The Problem: Far too many teacher preparation programs are failing to:
1) adequately prepare teachers for a modern, diverse classroom, and
2) recruit and retain a diverse cohort of teacher candidates.

Both of these failures negatively impact student achievement. Furthermore, it is difficult for prospective teachers to choose a teacher preparation program wisely due to a lack of public information about the effectiveness of programs.

Enter

• Prioritize increasing the number of teacher candidates of color
• Recruit candidates for positions where they are needed most
• Increase program selectivity

Experience

• Improve the student teaching experience
• Improve the quality of the cooperating teacher corps
• Prioritize developing cultural competency in teacher candidates
• Improve the focus (both in coursework and clinical practice) in critical areas for program growth

Exit

• Assess teacher candidate mastery using the edTPA
• Offer year-long residency programs for newly licensed teachers in hard-to-staff schools

Outside the Box

• Support high-quality, innovative alternative programs to increase teacher diversity
• Explore alternatives to accreditation for meaningful evaluation
• Base state funding formulas for teacher preparation programs partially on outcomes
Recommendations for Improving the Entrance Process

1. PRIORITIZE INCREASING THE NUMBER OF TEACHER CANDIDATES OF COLOR

The state should require preparation programs to submit an action plan outlining goals and aligned plans for recruiting and graduating teacher candidates of color. To support teacher preparation programs in enacting these plans, the state should create a workforce specialist position to help programs meet their goals. In addition, we must better understand where barriers in the pipeline exist, therefore the state should require that some reported outcomes on the new teacher preparation report card be disaggregated by race, including:

- 4-year graduation rates
- Licensure rates
- Employment rates
- Candidate satisfaction levels

2. RECRUIT CANDIDATES FOR POSITIONS WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST

The state should require programs to expand upon their teacher diversity plans to address goals and strategies for recruiting candidates into shortage areas. The current teacher shortage in Minnesota is concentrated in several licensure areas, including special education and English language learning. The plans should address at least one shortage area and could include strategies such as informing incoming candidates about employment trends, recruiting from other majors, and offering financial incentives.

3. INCREASE PROGRAM SELECTIVITY TO ENSURE PROGRAMS PRODUCE HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER CANDIDATES

Teacher preparation programs should increase selectivity of accepted applicants using multiple selection measures. Possible measures include:

- A minimum GPA/ACT scale score (this means a candidate could have a lower ACT score if he/she had a higher GPA, or vice-versa)
- Smaller class size for admissions
- Candidate interviews that screen for grit, leadership, and commitment to teaching
- Active recruitment of promising undergraduate or even high school teacher candidates

The Issue

Nationally, 80 percent of teachers report that teacher preparation programs need to change. The most frequent complaint is that programs are too theoretical and do not focus enough on the practical techniques that are needed to be successful in the classroom. In fact, principals report that 67 percent of new teachers are not ready to manage a classroom and 72 percent are not prepared to work with diverse student groups. This is particularly troublesome because in Minnesota, a significant portion of new teachers start their careers in hard-to-staff schools with high populations of low-income students and students of color.

The following recommendations reflect priorities from teacher-led research and perspectives on how to better prepare Minnesota teachers to successfully meet the needs of all learners.
Recommendations for Improving Coursework and the Clinical Experience

**1. IMPROVE THE STUDENT TEACHER EXPERIENCE**

Require that student teaching placements follow the co-teaching model where two teachers—a cooperating teacher and student teacher—jointly plan and deliver instruction to a group of students.

**2. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER CORPS**

Require that student teachers be matched with educators who are rated effective based on evaluation data. Districts should create systems for selecting and incentivizing high-quality cooperating teachers and prioritizing their training, such as targeted recruitment or offering larger stipends.

**3. PRIORITIZE DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN TEACHER CANDIDATES**

Improve the quality and amount of cultural competency coursework and clinical practices. Preparation programs should go beyond requiring candidates to take only a single “human relations” course (the current state licensure requirement) and should ensure a race equity framework is embedded in all curricula. Culturally competent teaching practices should be added to early career evaluations.

**4. (BOTH IN COURSEWORK AND CLINICAL PRACTICE) ON CRITICAL AREAS FOR PROGRAM GROWTH**

Teacher preparation programs should revise program plans, clinical requirements, syllabi, and curricula to better focus on areas of need identified by research: (1) English language (EL) and special education instructional techniques for all teacher candidates; (2) assessment and data literacy that drives instruction; (3) classroom management; and (4) differentiating instruction. Programs should be evaluated on their integration of these critical areas during accreditation proceedings.

Recommendations for Improving the Exiting Process

**1. ASSESS TEACHER CANDIDATE MASTERY USING THE EDTPA**

Require candidates to pass the edTPA as one part of full licensure. We propose the Board of Teaching start using the edTPA as a licensure requirement in the next two years so as to give programs time to adjust their coursework to best prepare candidates for this change.

**2. OFFER YEAR-LONG RESIDENCY PROGRAMS FOR NEWLY LICENSED TEACHERS IN HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS**

Offer high-quality residency programs for newly licensed teachers in hard-to-staff school settings within larger districts. The residency program could attract new talent into hard-to-staff schools by offering incentives such as loan forgiveness, opportunities to earn a master’s degree at no cost, and more intensive support.

“The stakes are high—we need to do more than simply say ‘we need more teachers of color.’ We need to increase our active-outreach efforts.”

Justin Pfaffinger
High school math teacher at FAIR School Downtown, Minneapolis Public Schools
**Recommendations for Thinking Outside of the Box**

1. **SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY, INNOVATIVE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS INCREASE TEACHER DIVERSITY**

Create a state competitive grant for innovative alternative or non-conventional teacher preparation programs. These programs disproportionately attract teachers of color because they frequently draw from larger pools of candidates, including those who did not immediately go to college and enroll in an education program.

2. **EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES TO ACCREDITATION FOR MEANINGFUL EVALUATION**

Incentivize teacher preparation programs to opt in to the inspectorate model of program review by waiving all or some of the continuing state-level approval reporting requirements for a period of time. A new program review model, commonly used in the United Kingdom, called the “inspectorate model” has emerged as a strong supplement to the traditional accreditation process because it provides programs with evidence-based improvement recommendations. It is currently being (or will soon be) piloted in eight states.

3. **BASE STATE FUNDING FORMULAS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS PARTIALLY ON OUTCOMES**

Incorporate outcomes data into state funding allocations or eligibility for grants and financial aid. There is currently little incentive for programs to help candidates prepare to pass licensure exams or find employment. A multi-measure formula could include: (1) graduation, licensure, and employment rates; (2) Teacher evaluations and student growth data; and (3) Candidate and principal satisfaction rates, among other measures.
THE 2015 EDUCATORS 4 EXCELLENCE–MINNESOTA
TEACHER POLICY TEAM ON RE-ENVISIONING THE
TEACHER PREPARATION EXPERIENCE

Laura Byard
Lead English language teacher at Anne Sullivan Communication Center, Minneapolis Public Schools

Anne Erickson
English language arts teacher at HOPE Community Academy, St. Paul

Jake Knaus
Second-grade teacher at Burroughs Community School, Minneapolis Public Schools

Annaka Larson
First-grade teacher at Paul and Sheila Wellstone Elementary, St. Paul Public Schools

Priscilla Martinez-Carlos
Multilingual language teacher at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary, St. Paul Public Schools

Megan McAllister
Human Resource Staffing Coordinator, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District

Paul Menard
AVID teacher at Washburn and Patrick Henry High Schools, Minneapolis Public Schools

Sharon Overlien
Kindergarten teacher at Jackson Elementary, St. Paul Public Schools

Justin Pfaffinger
High school math teacher at FAIR School Downtown, Minneapolis Public Schools

Sandra Pickett Santiago
Pre-kindergarten bilingual teacher at Richard R. Green Central Park School, Minneapolis Public Schools

Anna Yesberger
Special education teacher at FAIR School Downtown, Minneapolis Public Schools

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For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table—the voice of classroom teachers.

Educators 4 Excellence (E4E), a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers.

E4E has a quickly growing national network of educators united by our Declaration of Teachers’ Principles and Beliefs. E4E members can learn about education policy and research, network with like-minded peers and policymakers, and take action by advocating for teacher-created policies that lift student achievement and the teaching profession.

Learn more and read the full recommendations at educators4excellence.org/mnteacherprep.