

TROOPS-TO-TEACHERS

Program Brings More Men and Minorities to the Teaching Workforce, but Education Could Improve Management to Enhance Results

Why GAO Did This Study

With the 2002 enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), GAO was mandated to review the Troops-to-Teachers program, which provides financial assistance and counseling to help military personnel obtain their teacher licenses, especially in priority subject areas, such as math and science, and find employment in high-need districts and schools, as well as public charter schools. The U.S. Department of Education oversees the program, which received nearly \$15 million in fiscal year 2005. This report identifies (1) the number and characteristics of program participants and factors affecting participation; (2) the recruitment and retention of participants in high-need districts and priority subject areas; and (3) the steps Education has taken to facilitate program management.

What GAO Recommends

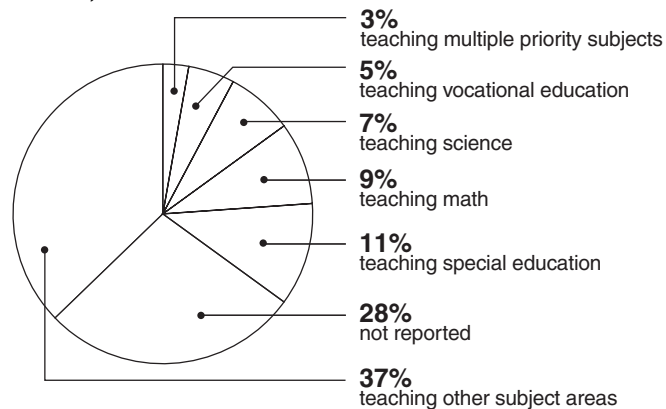
GAO recommends that the Secretary of Education take steps to improve program management and better coordinate with existing teacher recruitment and retention initiatives. Education generally agreed with GAO's findings and recommendations.

What GAO Found

The 3,875 troops who were documented as having been hired through the program between the enactment of NCLBA in 2002 and the close of the 2004-2005 school year contributed to gender and racial diversity in the teaching workforce. Over 80 percent of Troops teachers are male and over 25 percent are African American—characteristics that differ from the new teacher population overall. However, participation has recently decreased and hiring has been geographically concentrated. The majority of the program's teachers hired from school years 2001-2002 through 2004-2005 were employed in seven states.

Most teachers receiving financial assistance through the program between the enactment of NCLBA and June 30, 2005, were placed in districts designated as high-need on the basis of serving children who qualify for federal assistance. About 90 percent of these funded participants continued teaching in high-need districts during their second year, and over 75 percent of the original group taught in high-need districts for a third year. About one-third of Troops hired during this period reported teaching in the priority areas of math, science, special education, or vocational education.

Percentage of Hired Teachers Reporting Subject Areas Taught between the Enactment of NCLBA and June 30, 2005



Source: GAO analysis of DANTEs' administrative records.

Education has taken some steps to improve program management, but has not effectively coordinated resources with another teacher recruitment program also targeting military personnel. While Education has developed a draft work plan for Troops-to-Teachers and improved the definition of a high-need district for eligibility purposes, it has not assessed the data it uses to make high-need school determinations. Further, it disbanded a teacher policy group that once provided a forum for department managers to discuss recruitment and retention initiatives.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-265.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Marnie Shaul at (202) 512-7215 or ShaulM@gao.gov.