ABOUT THE ORIGINAL STUDY

Disparities in Access to Well-Qualified, Well-Supported Special Educators Across Higher- Versus Lower-Poverty Schools Over Time

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Why It Matters

Equal access to qualified special educators may not ensure equal access to well-supported teaching. This study examines whether disparities in special educators' demands and resources changed across higher- and lower-poverty schools.

Data and Sample

The study uses nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey and National Teacher and Principal Survey data spanning 2000–2016. It compares special education teachers' qualifications, demands, and school-based resources across school poverty levels.

Key Findings

- The gap in general teacher certification between higher- and lower-poverty schools closed by 2016; this measure does not establish parity in special education certification.
- Special educators in higher-poverty schools were more likely to teach self-contained classes and reported more challenging student behavior.
- Gaps in teacher cooperation and access to material resources persisted, generally favoring lower-poverty schools.

Policy Implications

- Include both teacher qualifications and organizational demands and resources in equity planning.
- Systematically collect teachers' reports of working conditions to identify inequities across schools.
- Direct greater attention and resources to high-poverty schools; the study identifies disparities rather than tests the causal effects of a particular investment.

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