

ACCELERATING THE LEARNING CURVE

*RE-ENVISIONING THE
TEACHER PREPARATION EXPERIENCE*

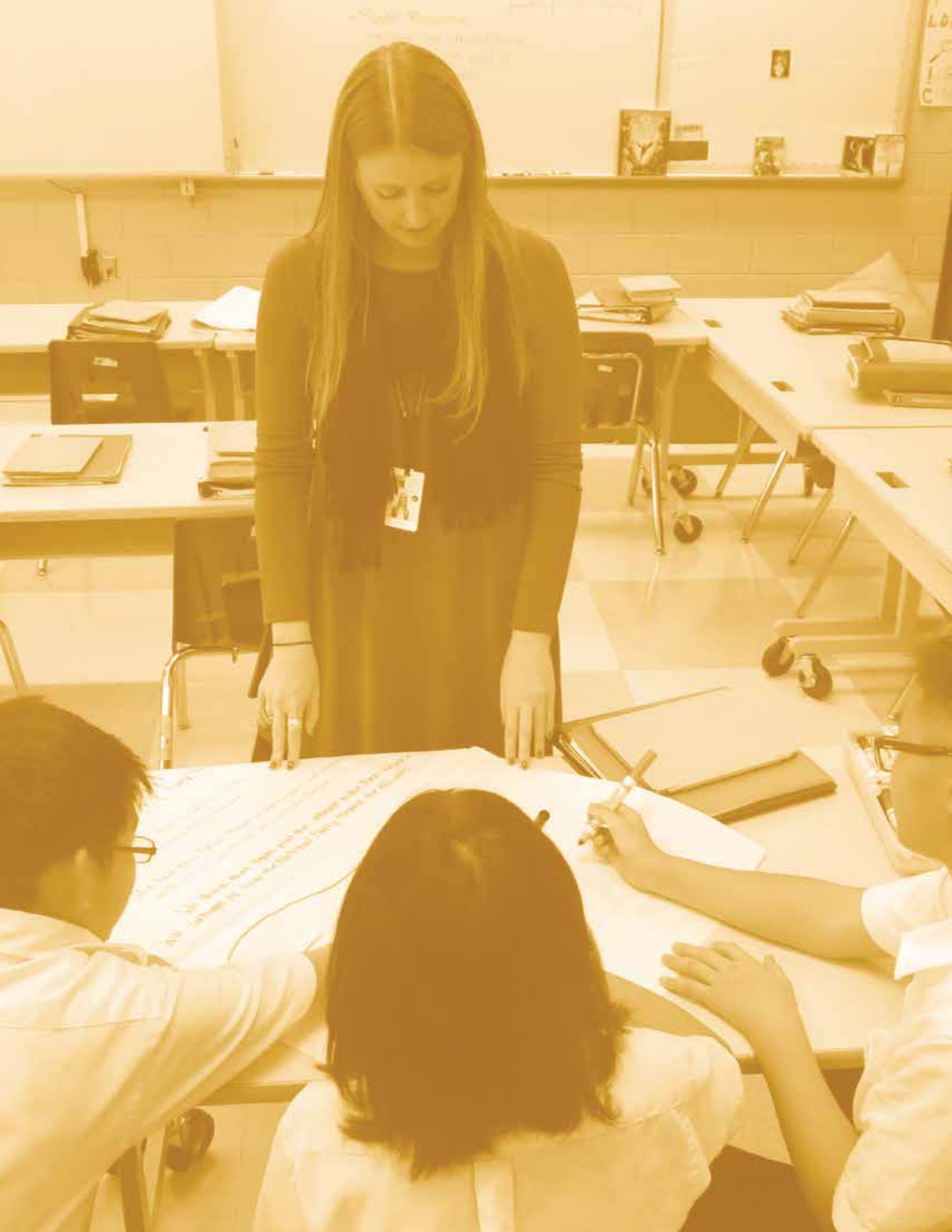
October 2015

*“Education is the passport to the future,
for tomorrow belongs to those who
prepare for it today.”*

MALCOLM X

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LETTER TO MINNESOTA'S FUTURE TEACHERS

Dear Future Teachers,

We come to the teaching profession through many different paths. Some of us join straight out of traditional undergraduate programs, while others make midlife career changes, and others join after spending time in classrooms then deciding to pursue licensure. Regardless of our unique paths, the beautiful thing about teaching is that we all stay for the same reason: the students.

Nevertheless, the reality you will face when you step into the classroom is a challenging one. You will need to draw on a variety of complex skillsets, especially if you choose to use your skills and passion where they are most needed—serving learners who are disadvantaged by our current system. Our education opportunity gaps in Minnesota are still some of the largest in the nation. Given the needs of our students and the passion that brings you to the teaching profession, you know these gaps are unacceptable. Acting upon that passion in the classroom requires immense daily effort and focus. That challenge is exacerbated when you are learning on the fly because of inadequate preparation. We must do better in preparing you to tackle these gaps in a way that not only harnesses your passion, but also quickly develops critical skills.

For those reasons, we came together as a team of veteran and new-to-the-profession teachers to examine where our own preparation experiences fell short, in hopes of changing it for you, our future colleagues. We examined policies that would improve the teacher preparation process in order to help future educators have the tools necessary to teach our diverse student populations. We hope to raise expectations for what it means to be classroom ready, while also helping you achieve those expectations—just like we set goals and scaffold up to them for our students. And just as we differentiate for our students, our recommendations support the development of several different pathways to licensure while maintaining high standards.

You deserve the highest quality of training because our students deserve the best teachers. That is why we hope the recommendations outlined in this paper serve as a launching point for a new conversation about teacher preparation in our state—one that leads to improved preparation experiences so that you can best serve our community's children.

The 2015 Educators 4 Excellence-Minnesota Teacher Policy Team on Re-envisioning the Teacher Preparation Experience

Our Recommendations for the Teacher Preparation Pipeline

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

THE CURRENT REALITY

A large and widely respected body of evidence has shown us that the most important in-school factor to improving student achievement is the quality of the teacher at the front of the room. As a result, debates over how to fairly evaluate teachers and support their development have been growing. While there have been many important changes to how we measure and support teaching within the K-12 system, there has been little innovation in how we prepare teachers before they enter the classroom so they are ready to meet the needs of students.

Traditional teacher preparation programs have the largest share of responsibility for the lack of innovation in this field. 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.¹ 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.² 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.³

Research shows us that the quality and type of preparation process impacts how well new teachers can serve students. For example, teachers who graduate from programs with high-quality clinical practice opportunities have better student outcomes in their first years.⁴ Even though the United States has a plethora of preparation programs, including 31 in Minnesota, we can see from the readiness data cited above that there are simply not yet enough high-quality programs to adequately prepare all of our new teachers to enter classrooms ready to teach.

Given the fierce urgency we feel about ensuring that Minnesota's teachers have the ability to meet the needs of all learners, we jumped at the chance to take action on an issue that matters so much to our students. Our team met seven times over the summer, conducted research into what makes the best preparation programs great, and surveyed our colleagues to get their perspectives. Combining our research and classroom experience, we developed a set of policy recommendations that aim to improve the quality of and diversity within teacher preparation programs. These recommendations, if implemented, would have a dramatic impact on the quality of our incoming teachers and thus the outcomes of our students, particularly those who are impacted by opportunity gaps, who are most likely to be taught by early-career teachers.

"You wouldn't assign a new attorney to a class action lawsuit, and you wouldn't put a new advertising professional on the most important account. Why do we assign new teachers to our low-income students and students of color—who arguably should be our most important account?"

Sandra Pickett Santiago

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

IMPROVING THE ENTRANCE PROCESS

RECRUITING AND SELECTING A DIVERSE POOL OF HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER CANDIDATES

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

The teaching profession in America faces a great challenge: how to recruit our best and brightest candidates into the classroom, particularly in areas where they are most needed—in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. Journalists and scholars have taken to the airwaves predicting an impending teacher shortage,⁵ but we see this issue somewhat differently. The magnitude of the teacher shortage in the United States reaches far beyond the mere number of teachers trained. The more acutely felt crisis playing out right now is that there are specific populations of students who are in desperate need of great teachers. These are the same students who are currently most affected by shortages, including English language learners and special education students.⁶

We have another great challenge: how to attract more teachers of color into our profession in order to more accurately reflect the diversity of our student population. Currently, Minnesota's teaching force is 96 percent white while our student population is 30 percent students of color.⁷ From our experiences, and as studies show, the gap between teacher and student demographics impacts outcomes for students of color.⁸ We believe the demographic gap is one important reason why Minnesota struggles to address the opportunity gaps that exist between students of color and American Indian students and their white, often more affluent peers.

There are many factors that contribute to these two challenges, including:

- Programs' lack of selectiveness (some programs accept 100 percent of applicants), furthering the perception of lack of prestige of teaching⁹
- Low starting salaries for teachers with few opportunities for significant increases until late in the career track, often coupled with significant student debt
- Teaching is not seen as a competitive option when compared with other career opportunities in high-demand fields such as science, technology, math, and global languages
- Negative experiences in the K-12 school system for people of color and feelings of isolation during the college experience
- The dearth of role models of color in teaching positions

While these problems are complex, teacher preparation programs and the state of the Minnesota have both the opportunity and the moral imperative to drive change. There are policy changes that will both increase the number of teachers of color and the number of teachers going into critical shortages areas, while also improving the quality and prestige of the teaching profession by recruiting more selectively.

MINNESOTA'S 2015 TEACHER PREP REPORT CARD LAW

In 2015, E4E teachers successfully pushed for the creation of a teacher preparation report card that requires all MN preparation programs to report on a common set of outcomes, including:

(1) graduation rates, (2) licensure rates, (3) employment rates, and (4) candidate satisfaction rates.

PRIORITIZE INCREASING THE NUMBER OF TEACHER CANDIDATES OF COLOR

How we make this happen

- 1 The state should require preparation programs to submit an action plan outlining goals and aligned plans for recruiting and graduating teacher candidates of color.
- 2 The state should create a workforce specialist position to help support preparation programs achieve their goals.
- 3 The state should require that some of the data on the new teacher preparation report card be disaggregated by race.

Rationale

In the past, states and the federal government have used the strategy of requiring accountability plans while providing support to drive local policy change.¹⁰ We believe this approach could work to target the problem of teacher diversity at the state level if preparation programs receive the right support to meet the goals in their plans and are held accountable.

Programs should receive support from an expert who is knowledgeable about local and national strategies to increase the number of teachers of color. In our research, we found a number of programs, organizations, and individuals trying different approaches—many unaware of what others are doing. There is a lack of knowledge about plans and tactics that are working well or where gaps or duplicated efforts exist. The Teacher Diversity Workforce Specialist would facilitate sharing of best practices for recruiting teacher candidates of color and would coordinate efforts between programs and relevant stakeholders.

The final component of this strategy entails learning from the data collected. But to better understand how well preparation programs (and the workforce specialist)

are doing in recruiting and preparing candidates of color, the state needs a transparent data tracking system and a common reporting tool that is accessible to the public.

What this looks like

ACTION PLANS

The teacher diversity action plans would include: a self-reporting and analysis of their current recruitment methods and outcomes, measurable goals for increasing enrollment and graduation of teachers of color, and aligned strategies and tactics. Programs would report annually to the state on progress toward goals.

THE TEACHER DIVERSITY WORKFORCE SPECIALIST POSITION

The position would be modeled after the Special Education Workforce Specialist position within the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). This position would be funded for five years and then re-assessed based on results, including an increased number of students of color enrolled in and graduating from teacher preparation programs. Job responsibilities could include:

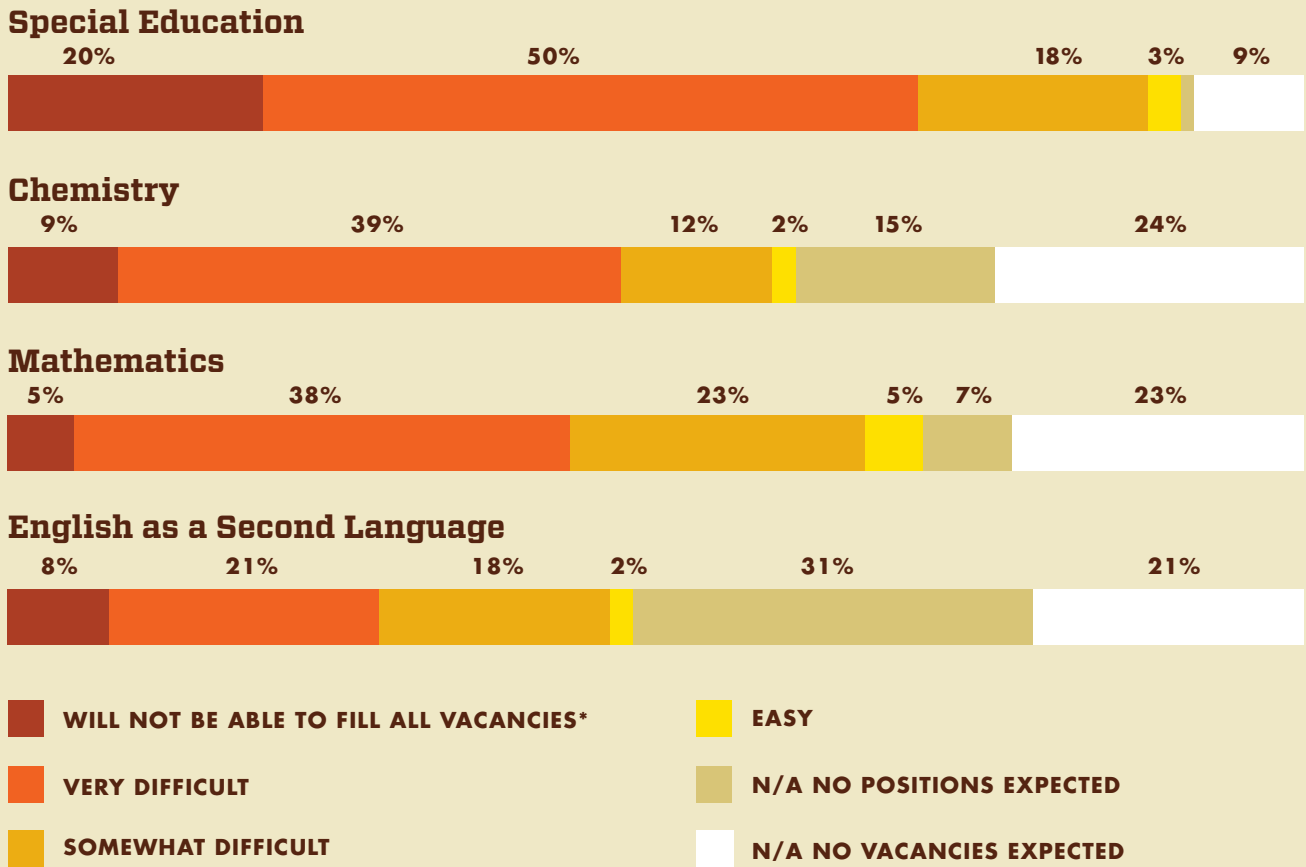
- Providing support to teacher preparation programs as they create their teacher diversity goals and plans
- Working with high schools with a high percentage of students of color and partnering with counselors, unions, and nonprofits to promote the field of teaching
- Researching programs such as Call Me Mister, Teach Tomorrow Oakland, and others, and determining whether potential programs or partnerships could be replicated in Minnesota¹¹
- Developing community partnerships that could aid in the recruitment of people of color into the teaching profession

“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

Fig. 1 Minnesota Licensure Shortage Areas
 Districts statewide identify staffing concerns for the next five years.



Source: Minnesota Department of Education.

- Creating and leading a task force with representatives from colleges and universities to brainstorm recruitment and support strategies to increase the enrollment of students of color

DATA DISAGGREGATED BY RACE

An ideal data system would show us where barriers exist and which programs are excelling so best practices could be replicated. Some of this data is already being collected

by the Minnesota Board of Teaching for the new teacher preparation report card, so it is feasible to disaggregate certain data points by race, including:

- Graduation
- Licensure
- Employment
- Candidate satisfaction¹²

RECRUIT CANDIDATES FOR POSITIONS WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST

How we make this happen

- 1 The state should require programs to expand upon their teacher diversity plans (*see above*) to address goals and strategies for recruiting candidates into shortage areas.

Rationale

The current teacher shortage in Minnesota is concentrated in several licensure areas, including special education, English language learning, and secondary math and science. Meanwhile, there are surpluses of elementary education

and social studies teachers.¹³ Preparation programs can and should play a more active role in addressing licensure shortage areas.

What this looks like

Preparation programs would create expansive plans that set goals and align strategies for recruiting more teachers into targeted high-needs licensure areas. The plans should address at least one of the shortage areas including: special education, English language learning, bilingual/immersion, science, math, and hard-to-staff school settings (both urban and rural).

Plans could include strategies such as:

- Informing teacher candidates: College entrance counselors could share an easy-to-understand executive summary of the state's supply and demand data for teaching positions with teacher candidates. Supply and demand data should include not only licensure shortage areas but also hard-to-staff school and subject area information
- Actively recruiting from other majors: Programs could recruit undergraduate students majoring in math, science, psychology, and Spanish to fill corresponding shortage areas
- Creating incentives: Programs could partner with local foundations or secure state funding streams to offer scholarships or loan repayment options for candidates who pursue licenses in shortage areas

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

How we make this happen

- 1 Teacher preparation programs should increase selectivity of accepted applicants using multiple selection measures.

Rationale

As teachers, we know this work takes perseverance, commitment, a sense of humor, and love. It is not for everyone. Therefore, programs should not accept all applicants.

Similar to the way we assess our students, we think being selective means programs should have multiple measures to determine applicant acceptance. A program's selectivity criteria should also vary as it relates to the specific needs of the communities or districts it serves. To us, there is no perfect or exact recipe for achieving selectivity. However, we feel teacher preparation programs should use evidence-based criteria to select only the applicants who have the greatest likelihood of leading students to success.

What this looks like

Colleges of education should be as, if not more, selective than other programs within the same university. Here are some possible methods used by other programs to raise the bar of selectivity:

- Use 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)
- Decrease the size of classes admitted
- Interview candidates to screen for grit, leadership, and commitment to teaching
- Actively recruit promising undergraduate or even high school teacher candidates

Caveats and considerations

Currently, programs often receive funding purely based on enrollment numbers. It is not in the financial interest of programs to be more selective because the more students that are enrolled, the more money the programs receive—regardless of how well they support teacher candidates. Therefore, funding formulas that are based at least in part on measures of performance should be explored. (*See the funding formula recommendation on page 21.*)

IMPROVING COURSEWORK AND THE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

DEVELOPING QUALIFIED TEACHERS WHO ARE PREPARED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

While the assets and needs of our learners have shifted, traditional teacher preparation programs have not changed to reflect them. Additionally, as the economy continues to become more globalized, the skills our students will need continue to change. This means teachers need to be prepared in new ways to drive student learning towards global citizenship.

The fact that teacher preparation has remained largely the same while student demographics have changed has disadvantaged specific subsets of students. For example, even though the number of English language learner students has grown by 300 percent over the last 20 years, English language instructional techniques are still not a common part of clinical practice or coursework for all teachers.¹⁴ This is in violation of the recently passed state law, the LEAPS Act (Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success), which requires all teacher candidates to be skilled in teaching English learners upon graduation.¹⁵

Teacher preparation has also failed to adapt to the large and growing racial demographic gap between teachers, who are majority white people, and students, who are majority people of color. On the whole, not enough has been done to develop meaningful coursework and clinical opportunities that build cultural competency and ask teachers to unpack their personal biases.

The recommendations in this section seek to improve several critical areas where teacher preparation is coming up short including:

- Lack of quality, rigor, and alignment between clinical practice, coursework, and the K-12 classroom
- Insufficient practical training in critical areas, such as classroom management, assessment and data literacy, and differentiation or special education techniques
- Low-quality cultural competency coursework that is not aligned to clinical work

“Traditional programs need to go beyond the standard course and clinical work. Programs should be focusing on getting candidates into the classroom and doing more hands-on co-teaching while ensuring high-quality mentorship is happening.”

Megan McAllister

Human Resource Staffing Coordinator, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District

IMPROVE THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

How we make this happen

- 1 The state should require that student teaching placements follow the co-teaching model.

Rationale

Research shows that the length and quality of student teaching impacts a first-year teacher's ability to drive student learning.¹⁶ This research confirms our view that clinical practice is the most important part of the preparation experience. However, when we reflected with our colleagues, we realized there were many inconsistencies in the quality of these opportunities across programs. For example, one teacher had an 18-week placement where the cooperating teacher: explained the techniques she used, ensured the student teacher developed some essential skills, particularly around classroom management, and allowed the student teacher to lead instruction. In contrast, another team member had a 12-week placement, where she was told "you just need to be in a class somewhere for 12 weeks in order to graduate." She spent most of her time observing the cooperating teacher and gained little practical experience leading a classroom.

One way to improve the consistency and quality of the student teaching experience is to invest in the co-teaching model. This model has a solid research base that demonstrates the following:¹⁷

- It raises student achievement more than when a class is taught by the classroom teacher or with both a student teacher and cooperating teacher who are not using the co-teaching mode¹⁸
- The impact on student achievement for special education students and students receiving free and reduced lunch is significant¹⁹
- High-quality cooperating teachers are more likely to accept student teachers because they do not have to relinquish full control of student learning in their classrooms²⁰

What this looks like

Preparation programs should partner with districts and schools that will invest in the co-teaching model. In co-teaching, two teachers jointly plan and deliver instruction to a group of students. During the first few weeks, the cooperating teacher models and assists as the student teacher acquires some basic skills of teaching. As the skills are gained, the student teacher takes on an equal share of the planning and instruction.²¹ Co-teaching requires that both the student teacher and cooperating teachers understand how to co-teach and co-plan (*See cooperating teacher recommendation on page 10.*)

POLL

How important is it for the state to improve the student teaching experience by requiring co-teaching with an effective teacher?

3%

Somewhat
Important

29%

Important

68%

Absolutely
Essential

POLL

To improve the teacher preparation experience, how important is it for programs to prioritize cultural competency?

4%

Somewhat
Important

28%

Important

67%

Absolutely
Essential

Source: Educators 4 Excellence-Minnesota internal survey of members and non-members, n=104

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER CORPS

How we make this happen

- 1 The state should require that student teachers be matched with educators who are rated effective based on evaluation data.
- 2 Districts should create systems for selecting and incentivizing high-quality cooperating teachers and prioritizing their training.

Rationale

We have heard stories of student teachers being placed with struggling teachers just to get more help into their classroom. We also know high-quality teachers can be wary of taking student teachers for fear of sacrificing their student gains. Improving aspects of the student teaching experience, such as requiring co-teaching, or expanding the length of the experience, will mean little if cooperating teachers are not high-quality. The state legislature has already recognized this fact in passing a law last year that prohibits student teachers from being placed with a teacher on a professional improvement plan.²² We need to go one step further to ensure that cooperating teachers are effective. Then, we need to invest in their success through meaningful incentives, training, and support.

What this looks like

The state legislature should pass a law requiring that student teachers be matched with educators who have proven effectiveness as measured by ratings in the top two tiers for evaluation systems that have four or more performance levels.

To further build a high-quality corps of cooperating teachers, districts should select, train, and incentivize cooperating teaching roles by:

- Developing a robust application process in order to become a cooperating teacher
- Actively recruiting teachers who have high evaluation scores and have demonstrated leadership or an ability to coach colleagues (informally or formally)
- Developing a cohort structure to support cooperating teachers in learning from each other
- Offering a larger stipend (potentially in partnership with universities or through state funds such as Q Comp)
- Working with preparation programs to offer joint training for cooperating teachers and their student teachers to: ensure the student and cooperating teacher understand the work styles of each other and to review the specific objectives and what mastery looks like and how it will be assessed

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Culturally responsive teaching is defined by the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems as “a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students’ unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student’s cultural place in the world.”

For example, culturally responsive teaching goes well beyond “food, folklore, and fun” where information is taught for one day and not threaded throughout instruction. Rather, teachers should challenge traditional and dominant culture views, and present diverse perspectives within all content.

PRIORITIZE DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN TEACHER CANDIDATES

How we make this happen

- 1 Teacher preparation programs should improve the quality and amount of cultural competency coursework and clinical practices.
- 2 Teacher preparation programs should evaluate student teachers on culturally competent teaching practices during their teaching placements.

Rationale

In Minnesota, a student’s skin color is more likely to predict academic outcomes than almost any other factor. It is time to acknowledge the importance of teacher demographics, expectations, and cultural competency that have a real impact on student success. For example, a recent study found that teachers of color often have higher expectations for students of color than their white colleagues, and that this impacts student achievement.²³ This should be particularly alarming to Minnesotans because the demographic gap between teachers of color and students of color remains large.

There are two concurrent ways to address this problem: 1) to recruit and prepare more teachers of color and 2) build cultural competency and instill anti-racist teaching practices into all teacher candidates. While efforts to increase the number of teacher candidates of color must be multiplied,²⁴ we can simultaneously work to address the need for cultural competency amongst all teacher candidates.

What this looks like

Programs should go beyond requiring candidates to take only a single “human relations” course (the current state licensure requirement). Programs should ensure that a race equity framework is embedded in all courses and clinical work to build candidates’ cultural competency. Coursework and clinical practice should include:

- Systemic components—learning about the structural racism that exists in education
- Personal components—unpacking a candidate’s biases and privilege (or lack of privilege)
- Practical components—learning and practicing techniques that engage all students in ways that affirm their culture

Programs should employ adjunct professors who are skilled K-12 teachers in schools with high populations of students of color to teach culturally responsive courses. Adjunct professors who lead these courses would be able to draw upon their own classroom examples to teach and model applying a racial equity lens to education situations.

Student teaching placements should build upon coursework and include a focus on practicing culturally competent teaching techniques. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors should give feedback and ultimately evaluate the cultural competency of student teaching candidates at the end of their placement as a component of graduation.



IMPROVE THE FOCUS (BOTH IN COURSEWORK AND CLINICAL PRACTICE) ON CRITICAL AREAS FOR PROGRAM GROWTH

How we make this happen

- 1 Teacher preparation programs should revise program plans, clinical requirements, syllabi, and curricula to better focus on the following categories, which research shows have been most lacking:
 - English language (EL) and special education instructional techniques for all teacher candidates
 - assessment and data literacy that drives instruction
 - classroom management
 - differentiating instruction.²⁵

Rationale

While many programs do touch on the areas listed above, many reports on the state of teacher preparation, along with candidate and principal feedback, show us that teacher candidates are not entering classrooms with skills in these areas.²⁶ One reason we believe programs are coming up short is that many of the areas mentioned above are skillsets needed to teach diverse learners in 21st century classrooms. Teacher preparation has been slow to evolve. We felt this as new teachers in our own classrooms as we struggled to build the skills that we needed but were absent from our training. Programs need to create quality-control methods to ensure teacher candidates develop the basic skills necessary to serve all learners.

What this looks like

Programs should seek out the best evidence-based approaches to teach each of the four focus areas previously mentioned. They should then seek to improve the alignment of coursework and clinical work in those areas, in part by collaborating with cooperating teachers. When evaluating their success, programs should go beyond focusing only on inputs such as having a one-class cultural competency requirement or credit and look at the outputs and outcomes of their preparation. Possible measures of success include: candidate surveys, cooperating teacher and district placement feedback, external program reviews, student achievement data, and the feedback from the Inspectorate Model. (See *explore program evaluations recommendation on page 18.*)

Caveats and considerations

Teacher preparation programs already submit a lot of paperwork both to the state and for national accreditation; but, the public and the preparation institutions themselves gain little useful information from this arduous process. Through these efforts, we should work to reduce unnecessary paperwork and focus more clearly on what is most important for preparing today's teachers to serve our learners. When conducting the continued program approval process, the Board of Teaching should focus on teacher preparation programs' rigor and alignment of coursework and clinical practice in the critical areas listed above.

IMPROVING THE EXITING PROCESS

DEMONSTRATING MASTERY AND BUILDING LINKAGES BETWEEN PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND K-12 SCHOOLS

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

Teacher candidates are asked to do many things in order to attain licensure and employment. Not only are these licensure requirements often not based on evidence of what matters most to our students, but the bar is set too low for demonstrating competence on these measures. Many times, major milestones such as student teaching are treated more like items to cross off a list rather than as a culminating benchmark to show growth and aptitude.²⁷ For example, one person on our team had a student teacher who struggled with classroom management so much that she was never able successfully to lead an entire lesson. Yet this student teacher graduated along with her classmates without having to demonstrate an ability to manage a classroom. These scenarios occur because our current structure does not ensure that teachers who graduate and receive licenses have the basic skills they will need on day one in the classroom.

Once teacher candidates attain licensure, there is often little or no partnership between preparation programs and districts to support new teachers. In our experience,

this lack of support is most acutely felt in hard-to-staff schools that are serving large populations of low-income students and students of color—typically schools with high concentrations of first-year teachers.

Some other key challenges that impede new teachers' ability to graduate ready to teach include:

- Lack of meaningful, evidence-based assessments to gauge teacher candidate competence or readiness
- Preparation programs have little contact with their teacher candidates after graduation
- Lack of aligned data systems that track teachers' (and their students') outcomes back to teacher preparation methods

Because there are many factors involved in accurately measuring a teacher's competency and readiness and then delivering support for smooth transitions into teaching, teacher preparation programs and districts must partner to drive meaningful change.

ASSESS TEACHER CANDIDATE MASTERY USING THE EDTPA

How we make this happen

- 1 The Board of Teaching should require candidates to pass the edTPA as one part of full licensure.

Rationale

While no single measure is perfect, we believe edTPA is a meaningful measure of teacher candidate effectiveness because: (1) there is a strong body of research that shows that performance-based assessments more accurately predict teacher effectiveness than other standardized licensure exams;²⁸ (2) the gap in the passage rate between white teacher candidates and teacher candidates of color on the edTPA is minimal, unlike many standardized

licensure tests including the Praxis and MTLE;²⁹ (3) cultural competency is a critical part of the assessment; and (4) candidates demonstrate effective teaching skills and reflect on practice through a process that is similar to becoming Nationally Board Certified.

What this looks like

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. The Minnesota Board of Teaching already uses the edTPA as a program evaluation tool, requiring 70 percent of a program's candidates to

pass in order for the program to keep accreditation.³⁰ In advance of our proposed change, the state should help programs falling below this mark to improve curricula, clinical work, and training for faculty.

To measure whether the edTPA is the right bar to assess teacher candidate aptitude, the state should analyze student achievement based on their teachers' edTPA scores. If the edTPA is a true measurement of effective teaching, higher edTPA scores should correlate with higher student achievement gains.

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

How we make this happen

- 1 Larger districts should offer high-quality residency programs for newly licensed teachers in hard-to-staff school settings.

Rationale

Residency programs provide the opportunity for recently licensed teachers to extend their period of study before taking full ownership of the classroom. A cohort of new teachers who all participate in job-embedded professional development, coupled with a reduced teaching load, would receive more support and benefit from gradually moving into the complex role of full-time teaching.

Not only would this serve as a professional development opportunity for these teachers, residency programs could serve as effective recruiting tools.³¹ Among the teachers polled, 98 percent felt year-long residencies were important or absolutely essential to improving the teacher preparation experience.

Caveats and Considerations

Another benefit is that the Board of Teaching could grant licensure to out-of-state teachers who have taken the edTPA and met a determined cut score. The Board of Teaching has struggled to lay out a clear and transparent process for determining which out-of-state educators should be given Minnesota licenses. Using the edTPA as a common measure would simplify the Board's task of assessing whether candidates bring the necessary teaching skills to work with Minnesota kids.

What this looks like

The program model could be flexible to meet the district's needs. Some key program components include:

- Partnership between the district and local universities, and/or alternative preparation programs
- Residency should be located at one (or a few) hard-to-staff schools. Limiting the location also allows for new and mentor teachers to benefit from a cohort structure

Given the critical role mentor teachers can play in the skill development of new teachers, the residency system should ensure mentor teachers are highly effective and have the resources to be effective mentors. To do this, the residency program should:

- Select mentor teachers who are rated in the top two tiers (out of four) on teacher evaluations. Those selected would be eligible to go through a district selection process to mentor residents
- Provide mentor teachers with an extra preparation period and meaningful stipend

The residency program can attract new talent into hard-to-staff schools by offering incentives. Some ideas include:

- Opportunities for residents to gain a master's degree or cultural responsiveness certificates through the university or alternative certification program
- Tuition forgiveness for serving in a hard-to-staff school within the district for a number of years
- A two-year commitment with the second year having increased teaching responsibilities

THE EDTPA

WHAT IS IT? The edTPA performance assessment requires future teachers to create a portfolio of materials during their clinical experience, including unedited videos of student teaching, lesson plans, and reflections. Each edTPA submission is scored by two trained and certified teachers or education professors. If there is a discrepancy between the two scores, a third person scores the submission.^a

HOW DOES IT CURRENTLY WORK IN MINNESOTA? While all Minnesota candidates go through this process as mandated by state law, only some programs require passage of the edTPA to graduate; it is not a state licensure requirement. This impacts how seriously teacher candidates and teacher preparation programs approach the process of crafting lessons, videotaping the execution, and reflecting on student learning that occurred.^b Many teachers we interviewed who went through the process reported knowing very little about the process, how they were evaluated, and why they did or did not pass.

^a edTPA Minnesota. (2015). Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved (9/7/15) from: http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_FAQ_Candidates.html

^b Focus groups of educators were conducted from July 2015 to September 2015; 15 focus groups were held, 108 educators participated.



THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE BOX

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AND IDEAS FOR INNOVATION WITHIN TRADITIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

In Minnesota, traditional preparation programs train approximately 98 percent of our incoming teachers each year.³² To ensure that high-quality new teachers impact students where the need is greatest, meaningful change within traditional programs must occur. Therefore, the previous sections and recommendations focus on traditional programs. The truth is, when seeking to impact large bureaucratic entities such as colleges and universities, change is often extremely slow and measured. Oftentimes there is a perverse incentive for colleges and universities to draw out the preparation process as long as possible to eke out tuition dollars, even if it means adding less meaningful coursework or experiences. We have seen these practices impact the most vulnerable teacher candidates—such as people applying for out-of-state teacher licensure. When these out-of-state teachers apply for licensure, some of whom have 10-plus years of experience, they are told they need to take additional courses from a local institution, costing up to \$10,000.³³

Some reasons teacher preparation programs have struggled to innovate include:

- Large amounts of paperwork for preparation programs, without meaningful evaluation to determine which programs are producing effective teachers and how
- No financial incentive for preparation programs to: (1) be more selective; (2) counsel candidates out of the profession; or (3) counsel candidates into hard-to-staff positions
- Lack of transparent and accessible data so prospective teacher candidates and school districts can select programs that match their needs
- The status quo is hard to change, particularly when some faculty and deans may be out of touch with the current realities of the profession

If we want to see the kind of transformational change that is necessary to truly improve outcomes for our students, we must be willing to explore innovative options to preparing teachers. We categorize innovative or “outside of the box” options in two ways—dramatic systems changes to the traditional system and alternatives to the traditional system.

“I was a paraprofessional in Minneapolis Public Schools and was able to get my teaching license while I was working. Not everyone can afford to do that. There are so many talented paraprofessionals who would be phenomenal teachers if they had better access to preparation programs while continuing to earn income.”

Anna Yesberger

Special education teacher at FAIR School Downtown, Minneapolis Public Schools

SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY, INNOVATIVE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS TO INCREASE TEACHER DIVERSITY

How we make this happen

- 1 The state should create a competitive grant for innovative alternative or non-conventional teacher preparation programs.³⁴

Rationale

Adopting a multi-pronged approach to training teachers is critical to ensuring our state is able to attract professionals of diverse backgrounds. Alternative and non-conventional pathways in particular create opportunities for mid-career professionals, veterans, and education support staff to more easily become licensed teachers. They disproportionately attract teachers of color because they frequently draw from larger pools of candidates, including those who didn't immediately go to college and enroll in an education program.³⁵

What this looks like

A dedicated grant fund could be opened up for a request for proposal (RFP) process. The RFP should be geared toward new or existing programs that meet the following criteria:

- Recruit high-quality candidates from diverse backgrounds. For example, candidates could be college students, recent graduates, mid-career professionals, or current education support professionals, or candidates with other impressive professional track records
- Provide meaningful clinical training and support in attaining licensure paired with ongoing support during placement through the first year of teaching and beyond
- Specifically outline strategies for supporting teachers of color
- For existing programs, have a track record of success in selecting, training, and supporting teachers so their student achievement data and teacher evaluation scores are equal to or better than new teachers prepared through traditional programs

Caveats and Considerations

The process of obtaining approval for alternative licensure programs has been time and resource intensive, taking more than two years for some programs. The Board of Teaching should streamline and make transparent the process for alternative certification program approval, particularly when a program is seeking to address shortage areas, like newly launched grow-your-own programs.

EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES TO ACCREDITATION FOR MEANINGFUL EVALUATION

How we make this happen

- 1 The state should incentivize teacher preparation programs to opt in to the inspectorate model of program review by waiving all or some of the continuing approval reporting requirements (*see below*) for a period of time.³⁶

Rationale

Currently, preparation programs go through continuing approval reporting and review by the Board of Teaching every two years.³⁷ Additionally, many preparation programs also go through national accreditation by the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education every seven

years.³⁸ These processes are labor and cost intensive for the programs due to the amount of data collection and paperwork, but they generally have not led to meaningful programmatic improvements or helped to distinguish between high and low performing programs. If we expect programs to improve, teacher preparation programs deserve a meaningful review process that results in actionable feedback identifying areas for growth.

A new program review model 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 has been widely used in the United Kingdom, and recently has been (or will be) piloted in

NON-CONVENTIONAL PROGRAM EXAMPLE: RELAY RESIDENCY PROGRAM, CHICAGO

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: In this two-year program, residents experience a structured and gradual on-ramp into the profession, complete a master's degree and earn a full-time teaching position at a high-performing urban school.^a

YEAR ONE: Residents immerse themselves in their schools, working directly with students under the close supervision of a mentor teacher. Residents simultaneously enroll in Relay, where they take classes on core teaching techniques and content-specific instruction, then rehearse those techniques and receive expert feedback during weekly practice sessions with faculty and classmates.

YEAR TWO: Successful first-year residents transition into lead teaching roles in the second year of the program, when they complete their master's degrees at Relay.

RESIDENT BENEFITS: Upon completion, residents have a portfolio of professional achievements, a toolkit of practical teaching strategies, and two years of full-time work experience in a supportive urban public school.

^a Relay Graduate School of Education. (2015). Relay Residency Program Chicago. Retrieved (8/15/15) from: <http://www.relay.edu/programs/chicago-teaching-residency/admissions>

eight states.³⁹ Programs that have participated report positive experiences.⁴⁰ Key benefits of the program include:

- The review process is about program growth and not about box checking or “catching” programs doing something wrong
- Inspectors give feedback along with specific and actionable next steps
- Inspectors review four critical areas instead of looking at an overwhelming number of standards
- Part of the review is about helping programs create | and improve their own quality control and self-evaluation processes
- Leaders at programs who have gone through the inspectorate model report finding it helpful

What this looks like

The inspectorate model is a review process in which a team of trained inspectors spend approximately one week at a preparation program observing and learning from stakeholders including teacher candidates, professors,

administration, recent alumni, and K-12 district administration and principals. Inspectors observe teaching and learning during courses and clinical practice. During the review process, inspectors are looking specifically at four key criteria, including:

- Quality of teacher candidate selection
- Quality of teacher candidate content knowledge and teaching methods (specifically classroom management, differentiation, and connection to clinical practice opportunities, among other things)
- Quality of clinical placement, feedback, and candidate performance
- Quality of program management

Caveats and considerations

This model is heavily focused on growth and does not provide the commensurate accountability. This type of model may need to be coupled with other review mechanisms that have an accountability lens, such as accreditation. (see appendix on page 24.)

POLL

How important is it for the state to support high-quality innovative alternative programs to expand the pool of high-quality teachers from diverse backgrounds?

7%

Somewhat Important

34%

Important

59%

Absolutely Essential

“I’m shocked by the lack of available data about teacher prep programs. I’d love to be able to compare the rigor of one teacher preparation program against another. We need a better understanding of what programs are doing well, and why.”

Anne Erickson

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

BASE STATE FUNDING FORMULAS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS PARTIALLY ON OUTCOMES

How we make this happen

- 1** The state should incorporate outcomes data into funding allocations or eligibility for state grants and financial aid.

Rationale

Currently, the more students a program enrolls, the more money they receive—regardless of how well it supports teacher candidates. This means it is not financially advantageous, nor potentially even feasible for programs to be selective about their candidates. Under the current system, there is little incentive for programs to help candidates prepare to pass licensure exams or find employment.

Basing funding in part on outcomes would make it financially necessary for preparation programs to do many of the things we are asking them to do, such as:

- Increase entrance selectivity to ensure candidates have a great chance of graduating
- Invest in and ensure quality student teaching placements
- Improve instructional and clinical opportunities
- Counsel candidates into shortage areas where employment is more likely
- Respond to districts needs

What this looks like

The state should revisit the funding formula for public institutions to include measures of program outcomes. Potential outcome data could include:

- Graduation, licensure, and employment rates
- Teacher evaluations and student growth data
- Candidate and principal satisfaction rates

The formula would account for outcomes, but would not be solely based on outcomes. A shift in the funding formula should be gradual so that schools will have an opportunity to improve.

Caveats and considerations

Programs that repeatedly do poorly could be required to use the inspectorate model to drive program improvement. This would help struggling programs identify the most urgent areas for growth and create aligned action plans. *(See explore program evaluations recommendation on page 18.)*

CONCLUSION

We recognize that re-envisioning the teacher preparation experience can be contentious, because moving beyond the status quo is difficult. However, if we acknowledge that the current system is not serving our students most in need of a quality education, then we must work for change with a sense of possibility. Given what we know about the importance of our teacher workforce in impacting student achievement, we need to come together to enact, fund, and implement policies that improve the way we recruit, select, and prepare teachers. We ask teacher preparation program leaders, legislators, and district leaders to come together in this work. We ask them to have conversations that are student-focused and maybe just a little bit radical; ultimately stepping up to the challenge of providing our students of color and low-income students with the great teachers they need in order for them to pursue the opportunities that they deserve.

TEACHER POLICY TEAM PROCESS & METHODOLOGY

IDENTIFYING E4E'S POLICY FOCUS: E4E conducted focus groups with diverse groups of teachers who work in public district and public charter schools. We polled hundreds of E4E members across Minnesota to identify the most important policy issues affecting teachers' classrooms and careers. Improving teacher preparation was the most important issue to many of our members.

REVIEWING RESEARCH: We met over the course of three months to review research on teacher preparation programs and recruiting and developing talent. We looked at current problems, root causes, barriers, and potential solutions. As we explored solutions, we looked to programs from across the nation, as well as promising policies and practices right here in Minnesota. We coupled this research with our experiences as educators to craft our recommendations teacher preparation programs, school districts and the state.

CONDUCTING LOCAL RESEARCH: We conducted interviews with teacher colleagues, teacher preparation professors, and other education stakeholders to gather critical information about current policies and practices. After developing initial ideas for recommendations, Teacher Policy Team members held focus groups, surveyed colleagues, and hosted a large-group listening session to gather feedback and finalize our recommendations. In total, we gathered feedback from over 150 educators.

APPENDIX: COMPARISON OF THE INSPECTORATE MODEL AND THE TRADITIONAL ACCREDITATION MODEL

| TRADITIONAL ACCREDITATION | INSPECTORATE MODEL |
|---|--|
| The model is aligned to national teacher preparation standards | The model is aligned to the needs of K-12 education |
| Compliance-based model for institutions who are either approved or not approve | Growth model for institutions that illuminates areas that need to be strengthened |
| Reviews are conducted largely by teacher educator peers and/or state officials | Inspections are conducted largely by effective P12 educators and others trained in inspecting the four basic areas (<i>outlined on page 20</i>) |
| Programs get a year or more lead-time before a site visit takes place, which turns them into “showcase” opportunities | Programs get reasonable advance notice of when the inspection will take place so that inspectors can examine the typical training candidates receives |
| Weak programs are often not distinguished from strong programs | Programs are assessed against a basic yet rigorous set of criteria that reflects the needs of public schools (<i>see four areas outlined on page 12</i>) |
| Current state approval and national accreditation reports are often opaque to those unfamiliar with the terms of evaluation | Inspection reports are clearly and cogently written with next steps for improvement clearly identified |

Source: The Tribal Group (TPI-US), and American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

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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

This report, graphics, and figures were designed by Kristin Redman and Tracy Harris at Cricket Design Works in Madison, Wisconsin.

The text face is Bembo Regular, designed by Stanley Morison in 1929. The typefaces used for headers, subheaders, figures, and pull quotes are Futura Bold, designed by Paul Renner, and Vitesse, designed by Hoefler & Co.

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