend that you take some time to check out the PDK web site. As already indicated, PDK is a very highly regarded professional organization for all kinds of educators. PDK publishes a wide variety of materials for educators, including an excellent monthly journal entitled the *Phi Delta Kappan*. PDK also conducts a variety of professional meeting for educators. See if they have a low cost teacher education student membership option, which you should seriously consider. Keep an eye out for their annual polls, which are very informative for present and future educators. PDK will have much to offer you as an educator.

And while on the topic of parents, let's briefly consider the important relationships between teachers and their students' parents. If this topic does not seem very important to you at this point, we can assure that it will become very, very important to you when you become a teacher.

It is not very easy, perhaps even impossible, to generalize about either teachers or parents, because they are all very different individuals. Some people are optimistic while some are a bit pessimistic, some smile and some don't, some are energetic and some not so, some talkative while some more quiet, some cooperative and some not so, some more demanding than others, and so on and so on. And while teachers and parents are very different, fortunately they share a common interest in the welfare of their student(s). This important common interest, demands that teachers find a way to become acquainted with, and work effectively with, each parent, in an efforts to cooperatively help their student(s) learn and develop. This is not an easy task for either the teacher or the parent. It requires a good deal of willingness, determination, time, effort, and skill. The teachers must work with many parents and the parents must work with many teachers.

Time and space does not allow much more on this topic at this point, but here are a few suggestions that may eventually be helpful to you when you become a teacher and are faced with your students' parents;

1. Take the initiative, and seize many opportunities to meet your students' parents.
2. Smile, be friendly, tactfully and gently honest, and try to be like people that you like.
3. Listen carefully to the parents; ask them for their concerns, suggestions and ideas.
4. Be patient with parents who are a bit difficult; they may be frustrated with their child, and are taking out their frustration on you, the teacher.
5. Remember that parents pay taxes that provides your salary; in a way, you are working for them.
6. Observe and learn from other teachers who seem to have good relationships with parents.
7. Find a way to study and learn as much as you can about human relationships in general.

We recommend that, during the remainder of your teacher education program, you seize opportunities to learn as much as possible about how people view our public schools, and also about how experienced teachers work with parents. Interviewing teachers and parents might help you do that. Remember to make notes about your efforts and what you learn in your journal.

Who Teaches in These Challenging Times?

Teachers come from varied backgrounds and hold a wide variety of perspectives. Some are Democrats, some Republicans, and some members of the Reform and other parties. Some belong to unions, but others don't. Teachers hold a variety of religious views. Because of these many differences, it is difficult to generalize about educators in the United States. However, taking a look at some of the similarities and differences among teachers may help you to understand the current teaching profession.

PROFILE OF U.S. TEACHERS. Although demographic data are elusive and constantly changing, the following snapshot of educators in the United States should help you get an idea of the profile of U.S. teachers. According to the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), the United States has about 3.2 million public school teachers, about 400,000 private school teachers, and about 932,000 college and university faculty members. More than 60 percent of the teachers work at the elementary school level. Our schools also have about 411,000 administrative and other types of education professionals.

In addition, approximately 1.25 million teachers' aides, clerks, secretaries, and service workers staff the nation's public schools. There are another roughly 1 million education-related jobs, including education specialists in industry, instructional technologists in the military, museum educators, and training consultants in the business world. So altogether, there are roughly 6 million people working in education-related positions in the United States, making education one of the largest professions in the country.

TEACHERS LEAVING THE PROFESSION. Although many teachers make careers out of teaching, unfortunately, some classroom teachers eventually decide that teaching is not the profession they wish



Triangle Images/Photodisc/Getty Images

to pursue. Figure 1.1 sheds light on the length of time that new teachers stay in the education profession.

Teachers leave the classroom for a number of reasons. Some leave to raise children and some decide to return to school full-time for an advanced degree. Others decide to pursue another career that they think might be more satisfying or pays a higher salary. Other reasons for leaving teaching are related to poor working conditions in schools, including lack of administrative support, student behavior problems, and little chance for upward mobility.

Teacher Supply and Demand

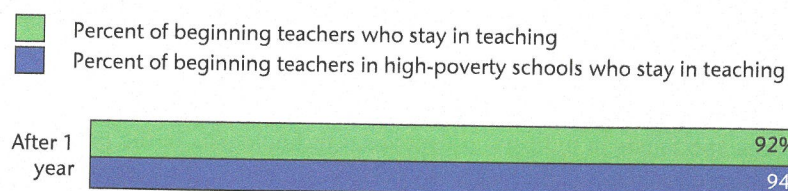
In addition to being passionate about helping learners, teachers must be good managers and take time to collaborate with their colleagues.

Many factors influence the number of teachers that a school district needs—and can afford—each year. These include the school budget, the number of students in schools, and the ratio of teachers to students in classrooms, immigration patterns, and migration from one school district to another. The supply of teachers depends on the numbers of new teachers licensed, teachers who retired or left the previous year, and teachers returning to the profession.

Sometimes the supply is greater than the demand, but various estimates for the next decade indicate a relatively steady demand for new teachers beyond the number being prepared in colleges and universities. At this time, however, the United States does not seem to have a general teacher shortage. Instead, the problem is the distribution of teachers. School districts with good teaching conditions and high salaries do not face teacher shortages. However, inner-city and rural schools often do not have adequate numbers of qualified and licensed teachers, in part because of lower salaries. There also are greater shortages of teachers in those parts of the country with increasing populations, such as states in the Southwest.

AVAILABLE TEACHERS. The supply of new teachers in a given year consists primarily of two groups: new-teacher graduates and former-teacher graduates who were not employed as teachers during the previous year. Not all college graduates who prepared to teach actually begin teaching right after graduating. We estimate that only about half the college graduates who have completed teacher education programs actually take teaching positions in the first few years after graduation. Rather than immediately starting to teach, some get married and start a family, some go on to graduate school, some enter another profession, some enter a family business, some don't find a teaching position in the location they want to live and can't or won't go elsewhere that a teaching position is available, and so on. You might face one of these situations when you graduate.

FIGURE 1.1 Beginning-Teacher Retention Rates



Source: Based on The Center for American Progress, Based on U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-Up Survey: Current and Former Teacher Data Files (2012–2013). Available to Restricted Users Through the Institute of Education Statistics.

However, even people who complete teacher education programs but never actually teach almost universally feel that their teacher education was worthwhile and valuable in many other ways (for instance, in parenting, working with and better understanding people, better understanding society, in other types of work)

It is estimated that nearly half the teachers hired by the typical school district are first-time teachers. A third represents experienced teachers who have moved from other school districts or from other jobs within the district. Experienced teachers reentering the field make up the remainder of the new hires.

New Teachers. A number of new teachers are not recent college graduates. They are typically people who are changing careers or retirees from the military or business. These older new teachers with years of work experience often have completed alternative pathways into teaching through school-based graduate programs that build on their prior experiences. These teachers bring a valuable different perspective on education to their teaching positions.

Unfortunately, still other new teachers have inadequate formal preparation to teach; some do not even have a college degree. More often they have a degree in an academic area such as chemistry or history but have not studied teaching and learning or participated in clinical practices in schools. Some states and school districts allow these individuals to teach with only minimal qualifications, often on a provisional certificate that requires full certification within a certain number of years.

Returning Teachers. A number of licensed teachers drop out of the profession for a time but return later in life. We estimate that these teachers constitute about 20 percent of the new hires each year. Therefore, when you finish your teacher education program, you will be competing for teaching positions not only with other new graduates but also with experienced teachers who are returning to the classroom or moving from one school district to another.

Teacher Demand. The demand for teachers in the United States varies considerably from time to time, from place to place, from subject to subject, and from grade level to grade level. One of the major factors related to the demand for teachers is the number of school-age children, which can be projected into the future on the basis of birthrates. The projected percentage change in K–12 enrollment, by state, through 2019, is shown in Figure 1.2.

A variety of factors including increases in student enrollment and a somewhat lower number of new teacher certification graduates are likely to result in increasing the need for teachers over the next decade. Also, many current teachers will be retiring during the next decade, raising even higher the number of new and re-entering teachers needed to staff the nation's schools. This suggests you are likely to be able to find a teaching position when you graduate.

Student-to-Teacher Ratios. Obviously, one measure of a teacher's workload is class size. The number of students taught by a teacher varies considerably from school to school and from state to state. Elementary teachers sometimes may have more students in a class than secondary teachers, but secondary teachers may have five to seven classes each day.

The demand for teachers has gradually increased over time, in part because some states and school districts are limiting the student-to-teacher ratio, especially in the primary grades. In large school districts, lowering the student-to-teacher ratio by even one student creates a demand for many more teachers. Statewide initiatives to reduce the ratio have an even greater impact on the number of teachers needed.

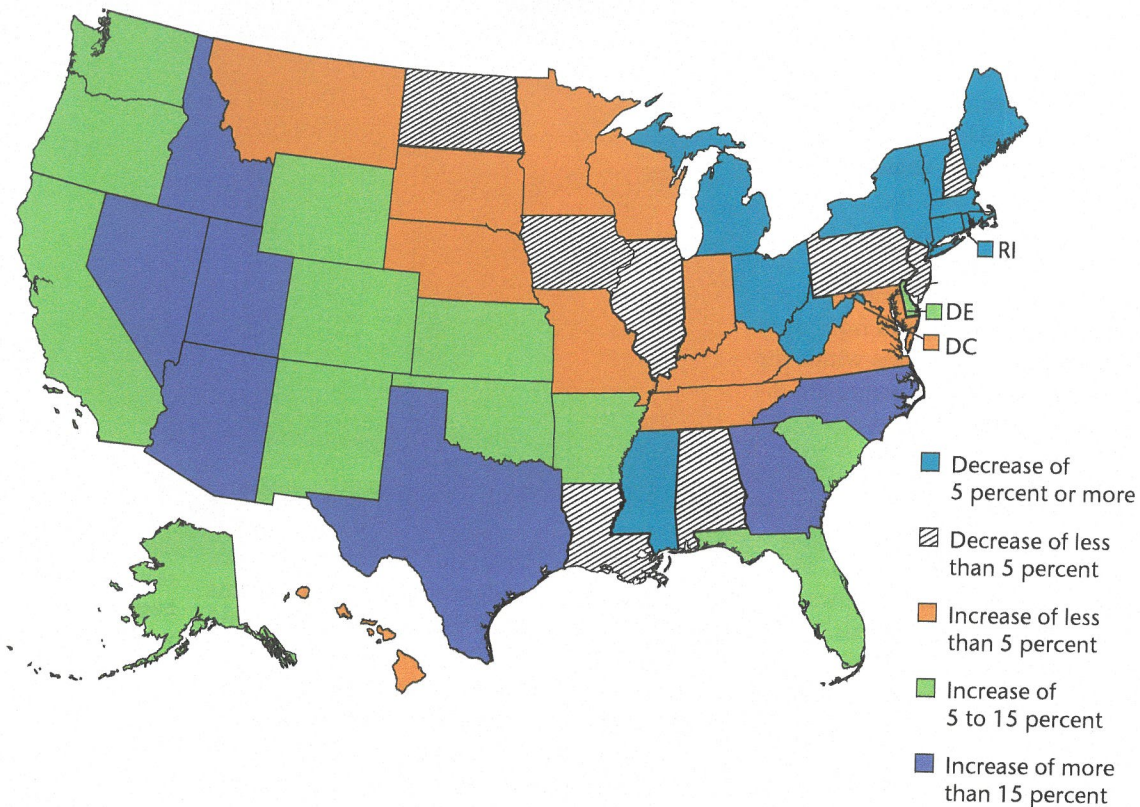
Location of the School District. Within a given area because of, for example, new housing developments, population shifts may cause one school district to grow rapidly, build new schools, and hire



Alexander Rath/Fotolia

Most teachers enter and remain in their profession because of a desire to work with young people.

FIGURE 1.2 Projected Percentage Changes in Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools Through 2019



Sources: Projected Percentage Changes in Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools through 2019 from State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Data 2007–2008. Published by U S Department of Education, © 2015.



Robert Kneschke/Shutterstock

new teachers, while a neighboring school district closes schools and reduces its number of teachers. Nevertheless, the greatest shortages are usually in urban schools with large proportions of low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Some teachers do not want to teach in large urban school districts because of poorer working conditions in some schools and relatively low salaries compared to schools in the wealthier suburbs. Other teachers believe that teaching in a large city is very rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling. We recommend that you explore the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in districts of different sizes and locations.

The number of school-aged children in the United States is expected to increase during the next 10 years, increasing the need for teachers.

Teaching Field Shortages. Teacher shortages are more pronounced in some fields than others. For instance, as a percentage of total public school enrollments, the number of students requiring special education has risen considerably in recent years. Consequently, many school districts report the need for more special education teachers, especially in the case of certain exceptionalities.

There is also a general shortage of bilingual teachers, especially in certain geographical areas. The need for bilingual teachers is no longer limited to large urban areas and the southwestern states. Immigrant families with children have now settled in cities and rural areas across the nation. The projected demographics for the country indicate a growing number of students with limited English skills, requiring more bilingual and English-as-a-second-language teachers. This suggests that, to improve your teaching options, you should consider developing skills in another language (especially Spanish), if possible.

Licensed, highly qualified mathematics and science teachers are needed in many school districts. One of the problems especially in secondary schools is that teachers may have a state license, but too often it is not in the academic area they are assigned to teach.

Teachers often receive out-of-field assignments when teachers with the appropriate academic credentials are not available. Sometimes the assignments are made to retain teachers whose jobs have been eliminated as enrollments shift and schools are closed. The tragedy is that students suffer as a result—it is very difficult to teach what you do not know well.

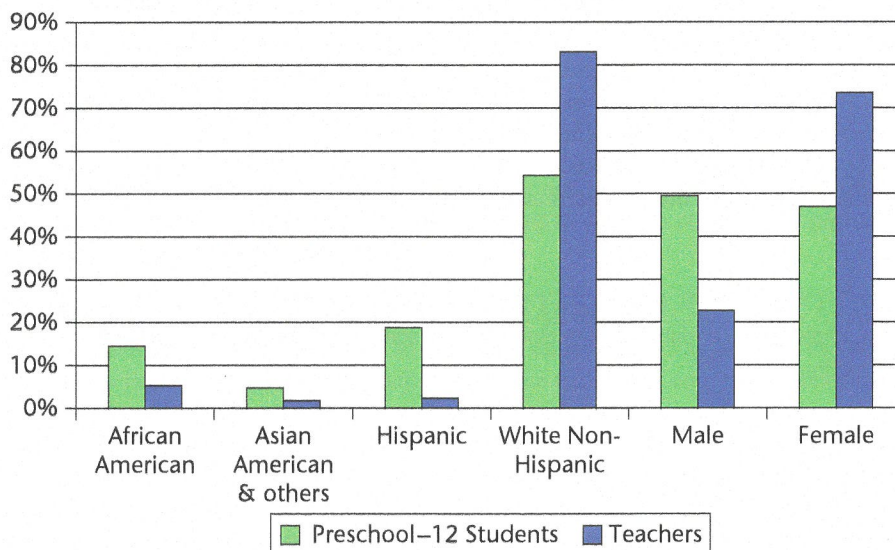
Teachers from Diverse Backgrounds. Although the student population is rapidly changing and becoming more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, the teaching pool is becoming less so. The number of Latino students is rapidly increasing, pulling almost even with the number of African American students. The student population is also more diverse than its teachers, as shown in Figure 1.3.

The degree and nature of diversity in schools vary by the region of the country. The percentage of students who are Hispanic or Asian American is higher in the West. Schools in the South and in large cities typically have the highest percentage of African American students. Midwest schools typically have the least diversity, although the number of Hispanic students is growing in that area. Having greater knowledge of the history and experiences of the diverse groups attending your school will improve your understanding of your students and their families. It also sends a message to families and communities that you care about them and their experiences.

Having teachers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds is extremely important. Most schools are actively seeking culturally diverse faculties. Another implication of the demographics of increasing student diversity is that all teachers need to become skilled at understanding and teaching in diverse schools and classrooms.

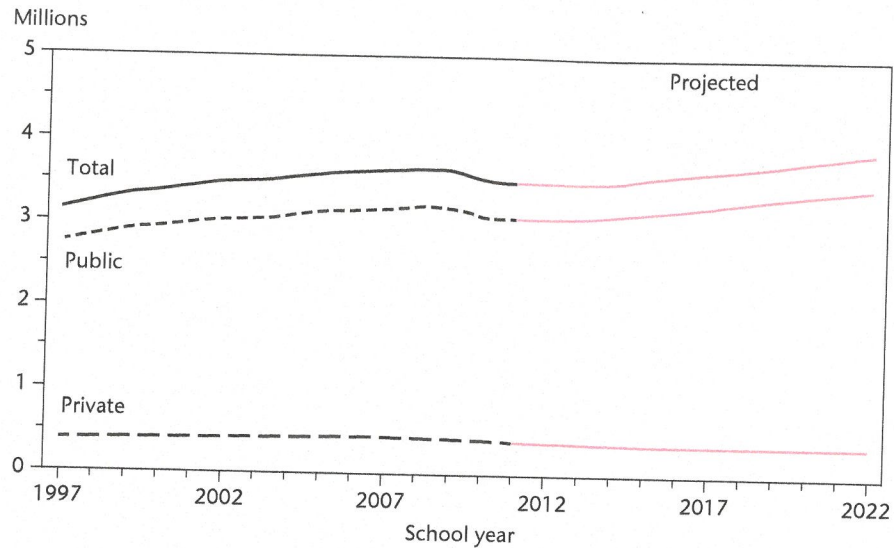
By way of summary, Figure 1.4 shows the overall projected number of public and private K–12 teachers needed in the United States through 2019.

FIGURE 1.3 Race, Ethnicity, and Gender of Students and Teachers



Source: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender of Students and Teachers from *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2009* Published by U S Census Bureau, © 2009.

FIGURE 1.4 New Teacher Hires



Source: New Teacher Hires from State *Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Data 2007-2008*. Published by U S Department of Education, © 2015.

Keep in mind that the need for teachers varies greatly from state to state and district to district. When you eventually begin your search for a teaching position, you will need to more carefully check on the need for teachers in your field and in the geographical area of your interest.

SHORTAGE OF SCHOOL FUNDS. Our schools need more teachers than they can afford. This fact will be substantiated by any school hiring official that you may ask. The problem is not that there is a shortage of teachers, but rather that there is a shortage of school funds that limits the number of teachers schools can afford to hire. It is perhaps a bit ironic that our citizens generally say they highly value education, but many of them seem to be reluctant to fully fund our schools—an educational problem that has existed for a very long time in our society and will unfortunately likely be the case throughout your teaching career. These realities may make it more difficult for you to find the ideal teaching position.

TEACHERS AS SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS. It turns out that teachers are usually very successful working in nonschool settings. The skills that most educators possess (helping people learn, human-relations skills, communication skills, understanding people, developing effective learning materials, motivating people, etc.) are the very skills needed to be successful in a wide variety of jobs, are the very talents most hiring officials are seeking, and are the skills needed to be a successful self-employed entrepreneur. Many people trained as educators do become entrepreneurs by developing their own businesses. Depending upon your particular situation, you may wish to consider some of these options at some point in your career.



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.1

Complete Check Your Understanding 1.1 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

Historically, fields such as law, medicine, architecture, and accounting have been considered professions, but teaching has sometimes been thought of, by some people, as a semiprofession. This distinction is based in part on the prestige of different jobs as reflected in the remuneration

received by members of a particular profession. Although teaching salaries remain lower than those of many other professionals, educators consider themselves professionals. The good news is that during the past decade, the prestige of teaching has risen. Most teachers have master's degrees and continue to participate in professional development activities throughout their careers. They manage their professional work, designing and delivering a curriculum during a school year. They develop their own unique teaching styles and methods for helping students learn. In this section, we explore the factors that characterize a profession and demonstrate that teaching itself is a full-fledged profession.

Professional Responsibilities

Being a professional carries many responsibilities. Professionals in most fields regulate licensure and practice through a professional standards board controlled by members of the profession rather than the government. Professional standards boards for teaching currently exist in about one-fourth of the states; other agencies have this responsibility in the remaining states. These boards have a variety of titles and typically include many practicing educators. Not only do these boards set standards for licensure but also they have standards and processes for monitoring the practice of teachers. They usually have the authority to remove a teacher's license.



VIDEO ANALYSIS 1.1

Watch a seventh-grade Language Arts teacher employ many different roles of the profession—highlighting her professional knowledge and skills—in this video. Notice the skills that she demonstrates, then answer the questions that follow the video in your Pearson eText.

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS AND DISPOSITIONS. Successful teachers exhibit **dispositions** (beliefs, attitudes, and values) that facilitate their work with students and parents. Teachers' values, commitments, and professional ethics influence interactions with students, families, colleagues, and communities. They affect student learning, motivation, and development. They influence a teacher's own professional growth as well. Dispositions held by teachers who are able to help all students learn include the following:

1. Enthusiasm for the discipline(s) she or he teaches and the ability to see its connections to everyday life
2. A commitment to continuous learning and engagement in professional discourse about subject matter knowledge and children's learning of the disciplines
3. The belief that all children can learn at high levels
4. Valuing the many ways in which people communicate and encouraging many modes of communication in the classroom
5. Development of respectful and productive relationships with parents and guardians from diverse home and community situations, seeking to develop cooperative partnerships in support of student learning and well-being

LEARNING TO USE AND CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH. Another important professional responsibility of all educators is to be able to understand, evaluate, and use educational research results. Parents rightly expect teachers to utilize the best of educational research in their classrooms, just as we patients rightly expect our physicians to utilize the most recent medical research results when they provide us with medical treatment.

Teachers can begin to better understand and use good educational research by enrolling in courses dealing with educational research, attending meetings on the subject, reading educational research journals, and doing Web searches on the topic. Teachers can also participate in research studies and, with the proper background, even design and carry out their own action research to help solve problems they face in their classrooms.

Dispositions The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Professional Knowledge

Professionals provide services to their clients, and their work is based on unique knowledge and skills grounded in research and best practice in the field. Professions require their members to have completed higher education, usually at the advanced level. The competence of most professionals is determined in training by **authentic assessments** in real-life settings. Traditionally, professionals have had control of their work with little direct supervision.

Yet another characteristic of a profession is that its members have some generally agreed-on knowledge base for their work. This professional knowledge has evolved from research and practice in the field. Teachers who have formally prepared to teach are usually more successful in classrooms than those who have no or little formal teacher training. Competent and qualified teachers are key to student learning.

To be a professional, teachers must also know the subjects they will be teaching. For example, secondary teachers should major in the academic area that they later will teach so that they learn the structure, skills, core concepts, ideas, values, facts, and methods of inquiry that undergird their discipline(s). They must understand the discipline well enough to help young people learn it and apply it to the world in which they live. As students learn about a concept or skill, teachers must be able to relate the content to the experiences of students in order to provide meaning and purpose.

VIDEO NOTE 1.1



This video showcases several teachers at different grade levels using their professional knowledge. How does their professional knowledge impact their teaching?

Professional Skills

One of the cornerstones of the field of teaching is knowledge about teaching and learning and the development of skills and dispositions that help students learn. Therefore, you, and all teacher candidates, study theories and research on how students learn at different ages. They must understand the influence of culture, language, and socioeconomic conditions on learning. They also have to know how to manage classrooms, motivate students, work with parents and colleagues, assess learning, and develop lesson plans. Teaching is a complex field. There are seldom, actually likely never, right answers that fit every situation. Teachers must make multiple decisions throughout a day as they respond to individual student needs and events in the school and community, all while keeping in mind the professional ethics required by the education profession. Incidentally, by taking this course, you are taking an important step toward developing the professional skills needed to be an effective educator.

Qualified teachers have also had the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions with students in schools. These field experiences and clinical practices such as student teaching and internships should be accompanied by feedback and mentoring from experienced teachers who know the subject they teach and how to help students learn. Work in schools is becoming more extensive in many teacher education programs. Some teacher candidates participate in yearlong internships in schools, ending in a master's degree. Others work in professional development schools in which higher education faculty, teachers, and teacher candidates collaborate in teaching and inquiry. In both of these cases, most, if not all, of the program is offered in a real school setting.

Parents and society in general expect teachers to be competent professionals who demonstrate all of the skills just discussed. This is an expectation that all teachers must meet, even while meeting the many difficult challenges that they will inevitably face.

An example of the many kinds of challenges that teachers face can be found in the "Perspectives on Diversity" feature dealing with understanding and working with people of diverse backgrounds.

Authentic assessment

An assessment that measures one's ability to perform a task in a real life situation.

PERSPECTIVES on DIVERSITY

Understanding and Working with Students from Diverse Backgrounds

Jim is a first-year teacher. He grew up not having many opportunities to know or work with people from cultural backgrounds other than his own. He now works with students, colleagues, and parents who come from different socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. There are even a couple of students who have recently immigrated to the United States in his classroom. The only language Jim knows is English. He is worried that, due to his inexperience, he may have difficulty understanding and working

with this vast array of students/colleagues/parents from diverse backgrounds.

WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

1. What suggestions might you have for Jim?
2. What cautions, if any, might you have for him?
3. What would you suggest that his school and colleagues do to help him?



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.2

Complete Check Your Understanding 1.2 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Different professions have different means of providing quality control over those who enter and remain in their profession. Most other professions, such as law, medicine, and dentistry, require candidates to graduate from an accredited professional school before they are eligible to take a licensing examination to test the knowledge and skills necessary to practice responsibly. Some professions also offer examinations for certification of advanced skills, such as the CPA exam for public accountants, or for practice in specialized fields, such as pediatrics, obstetrics, or surgery. The same quality assurance continuum now exists for teaching.

Accreditation

Both public schools and teacher education programs are subject to **accreditation programs**, in which they must demonstrate that they meet the standards established by accreditation agencies, some of which are mandated and some of which are voluntary. Accreditation provides assurance to the public that graduates of programs are qualified and competent to practice. The proportion of accredited schools, colleges, and departments of education in a state has been found to be the best predictor of the proportion of well-qualified teachers in a state. Because well-qualified teachers are the strongest predictor of student achievement on national achievement tests, accreditation is an important first step of a quality assurance system for the education field.

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION. The general concept of accreditation is related to an internal attempt on the part of a professional training system to examine and improve the quality of the profession that it serves. Six regional accreditation bodies offer accreditation to all K–12 schools and to colleges and universities. One of these six agencies is functioning in your state right now. For instance, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) accredits colleges and universities across the South. Three of the regional accreditors have merged their PreK-12 divisions into AdvancED to conduct reviews of schools. You might want to inquire whether your own institution is accredited by one of these six regional accrediting agencies. There is a good chance that the schools in which you will eventually teach will also be involved in some type of regional accreditation.

CAEP (COUNCIL FOR ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION). Do you know whether the teacher education program you are now in has CAEP accreditation or perhaps still has NCATE accreditation? Your college or university is probably accredited by one of the six

Accreditation programs Recognition given to educational institutions that have met accepted standards applied by an outside agency.

regional accrediting bodies just discussed that apply standards to the university as a whole by reviewing its financial status, student services, and the general studies curriculum. However, professional accreditation in teacher education is granted to the school, college, or department of education that is responsible for preparing teachers and other educators. Fewer than half of the roughly 1,300 institutions that prepare teachers in the United States is accredited by the profession's major accrediting agency, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation. However, the CAEP-accredited institutions graduate a majority of our new teachers. To learn more about the accreditation status of institutions, visit CAEP's website.

Licensure

When you graduate, to teach in public schools and in most private schools, you will be required to obtain a teaching license for the state in which you wish to teach. The requirements for your license are determined by the state in which you teach.

STATE TEACHER CERTIFICATION. State licensure is a major component of a quality-assurance system for professionals. To practice as a teacher, you must be granted a license from a state agency. A license to teach usually requires completion of a state-approved teacher education program and passing a standardized test of knowledge. In addition, student teaching or an internship must be completed successfully.

Before granting a professional license, some states are requiring teachers to submit **portfolios**, which are scored by experienced teachers as evidence of teaching effectiveness. The portfolios that you begin to compile during your teacher education program could evolve into the documentation you will later need to submit for your first professional license. Portfolios are discussed more fully elsewhere in this book and at the end of each chapter.

States traditionally required candidates to take specific college courses, complete student teaching, and successfully pass a licensure examination for a license. Most states either already have developed, or are in the process of developing, **performance-based licensing** systems.

Such systems will not specify courses to be completed; instead, they will indicate the knowledge, skills, and sometimes dispositions that candidates should possess. Future decisions about granting a license will depend on the results of state assessments such as the edTPA or PPAT, which are required by some states.

As already mentioned, requirements for teacher licensure differ from state to state. For this reason, if you plan to teach in a state different from the one in which you are going to school, you may want to contact that state directly for licensure information. The teacher certification officer at your institution should be able to provide you with licensure information and details about seeking a license in any particular state.

An initial teaching license allows a new teacher to practice for a specified period, usually three to five years, which is also known as the induction period. On completion of successful teaching during that period, and sometimes a master's degree, a professional license can be granted. Most states require continuing professional development throughout a teacher's career and periodic renewal of the license, typically every five years.

Incidentally and perhaps ironically, teaching certificates are rarely required to teach in higher education institutions. However, most teacher-preparing institutions do require that their education instructors and student teaching supervisors have prior public school teaching experience (and therefore prior teacher certification.)

InTASC. The ten standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) have been adopted or adapted for teacher licensure by many states. Figure 1.5 lists these ten standards, which describe what teachers should know and be able to do in their first few years of practice. You should learn the details of this important set of standards. You can do so by going to the InTASC website.

You will notice, as you work your way through this textbook, that these InTASC standards have been stressed and accommodated in a variety of ways in each chapter.

PRAXIS. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) has developed a series of examinations, commonly called the *Praxis Series*[™], that are designed to assess the knowledge and skills required to be an effective educator at various stages of a beginning teacher's career. Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (Core) Tests assess academic skills in reading, writing, and

Portfolio A compilation of work, records, and accomplishments that teacher candidates prepare for a specific purpose to demonstrate their learning, performance, and contributions.

Performance-based licensing A system of professional licensing based on the use of multiple assessments that measure the candidate's knowledge, skills, and dispositions to determine whether he or she can perform effectively in that profession.

FIGURE 1.5

InTASC Core Teaching Standard

The Learner and Learning

Standard #1: Learner Development. The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

Standard #2: Learning Differences. The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

Standard #3: Learning Environments. The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.

Content

Standard #4: Content Knowledge. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

Standard #5: Application of Content. The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Instructional Practice

Standard #6: Assessment. The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own

growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

Standard #7: Planning for Instruction. The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Standard #8: Instructional Strategies. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Professional Responsibility

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration. The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

Source: InTASC Core Teaching Standards from *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue*. Copyright © 2011 by Council of Chief State School Officers. Used by permission of Council of Chief State School Officers.

mathematics. Praxis Subject Assessment measures the subject-specific content knowledge for the subject(s) you plan to teach. The Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) test measures your pedagogical knowledge for the level that you plan to teach (e.g., elementary or secondary). Some teacher education programs and most states make use of these tests as part of their admission, retention, graduation, and certification requirements. Perhaps you are familiar with these Praxis tests; you might even have taken some of them. In any case, you should become familiar with them. You can learn more about the *Praxis Series* by visiting its website.

Your state may require licensure tests developed by the state or another testing company such as Pearson. Check the web site of your state department of education or licensure agency for specific information.

Advanced Certification

Advanced certification has long been an option in many professions but is relatively new for teaching. Requiring advanced certification, like all issues related to education, is not supported by everyone or all groups.

Many states now have an advanced certification option for educators. Some states actually require teachers to progress through a series of certification levels, whereas other states have only one certification level, or optional levels of certification that are made available to teacher. You should eventually understand the certification requirements and options in any school district in which you might consider working.

NBPTS. The **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)** was established in 1987 to develop a system for certifying accomplished teachers. The first teachers were certified by NBPTS in 1995, and the number of teachers seeking national certification continues to increase.

The NBPTS standards outline what teachers should know and be able to do as accomplished teachers. In essence, these standards state that nationally certified teachers:

1. Should be sincerely committed to students and to their learning.
2. Should thoroughly know their subject matter and their students.
3. Must be able to managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Should think systematically about their teaching and learn from their experiences.
5. Should be members of learning communities.¹



Wavebreakmedia/Shutterstock

To become eligible for national certification, you must teach for at least three years. The process for becoming nationally certified requires at least a year. The certification process requires the submission of portfolios with samples of student work and videotapes of the applicant teaching. In addition, teachers desiring NBPTS certification must complete a computer-based assessment in a testing center. Many teachers do not meet the national requirements on the first try but report that the process is the best professional development activity in which they have ever participated. Overwhelmingly, teachers report that they have become bet-

Given the trend to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms, it is likely that some of your students will have special needs, no matter what grades or subjects you teach.

ter teachers as a result. More and more parents in the future will likely desire nationally certified teachers in their children's classrooms.

Why do teachers seek national certification? For one thing, recognition of accomplishment by one's peers is fulfilling. Nationally certified teachers are also aggressively being recruited by some school districts. Nationally certified teachers may also be paid an extra salary stipend.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards A national association that creates and publishes standards and offers certification to accomplished teachers.

performance assessments A comprehensive assessment system through which candidates demonstrate proficiencies in the area being measured.

Standards

Standards and standards-based education are prevalent at all levels of education today. To finish your teacher education program, you will have to meet professional, state, and institutional standards that outline what you should know and be able to do as a novice teacher. When you begin teaching, you will be expected to prepare students to meet state or district standards. Assessments are designed to determine whether students meet the PreK-12 standards at the levels expected. Most states require teacher candidates to pass standardized tests at a predetermined level before granting the first license to teach. Some states require beginning teachers to pass **performance assessments**, based on standards in the first three years of practice in order to receive a professional license.

Standards developed by the profession can be levers for raising the quality of practice. When used appropriately, they can protect students from incompetent practice. Some educators view standards as a threat, especially when a government agency or other group holds individuals or schools to the standards, making summative judgments about licensure or approval. Others see standards as powerful tools for positive change in a profession or in school practices.

Standards are now used in many ways and at many educational levels throughout the nation. For instance, states have now created standards for public schools that apply to student learning.

¹ Based on National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

TEACHING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Standardized Tests

Testing is pervasive in our educational system today. Many school districts and states require students to pass tests to move from one grade to another grade. They must pass tests to graduate from high school and to enter most colleges and universities. Teacher candidates, like you, are required to pass standardized tests to be licensed to teach.

Not only are students and teacher candidates tested regularly and often, but also their schools and universities are held accountable for their performance on these tests. The aggregated results are published in newspapers and on websites. Schools and colleges are ranked within a state. Some are classified as low performing and lose part of their public funding. In some schools, teachers' and principals' jobs depend on how well their students perform on these standardized tests.

The standardized tests that are being used in elementary and secondary education are supposed to test for evidence that students are meeting state standards. For the most part, they are paper-and-pencil tests of knowledge in a subject area. Although the state standards are advertised as being developed by teachers and experts, many educators

argue that many of the standards expect knowledge and skills that are developmentally inappropriate at some grade levels. In areas such as social studies, recall of specific facts that cover spans of hundreds of years is not an uncommon requirement.

It probably comes as no surprise that some teachers are teaching to the test and even taking weeks out of the curriculum to coach students for the test. Some people believe that this constitutes a form of cheating. And due to pressure to do well on tests, some students find ways to cheat in an attempt to obtain higher scores.

WHAT ARE MY CHALLENGES?

1. What are your perspectives on standardized tests at this point in your professional development?
2. What are some things that teachers can do to deal with the problems of standardized tests?
3. What are some of the factors that probably cause students to cheat, and what are some things that a teacher could do to reduce cheating?

Standards usually lead to standardized testing, which can now be found in all public schools. And, as is the case with most public school activity, there are varied perspectives on the pros and cons of standardized testing in the public schools. The accompanying "Teaching in Challenging Times" feature illustrates one of the challenges that teachers may face concerning standardized tests.



VIDEO NOTE 1.2

In this video, you'll hear a principal describe her views on standards and accountability. Does she believe they have a positive impact on the classroom?

USING TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND STANDARDS. Just about all national and state educational standards can be rather easily found on the Web. Standards created by professional organizations can also be accessed by checking the websites of those organizations. We highly recommend that you find and carefully examine any standards that apply to your major(s) and to the teaching areas that are of interest to you. And as already mentioned, you should also become familiar with the educational standards that apply to the state(s) in which you intend to teach. Such standards should be useful in guiding you through your remaining teacher education preparation.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* was signed into law in December 2015 as a replacement for the former NCLB Act. This act, which is actually a reauthorized version of the earlier Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), expresses broad national education goals, and guides much of the federal funding of educational activity throughout the Nation. This ESSA Act, like all federal education laws and programs, exist only if periodically approved and funded by congress. ESSA is likely to guide much of our public education as long as it exists.

Like all sweeping pieces of legislation, the ESSA Act is, and will continue to be, controversial, have many critics, and is subject to change. Because it will have a considerable impact on your future as an educator and citizen, we highly recommend that you review it more closely.



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.3

Complete Check Your Understanding 1.3 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

IMPROVING BY REFLECTING

It is interesting, and perhaps useful to educators, to remember that physicians proudly claim to “practice” medicine throughout their careers. Many people have suggested that teachers should borrow this concept and also proudly undertake to “practice” teaching throughout their careers. This interpretation of the word *practice* implies that teachers, like physicians, should constantly strive to improve their performance—something that all good teachers do. The following section provides you with a few practical suggestions as you prepare to “practice” your profession as a teacher.

Systematic Observation

As you proceed through your teacher education program, you should seize every opportunity to observe a wide variety of activities related to the world of education. For instance, in addition to the observation and participation assignments you will have as part of the formal teacher education program, you should volunteer to visit, observe, and volunteer in a wide variety of classrooms. You should also attempt to find summer employment that allows you to work with young people. The more time you spend with children, the better you will understand them and be able to work with them.

Informal Note-Taking

As you observe teachers and classrooms, write down your observations. This type of note-taking can be done in a variety of ways. For instance, when you enter a classroom, write a brief description of the setting, such as the physical appearance of the room, the number of students, the teaching devices available, and so on. Then systematically describe each thing you observe. The more detail you can record, the more you will learn from your observations.

Create a list of questions that interest you before you begin any given observation. If you are interested in how a teacher motivates students during a particular lesson, write down the question “What techniques does the teacher use to help motivate students?” Then record your observations under that question. The “School-Based Observations” feature, located at the end of each chapter, will help you get an idea of the types of observations you can make.

Analysis of Practice and Reflection

Once you have collected observations of teaching, children, classrooms, and schools, take time to think about what you have seen. Several techniques exist for systematically analyzing your observations, but equally important is taking time to reflect on these analyses. In our rush to get everything done, we frequently fail to take time to examine our experiences and impressions. However, being serious about finding time for thoughtful reflection is an important part of becoming an excellent teacher. The following processes can be helpful.

Reflective Journaling

Educators at all levels have come to realize that learners profit greatly from thinking reflectively about, and then writing down, what they learn in school. This process is called *reflective journaling*. If you are not now required to keep a journal in your teacher education program, we strongly recommend that you start doing so by completing the following “Journal for Reflection” feature, as well as the others found throughout this text.

JOURNAL FOR REFLECTION 1.1

Record your thoughts at this stage of your professional development about:

1. The teaching profession
2. Its strengths and weaknesses
3. Your interest in teaching as a career
4. Your excitement and doubts about working in the profession

You can go about keeping a journal in many ways. All you need is something to write on and the will to write. A spiral notebook, a three-ring binder, or a computer works fine. Preferably at the end of each day (at the very least once each week), briefly summarize your thoughts about and reactions to the major events and concepts you have experienced and learned. Spend more time thinking and reflecting, and write down only a brief summary. We believe that your journal should be brief, reflective, candid, personal, and preferably private, something like a personal diary. Try to be perfectly honest in your journal and not worry about someone evaluating your opinions.

When you start to work in schools, you will discover (if you have not already done so) that teachers in elementary and secondary schools use journaling with their students. Something about thinking and then writing down our thoughts about what we have learned helps us to internalize, better understand, and remember what we have learned.

Within each chapter in this book, we offer several suggestions for entries in your journal. We sincerely believe that reflective journaling throughout your teacher education program will enrich your learning and better prepare you for teaching.

Folio/Portfolio Development

As you move through your teacher education program and into your career as a teacher, you will find that you have been collecting stacks, boxes, and files of information and “stuff” related to you, your teaching, and the accomplishments of the students you have taught.

COLLECTING AND ORGANIZING MATERIAL. If you are like most teachers, you will not know for sure what to do with all of the teaching materials that you accumulate, yet you will be reluctant to throw any of it away. Be very careful about discarding material until you have organized a folio and anticipated the needs of various portfolios that you might have to prepare. A *folio* is an organized compilation of all the products, records, accomplishments, and testimonies of a teacher and his or her students. Imagine the folio as a large file drawer with different compartments and file folders. Some of the material included is related directly to you and your background. Other items or artifacts reflect what others have said about you. Other materials may include examples of projects that your students have completed.

A *portfolio* is a special compilation assembled from the folio for a specific occasion or purpose, such as a job interview or an application for an outstanding teacher award. The portfolio might also be used by you and your professors throughout your teacher education program to document your performance in meeting state, professional, and institutional standards. Portfolios are required in some states as evidence that you should be granted a professional teaching license after the first few years of actual work in classrooms. Portfolios will also be required for NBPTS certification later in your career. A folio or portfolio can be organized in any way you think will be most useful.

The occasions on which other people recognize your contributions and achievements are called *attestations*. Awards, letters of commendation, newspaper articles, and information on elected positions and committee memberships are examples of attestation items to keep in your folio.

Through your efforts as a teacher candidate and teacher, students complete assignments, assemble projects, achieve on examinations, and receive awards. Compile the works and successes of the people you have worked with along with photographs and video records of your classroom and student projects. You may want to include videotapes of your teaching with a description of your classroom context and a written analysis of your teaching. Also include copies of your best lesson plans, committee reports, grant proposals, and other products that have resulted from your efforts as a leader.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT TASKS. To help you with your folio, we have included at the end of each chapter several suggestions in the Portfolio Development section. We have selected topics and tasks that are important to you at this early point in your teacher education program; in fact, these suggestions anticipate some of the items you may need to include in future portfolio presentations.



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.4

Complete Check Your Understanding 1.4 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

BEGINNING AND DEVELOPING YOUR CAREER

The following information will hopefully help you to learn more about becoming a certified educator in your field and in the state(s) where you hope to teach, to learn more about teacher salaries and benefits, to apply for teaching positions, and to eventually locate a teaching position.

Becoming Licensed

All teachers must obtain a license before they can legally teach in public schools. Many private schools also require their teachers to be licensed. Each state determines its own teacher licensure requirements.

LICENSURE TESTS. Most states require teacher candidates to pass one or more standardized tests at a specified level to be eligible for their first license to teach. Written assessments are required in many states, and many states require basic skills tests; in fact, many institutions require candidates to pass these tests before they are admitted into teacher education programs. More than half the states require candidates to pass tests in both professional pedagogical and content or subject-area knowledge. The cutoff scores that determine passing are set by states and vary greatly.

An increasing number of states are requiring future teachers to major in an academic area rather than only in “education.” Students complete courses in education, field experiences, and student teaching or an internship along with courses in a chosen academic major to become eligible for a license when the program is completed. You should clearly understand the requirements for a license in the state in which you are attending school and in any states in which you may wish to teach.

Searching for a Teaching Position

Teacher education candidates should begin thinking about employment early in their college careers. A helpful annual resource, which is likely available in your college’s job placement office, is the *Job Search Handbook for Educators* from the American Association for Employment in Education. This handbook contains suggestions for preparing your résumé, cover letters, and letters of inquiry; it also provides excellent practical suggestions for improving your interviewing techniques. Information on teacher supply and demand in different fields is included in the handbook as well. This information is also likely available on the Web.

School districts typically would like applicants to present evidence that responds to the following questions (along with portfolios containing illustrations of performance, which are very helpful in this process):

1. Can the candidate do the job? Does the candidate have the necessary academic background? Can the candidate provide evidence that his or her students learned something? Does he or she know how to assess learning? Is he or she sensitive to the needs of diverse children? Can the candidate respond well to individual differences? How strong is he or she with regard to community activities?
2. Will the candidate do the job? What interview evidence does the candidate provide that communicates a professional commitment to getting the job done?
3. Will the candidate fit in? Is this candidate a good match for the needs of the district and the student needs as identified? How will the candidate work with other teachers and staff?

4. Will the candidate express well what he or she wants in a professional assignment? Does the candidate have personal and professional standards of his or her own?
5. Does the district's vision match the candidate's vision?

Understanding the expectations of the district, as well as your own expectations, is critical if you will be successful in a given school district.

You may also find that using *social media* can be helpful in your eventual search for a teaching position. You will undoubtedly need to be creative in doing so, but this rapidly developing, amazing network can greatly and rather easily expand your network of potentially useful connections.

Education Salaries in a Changing World

Teaching salaries vary considerably from state to state and from school district to school district. One reason for the higher salaries in some districts is the difference in the cost of living from one area to another. However, cost of living alone does not explain the differences. Some states and some school districts view teachers as professionals, have high expectations for them, support them through mentoring and professional development, use multiple assessments to determine teacher effectiveness, and pay salaries commensurate with those of other professionals. Unfortunately, some other states do not support or pay their teachers this well.

VIDEO NOTE 1.3



An education professional shares varying opinions on performance pay. Does the superintendent in this video believe it has merit?

SALARY DIFFERENCES. Each board of education is an agent of the state and is therefore empowered to set salary levels for employees of the school districts it governs. Each school system typically has developed a **salary schedule** that outlines the minimum and maximum salary for several levels of study beyond the bachelor's degree and for each year of teaching experience. For example, a beginning teacher with a bachelor's degree might be paid \$35,000, and one with a master's degree might be paid \$42,000. Teachers with twenty years of experience might be paid \$50,000 to \$76,000, depending on the school district in which they are employed. Schools also typically pay extra for additional duties such as coaching or working with extracurricular activities.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS. All full-time teachers receive additional benefits that, when added to their basic salary, constitute their total compensation package. When you pursue your first teaching position, you will want to inquire about these benefits as well as the salary. Although the salary is usually of first concern to a teacher, additional benefits are equally important over the long term. Additional benefits vary from school to school but frequently include some type of health insurance benefits—hospitalization insurance, medical/surgical coverage, and major medical insurance. Somewhat less frequently, a teacher's medical insurance also includes dental care and prescription drugs; it may include coverage of eyeglasses and other types of less common medical services. Benefits often include a group life insurance policy as well.

Retirement Benefits

Full-time public school teachers are usually eligible for retirement benefits as part of their total compensation package. These benefits also vary from state to state. In some states, teachers receive a combination of state teacher retirement and Social Security retirement. In other states, a teacher's retirement may depend totally on a state program and be divorced entirely from the federal Social Security retirement system. It is sometimes possible for teachers who move from state to state to transfer their retirement benefits to the state in which they ultimately retire. A teacher's retirement package is an extremely important part of the total compensation package and needs to be well understood by everyone entering the profession.

Salary schedule

A printed negotiated schedule that lists salary levels based on years of experience and education.

Working Conditions

Almost everyone feels better about his or her work when the environment is supportive and conducive to high-quality output. The same is true for teachers and students. Like other factors in education, working conditions differ greatly from school to school. Within a single school district, the conditions can change dramatically across neighborhoods. Some schools are beautiful sprawling campuses with the latest technology. Unfortunately, in at least some other schools, toilets are backed up, paint is peeling off the walls, classes are held in storage rooms, and/or some administrators are repressive. Most teachers who begin their careers in the second type of setting either aggressively seek assignments in other schools as soon as possible or leave the profession.

Teachers work under very different conditions from those of most other professionals. Secondary and middle school teachers usually work with students in forty-five- to fifty-five-minute time periods with brief breaks between classes. Elementary and early childhood teachers are usually in self-contained classrooms in which they have few breaks and sometimes even have to supervise students during recesses and lunch periods. Unfortunately, this leaves little time during the school day to work with colleagues or to plan for the next lesson or the next day. In some schools, unfortunately, teachers still have limited access to telephones or computers for support in their work.

Improving Through Experience

Like all other professionals, teachers become more accomplished through positive experience. As mentioned before, most states do not grant a professional license to teachers until they have taught for at least three years. Teachers cannot seek national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards until they have taught for three years. When teachers leave the profession in their first few years of practice, schools lose an important developing resource. Good professional development programs for teachers such as **induction** programs, which provide special help for new teachers during their first few years, also help to retain new teachers.

An increasing number of schools now have a system that provides **mentoring** among teachers. This peer mentoring system is designed to facilitate teachers helping one another. As part of a new teacher induction program, many of these schools assign an experienced master teacher to mentor beginning teachers. When you search for your first teaching job, find out whether the school district provides induction programs, mentors, and professional development, especially for beginning teachers. These are services hopefully offered by your school district that help you improve your skills as an educator.

Developing as a Teacher

Most educators feel that their teaching improves dramatically during the first five years of practice. Often teachers hone their skills alone as they practice in their own classrooms and take advantage of available professional development activities. A promising practice is the assignment of mentors to new teachers to assist them in developing their skills during the early years of practice.

Effective experienced teachers see teaching as a public endeavor. They welcome parents and others to the classroom. As cooperating teachers and mentors, they become actively engaged with higher education faculty in preparing new teachers. They become researchers as they critically examine their own practice, testing various strategies to help students learn and sharing their findings with colleagues in faculty and professional meetings.

RENEWAL OF LICENSE. Most states require teaching licenses to be renewed periodically. A professional license is usually not granted until after a certain number of years of successful practice. Some states require a master's degree; a few require the successful completion of a portfolio with videotapes of teaching that are judged by experienced teachers. To retain a license throughout one's career, continuing professional development activities will probably be required.

Induction Years one to three of full-time teaching.

Mentoring An experienced professional helping a less experienced colleague.



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.5

Complete Check Your Understanding 1.5 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

THE CHALLENGES OF BECOMING A GREAT EDUCATOR

We all live in a challenging and rapidly changing world, especially the professional world in which educators live. Many—if not most—of the topics discussed in this chapter will change over time, and you will need to keep up on current educational trends throughout your career as an educator.

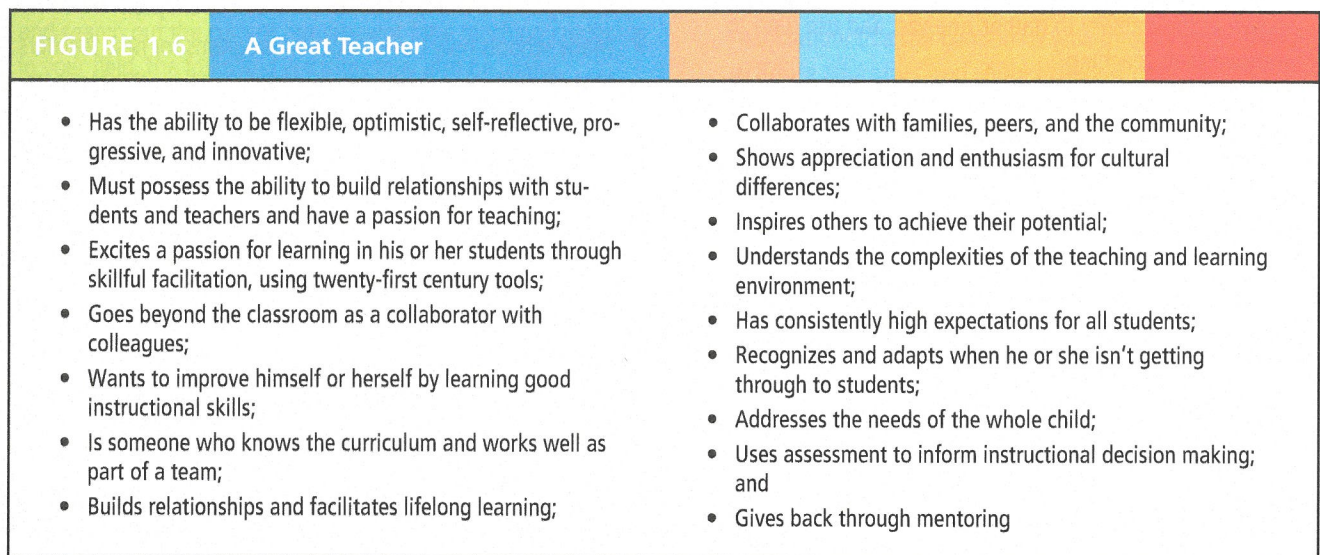
Continuing professional development is one of the ongoing activities of conscientious career teachers. Often teachers return to college for a master's degree that may help to increase their knowledge and skills related to teaching and learning and the subjects they teach. They learn new skills such as the use of the technology to help students learn. They learn more about the subjects they teach by taking formal courses, reading on their own and exploring the Internet, working in related businesses in the summers, or traveling as time and resources permit. Effective teachers often ask colleagues to observe their teaching and provide suggestions for improving their work. They seek advice from other teachers and professionals with whom they work. They join and become active in professional organizations, attend and participate in professional meetings, read educational journals, explore and participate in educational research, keep up on world events, and so forth. Doing as many of these things as possible will improve your work as an educator and will even make your work more enjoyable.

VIDEO ANALYSIS 1.2



To hear two principals' views on what it means to be a professional, watch the video, then answer the questions that follow the video in your Pearson eText.

Participants at a *Phi Delta Kappa Summit on High-Performing Educators* developed a list of the qualities of a great teacher, which are shown in Figure 1.6. This list is a wonderful set of goals for you to keep in mind as you look ahead to your career and as you strive to become a “great educator.”



Source: A Great Teacher from *What Makes a Great Teacher?* By Erin Young. Copyright © 2009 by Phi Delta Kappa . Used by permission of Phi Delta Kappa.



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.6

Complete Check Your Understanding 1.6 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

SUMMARY

TODAY'S TEACHERS

- There are about 4 million public and private school teachers—who are generally highly regarded and respected—in the United States today.
- Parents feel that adequate funding is the major problem in our public schools.
- Educators must constantly be attuned to the many different perspectives on education that are held by policy makers, parents, students, fellow educators, and society in general.
- Teacher supply and demand and teacher salaries vary greatly from place to place.

TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

- Educators must develop many professional skills, commitments, and dispositions to be effective teachers, and their major professional responsibility is to help students learn.
- The dispositions needed by teachers include enthusiasm for the subjects they teach, a commitment to continuing education, a belief that all children can learn, value communication with everyone, and value productive relationships.
- Teachers must have a keen understanding of teaching and learning and possess the dispositions that help students learn.
- Successful teachers are reflective about their work as shown in their ability to gather, analyze, and use data to improve their teaching.
- These teachers have a natural curiosity about their work and are continually searching for better answers to the challenges they face and work to refine their professional skills throughout their entire career.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Each state determines its own teaching requirements and issues its own teaching certificates.
- A variety of agencies are attempting to improve the education profession through accreditation programs.

- InTASC has created a list of standards that describe what teachers should know and be able to do.
- PRAXIS examinations are designed to assess the knowledge and skills required to be an effective teacher.
- The NBPTS is a system for granting certification for accomplished teachers.
- Standards and standards-based education are prevalent at all levels of education today.

IMPROVING BY REFLECTING

- You can learn a good deal about teaching through systematic observation and reflective journaling.
- Beginning in their teacher education programs, teachers should write in reflective journals, collect and organize information and data, and compile information from their folios into portfolios for specific purposes such as performance assessments and job applications.
- Collecting, organizing, and saving material you produce during your teacher preparation program can help you learn and be useful to you in the future.

BEGINNING AND DEVELOPING YOUR CAREER

- People are typically required to take a variety of tests to become certified as teachers.
- School district employing officials typically want candidates to respond to the questions listed in this chapter.
- Many schools now have induction programs for new teachers that often involve mentoring by experienced master teachers.
- You should begin your job search process early with the help of your school's job placement office, and the annual *Job Search Handbook for Educators* can be very helpful.

THE CHALLENGES OF BECOMING A GREAT EDUCATOR

- The field of education will continue to present challenges to educators and will change rapidly in the future.
- There will also continue to be a great variety of perspectives on education.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What are the characteristics of a profession? What are some of the arguments for or against recognizing teaching as a profession?
2. Why do shortages of teachers probably exist in some subjects and in some schools, but not in others?
3. What should national accreditation tell you about your teacher education program?
4. Of what potential value are journals, folios, and portfolios in preparing to teach?
5. What support should school districts provide to teachers in the induction years to encourage retention in the profession beyond three years?

SCHOOL-BASED OBSERVATIONS

1. Begin a list of the teaching challenges that you observe in schools. Reflect on the challenges that you had not expected when you initially thought about teaching as a career and how those challenges may influence your decision to become a teacher. How much have the teaching challenges you have observed met your initial expectations?
2. Ask several teachers what their major challenges and satisfactions are as educators. Analyze their answers and think about the major challenges and satisfactions you may experience as an educator.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

1. Find and organize the many materials, artifacts, and records that you currently have. Examples may include term papers, transcripts, awards, letters of recognition, and observation journals. Organize these materials into logical categories. At various points in the future, you will be drawing items out of the folio to develop a portfolio for completion of student teaching or to apply for a teaching position or national certification.

WEB SOLUTIONS

You will eventually need to understand the teacher certification requirements for the state(s) in which you may wish to teach. It is never too early to begin that process; therefore, we highly recommend that you now decide in which state(s) you may end up teaching, find the websites for their teacher certification offices, and search out the current requirement for a teaching credential in your field. The following websites may also be useful:

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification.

Information on licensure requirements and state agencies that are responsible for teacher licensing are available on this organization's website.

NCATE/TEAC. A list of institutions with teacher education accredited and information about becoming a teacher are available on this website. It also includes links to state agencies and their licensure requirements.

Educators Rising. Formerly known as the Future Educators Association, this site contains a wealth of material useful to future educators. You should check it out.