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## Promoting Equitable Access to Effective Teachers

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# How does access to effective teachers vary in a metro-Atlanta school district?

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The question of whether all students have equal access to effective teachers has proven difficult to answer. We provide descriptive evidence on the distribution of teacher quality across a metro-Atlanta school district. Our analysis focuses on the distribution of teacher quality geographically and over time, comparing differences in access to effective teachers between students in high- and low-income areas and assessing how the distribution of teacher effectiveness has changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## What did we learn?

Average teacher effectiveness is lower in the Higher-Poverty Region (HPR). The difference is roughly twice the size of the typical difference in performance between a first-year teacher and a teacher with 3–5 years of experience when extended across a full school year.

We find generally higher variance in teacher effectiveness in the Higher-Poverty Region despite substantial overlap in teacher effectiveness between the two regions, driven by a higher share of teachers in the bottom decile of teacher effectiveness working in the HPR.

We find evidence of increased variation in teacher effectiveness after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic district-wide but particularly in the Lower-Poverty Region.

## What are the policy implications?

Research finds that few highly effective teachers are willing to move to “hard-to-staff” schools, even when offered large bonuses. A more cost-effective approach would be to focus on reducing the proportion of relatively ineffective teachers in higher-poverty schools by improving the selection process or using financial incentives for new teachers who begin their careers in the Higher-Poverty Region. These strategies could be paired with retention incentives tied to performance.

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### Researchers

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## What questions did we answer?

1. How does access to effective teachers vary between higher and lower-poverty regions of a metro-Atlanta school district?
2. How did the teacher effectiveness distribution change after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

## What data did we use?

Our analysis uses student-level administrative data from a large school district in the metro Atlanta area between school years (SY) 2017–18 and 2021–22. These data include demographic information such as a student's race, identified disability and free or reduced-price meals status, English Learner status, school, and grade level along with fall and winter formative assessment scores. In total, we construct roughly 4,500 teacher-subject effectiveness estimates based on about 195,000 student-subject-year observations.

## Why is this issue important?

Ensuring that students have equal access to effective teachers is vital for promoting economic mobility and closing existing achievement gaps. By studying how effective teachers are distributed between higher- and lower-poverty schools in metro-Atlanta, we can suggest context-specific policy interventions that are most relevant for equalizing access to effective teachers in the area.

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## Want to learn more?

A report is available at  
[gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications](https://gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications)

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The **Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE)** is a component of the **Georgia Policy Labs (GPL)**, a research collaboration between Georgia State University and a variety of government agencies committed to leveraging the power of data to drive policy and programmatic decisions that lift children, students, and families—especially those experiencing vulnerabilities.

## Suggested citation

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