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“There is a need – indeed an urgency – to do things differently,” states Michael Poliakoff, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality. “Existing regulations for teacher certification in almost every state include greater or lesser (usually greater) amounts of seat-time in teacher education courses. These regulations are weak at screening prospective teachers for mastery of their subjects and often require a battery of education courses that discourage promising candidates from entering teaching.”

Poliakoff continues, “School personnel policies make staffing even more difficult. Schools have traditionally had few tools at their disposal to attract teachers to hard-to-staff subjects, like math and science, or to rural and urban schools. Once teachers are hired, they are locked into a single salary scale that does not distinguish between good, bad and indifferent performance. The good news is that receptivity to new ways to improve the teaching force has never been higher. We have a great opportunity to do a lot of good for the school children of America.”

**The full article, "The Path to Teacher Quality from Regulation to Local Responsibility" appears in the Summer 2002 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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The last several years have seen states develop a large number of policies and programs to address the issue of teaching quality. These include measures to recruit and retain teachers more successfully, prepare them more soundly, certify and insure their competence more reliably, and provide more effectively for their continuing professional growth.

Michael Allen, program director for the Education Commission of the States, believes that “what works is never only a matter of a particular kind of policy or program but also depends upon the specific details of the program’s design, its political and financial support, the skill and determination of those who administer it, and the other factors that determine the manner and success of its implementation.”

**The full article, "Improving Teacher Preparation, Recruitment and Retention," appears in the Summer 2002 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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“There is an irony in demonstrating that teachers are important by showing that students’ academic achievement is dependent on the teachers they are assigned,” according to Grover J. Whitehurst, Assistant Secretary for Education Research and Improvement for the U.S. Department of Education. “In other fields, substantial variation in performance among professionals delivering the same service is seen as a problem to be fixed. For example, we would not tolerate a system in which airline pilots varied appreciably in their ability to accomplish their tasks successfully, for who would want to be a passenger on the plane with the pilot who is at the 10th percentile on safe landings?” Whitehurst continues, “The American system of public education is built on what Richard Elmore has called the ethic of atomized teaching: autonomous teachers who close the doors to their classrooms and teach what they wish as they wish. The graphs from the value-added studies tell us what happens when a child has the bad luck to be assigned to a teacher whose approach doesn’t work. Variation in teacher effectiveness needs to be reduced substantially if our schools are going to perform at high levels.”

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The role of the states in regulating teacher licensure differs in degree and complexity from state regulation of other professions. Although state boards, for example in law and medicine, require demonstration of competency, the state is not directly responsible for delivering legal and medical services. In these instances, oversight is often delegated by the state to the legal and medical communities. In education, however, states mandate school attendance and contribute to school financing. According to Thomas Houlihan, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, "The states need policy and capacity to ensure that students receive a quality education. One way for states to accomplish this is to take a direct role in the oversight of the teaching profession."

**The full article, "State Collaboration and Teacher Preparation Reform" appears in the Summer 2002 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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The Summer 2002 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government* includes a symposium section examining the trends in education reform. Other issues explored include new demographic divisions, a new compact on adult offender supervision and Nevada's successful efforts at collecting debt.

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Recently, [The Council of State Governments](#) launched a national mission to help state leaders better prepare for the future by identifying emerging trends and issues that might have significant impact on state priorities and policymaking. **CSG's Trends Forecast Report** is an effort to provide foresight for state officials across the nation. The information in this monthly report is condensed from CSG's quarterly journal, *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*. For more information on the contents of this report or *Spectrum*, please contact CSG, PO Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910; (859) 244-8220; or [alindon@csg.org](mailto:alindon@csg.org). If you would like to subscribe to *Spectrum*, click [here](#).

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