

Preparing for the Classroom:

A Vision for Teacher Training in the 21st Century

Teacher Policy Team on Teacher Preparation
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Educators 4 Excellence

New York

Preface

Education in America is going through a transformation. One that includes ever-changing technologies, more rigorous teaching standards, new teacher evaluation systems, growing diversity in our schools and the increased need to prepare our students to compete globally. This has put added pressure on our teachers who, on a day-to-day basis, are responsible for the cognitive, intellectual and emotional development of the next generation. Unfortunately, the university programs, which have prepared teachers to enter the classroom for decades, have on the whole failed to keep up. As a result, teachers often enter the classroom ill prepared for the enormity of the job that lies ahead of them, leading to frustration and high turnover among educators.

Further, the teaching profession is not as highly regarded as other professions, despite the profound importance of our work. We believe that elevating the

prestige and quality of our profession is essential to improving the outcomes of our students, and one important step to accomplishing this goal is rethinking how we train teachers.

Throughout history, other professions have been in similar situations. Medicine in America wasn't esteemed, as it is today, until the Flexner Report on medical schools in 1910. The report shifted medicine from a trade to a profession by making recommendations to dramatically change how we train doctors. Making changes to how we prepare educators can have a similar effect on the teaching profession.

This paper envisions a new kind of teacher preparation – one we hope will attract the best candidates and better train our newest teachers. This, in turn, will elevate the profession and lift student achievement.

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Introduction

As classroom teachers, we know that even as our training experiences vary from traditional to alternative certification, one aspect among them is common: quality preparation is critical yet not consistently received. Too many teachers enter the classroom feeling ill prepared for the challenges of teaching – whether those challenges are classroom management, content expertise or pedagogical strategies. Teacher preparation programs are failing to prepare us for success. According to the American Federation of Teachers, one in three new teachers do not feel prepared on their first day of teaching.¹ Furthermore, approximately 50 percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years.² These are unsustainable conditions if we want to build a teaching force for the 21st century.

Grounded in our own experiences as NYC classroom teachers, we looked at the research on teacher preparation, studied and spoke with traditional and alternative teacher training programs and experts in the field, and conducted a survey of fellow NYC teachers to answer these questions:

1. What is the current state of teacher preparation? What works? What doesn't?
2. What do teachers need to know on day one and throughout their career to be exceptional educators?
3. How can we ensure that the profession attracts great candidates?

Finally, we asked the most important question: what changes are needed to current teacher preparation programs to ensure that we are training educators to prepare their students for success in college and careers?

In the end we came up with four critical areas of focus. We concluded each aspiring teacher must:

1. Want It, and be able to demonstrate it through a rigorous admissions process;
2. Learn It, in practice-focused classes;
3. Live It, in a clinical setting with a cooperating teacher who opens their classroom to student teaching and who serves as a model and mentor; and
4. Prove It, through demonstrated student growth, exams and a rigorous portfolio defense.

We and our peers want more rigorous and effective preparation. We call on schools of education to upgrade their programs to enable teaching candidates to Want It, Learn It, Live It and Prove It. And we call on our local and state governments to expect and demand better training and create incentives for these changes to be made. In the end it is our job, as classroom teachers, to ensure the next generation of teachers are trained to be the best yet. We agree with American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) President Randi Weingarten's conclusion in her introductory letter to the AFT report on teacher preparation:

"...the primary responsibility for setting and enforcing the standards of the profession and ensuring the quality and coherence of teacher preparation programs must reside with members of the profession—practicing professionals in K-12 and higher education."³

We owe it to our profession and our students to get it right.

Recommendations

WANT IT

A rigorous admission process

Teacher preparation programs should require potential candidates to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and have admission requirements that include a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0.

Teacher preparation programs should have a thorough screening process for admission that includes and assesses a candidate's "soft" attributes.

Teacher preparation programs should be required to collect and publish data on alumni feedback, retention and effectiveness in the classroom.

LEARN IT

Knowledge and skills with immediate implications for the classroom

Teacher preparation programs should employ instructors who have had experience in the classroom with demonstrated effectiveness in their field.

Teacher preparation curricula should cover five areas of knowledge: strategies, content, diversity, context and theory, and design.

LIVE IT

Meaningful clinical practice and support from master educators

Prospective teachers should observe a wide variety of classroom settings prior to student teaching to make an informed decision about their area of focus.

Prospective teachers should be thoughtfully and deliberately paired with an experienced, highly effective cooperating teacher who takes responsibility for their success in the classroom as a student teacher for one full school year.

Student teachers should be observed and receive concrete, targeted and actionable feedback.

Teacher preparation programs should identify creative ways to make extended student teaching financially feasible for their students.

PROVE IT

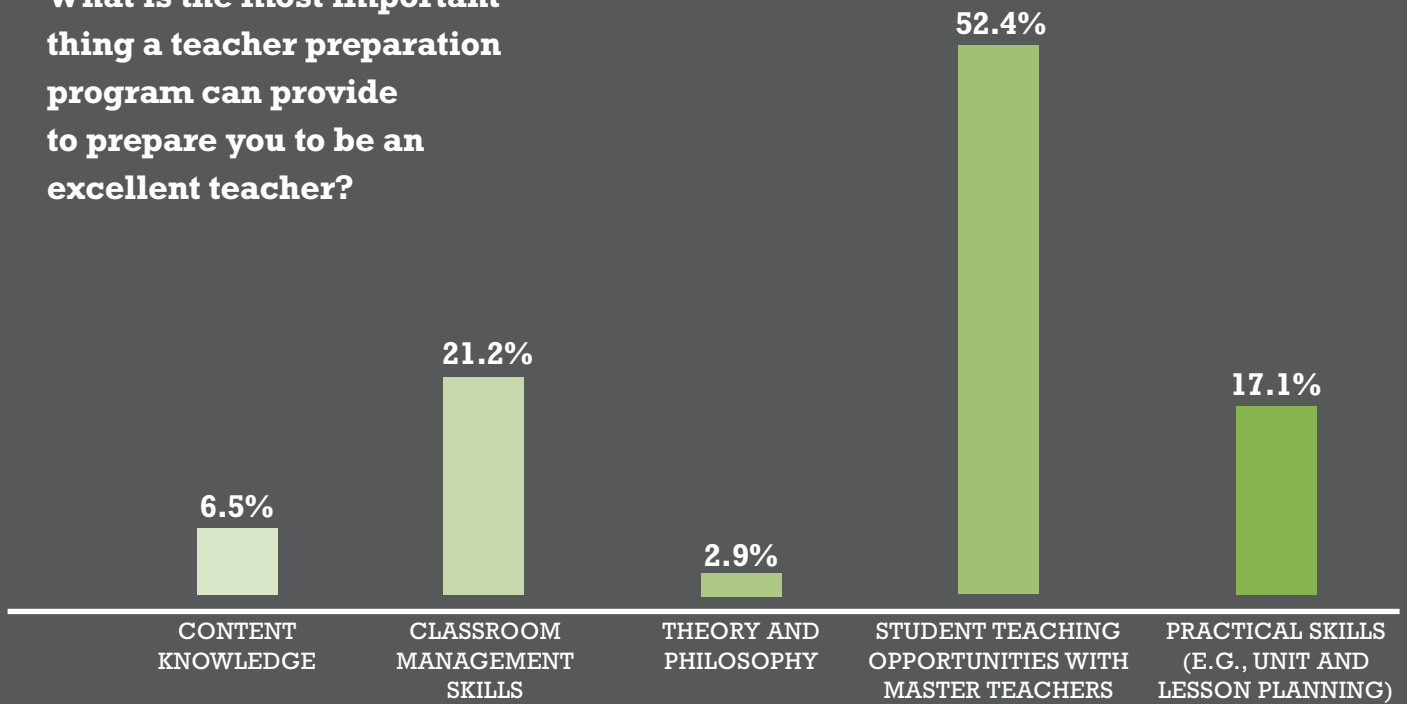
A demonstration of mastery, effectiveness and professionalism

After completing classroom and clinical training, prospective teachers must demonstrate their readiness to teach by proving their effectiveness in the classroom through a series of formal assessments.

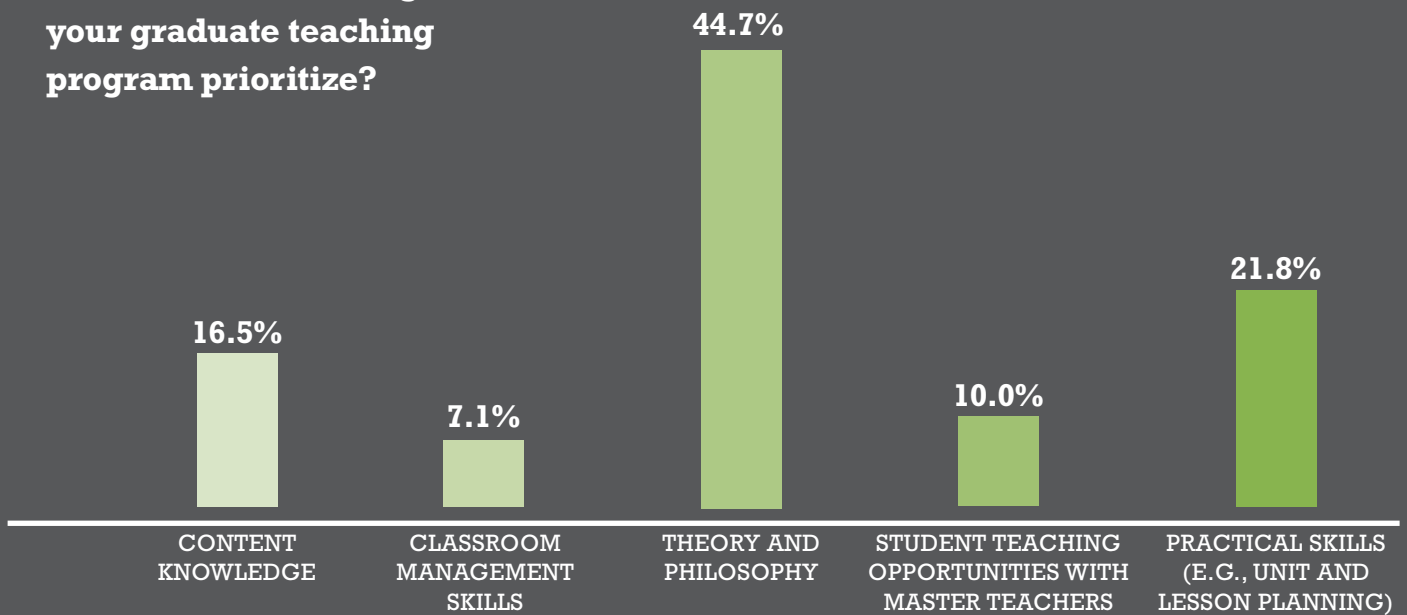
After completing their teacher preparation program, prospective teachers should pass a CCSS aligned examination, demonstrating their ability to teach to the new standards.

Prospective teachers should pass a rigorous defense to earn their master's degree that includes classroom observations, reflection and data that demonstrate adequate student growth.

What is the most important thing a teacher preparation program can provide to prepare you to be an excellent teacher?



Which of the following did your graduate teaching program prioritize?



Teacher survey (n=170).
Educators 4 Excellence-New York, May 2013.



Background

Teacher Preparation

Teachers generally enter the classroom through one of two pathways:

1. Traditional four-year undergraduate or two-year graduate teacher preparation programs, taken before entering the classroom, require coursework and some student teaching in the classroom of a currently certified teacher before earning their teaching certification; and
2. Alternative certification programs, such as the New York City Teaching Fellows and Teach for America, enable candidates to complete an abbreviated introductory training program, which usually includes limited student teaching, before receiving a temporary license that is good for three years.⁴

The completion of a teacher preparation program is a significant professional and financial milestone in a teacher's career. Professional or Permanent Certification, achieved through a master's degree, is a step toward career security, and graduate-level study counts toward teachers' incremental pay increases, as part of the "steps and lanes" salary schedule. However, teachers consistently report being unprepared for the challenges of teaching, and research has shown that a master's degree has little impact on the quality of teaching. In fact, in 30 years of research, approximately 90 percent of studies have failed to find an impact of a master's degree on student achievement. In some cases they found a negative impact.⁵

In our experiences, those of our peers and as found in research,⁶ teacher preparation programs generally:

- Lack selectivity and don't attract the most competitive candidates to their programs and to the profession;

- Prioritize the elements of education that teachers don't identify as being most valuable to their teaching, such as education theory (see chart on page 6 for more detail);
- Provide limited mentoring with master teachers and few clinical experiences; and
- Have low barriers to graduation (graduation means the programs recommend candidates for permanent certification by the state).

There is a newfound urgency and opportunity to dramatically improve teacher preparation in New York State. In the 2013-14 school year the state's public schools will implement teacher evaluation programs, which have the potential to correlate teacher preparation programs with the quality of their graduates. Additionally, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will raise the rigor in classrooms and require better teacher training to meet these higher expectations. Finally, the coming demographic shift, as the baby boomer generation retires from teaching, will require the preparation of a new generation of teachers.

In addition to the growing urgency, there is growing momentum for reforming teacher preparation programs. The New NY Education Reform Commission, assembled by Governor Andrew Cuomo, recognized this need and made a series of recommendations in early 2013, similar to those found within this report. Governor Cuomo has embraced the recommendations of the commission and included them in his administration's priorities in his 2013 State of the State Address.⁷

Want It

A Model Admission Process

One clear way to improve the quality of the teaching profession and thus student achievement is to raise the bar for entry into teacher preparation programs. We should ensure that our selection process identifies the strongest candidates to enter teacher training programs. To do this, our admission criteria should assess candidates on both academic competencies and soft attributes that have been identified in highly effective teachers. Furthermore, applicants to teacher preparation programs should be empowered with program performance data so they can ensure they are making sound investments in their own education.

1. Admission Standards

Teacher preparation programs should require potential candidates to take the GRE and have admission requirements that include a minimum undergraduate grade point average of 3.0.

Rationale: The highest-achieving nations typically recruit their teachers and school leaders from the top of their college graduating classes, while only about 30 percent of American teachers are from the top third of their undergraduate class.⁸ In addition, studies on this matter are conclusive: teachers who bring academic excellence to the classroom are more likely to lead their students to greater achievement.⁹ By creating minimum standards for entry, schools of education can guarantee we are starting with the best and brightest candidates. By recruiting our nation's top students, we can also drastically improve the perception of the teaching profession and encourage greater support for the field.

What this looks like: The GPA requirement for entry into teacher preparation institutions should be a minimum of 3.0. However, since undergraduate institutions don't have standardized grading processes themselves, we believe that applicants to teacher preparation programs should also face a test of academic proficiency: the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE measures performance against peers from other schools and those entering other graduate fields. Furthermore, the GRE is a critical tool because of the recent shift to the CCSS. The CCSS require teachers of all content areas to teach literacy, making it even more essential that all teachers are fluent in high-level literacy skills. Using the GRE as a common assessment of all applicants will help determine if potential teachers are qualified to teach the more rigorous standards.

Additionally, teacher preparation institutions should be required to collect and publish the GRE results of their admitted applicants so that programs can be compared to one another. This data will also help applicants decide on the best program to attend and help universities compare the entry-level quality of their applicants.

2. Soft Attributes

Teacher preparation programs should have a thorough screening process for admission that includes and assesses a candidate's "soft" attributes.

Rationale: While high academic achievement is essential, intellect alone is not enough to drive our students' success. Highly effective teachers bring other qualities

to the classroom, including organization, dedication, honesty, professionalism, compassion, perseverance, integrity, empathy and kindness. These attributes cannot be measured through a GPA or the GRE, but they are crucial to a teacher's success.¹⁰

While the science is new and these aspects of teacher effectiveness are difficult to measure, there is some consensus around which character traits are more likely to help produce academic results. For example, teachers who exhibit empathy towards their students build stronger relationships in their classrooms, leading to higher academic achievement.¹¹ Furthermore, data suggests that a lack of teacher perseverance is directly correlated to low teacher retention.¹² Almost half of new teachers leave the profession within five years,¹³ which is especially disappointing since we know that teachers'

performance improves with time in the classroom.¹⁴ Teachers who demonstrate dedication and are reflective in their practice tend to stay in classrooms longer and provide more consistency to their schools and students.¹⁵

What this looks like: Identifying applicants' soft attributes needs to be an important part of the admissions process because it is directly tied to teaching excellence. The details of this rigorous screening process can be determined by each individual institution but should include personal essays from applicants, interviews with a panel of education instructors and interactions in group settings. Group interactions, such as discussions or role-playing scenarios, can demonstrate an applicant's ability to resolve conflicts and shed light on his or her ability to communicate empathetically.



3. Alumni Effectiveness

Teacher preparation programs should be required to collect and publish data on alumni feedback, retention and effectiveness in the classroom.

Rationale: Publishing data on teacher effectiveness tied to individual teacher preparation programs can serve as a tool for accountability. In addition, the feedback from alumni working in diverse settings with diverse student populations in terms of age, grade level, needs and abilities would help aspiring teachers and districts understand if some graduate programs are better at

preparing teachers for different teaching environments or for specific student needs.

What this looks like: Certifying teacher preparation programs should report to the New York State Department of Education their best available data on alumni feedback, retention and effectiveness in the classroom through annual surveys of their alumni. This data will become more useful as the new teacher evaluation system is implemented, enabling the correlation of teacher effectiveness and teacher preparation programs.

What “Want It” Looks Like

- Potential teachers are required to take the GRE so candidates can be compared across institutions and to other fields.
- Admission requirements include a minimum GPA of 3.0 and screen for soft skills we know are essential to effective teaching.
- Potential teachers are armed with information so they can set themselves up for success by choosing the preparation programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in their desired content area and grade level.

Learn It

Knowledge with Immediate Practical Implications for the Classroom

“Bridging theory and real-world classroom experience is the key in producing teachers prepared to face the realities of the classroom.”

Vailala Salazar Gregory, Special Education, P.S. 141

Practical Preparation

Current New York City teachers experience high levels of turnover and very stressful first-year experiences, due in part to a lack of practical preparation. To combat this problem, it is critical that the time student teachers spend in the classroom is focused on tangible and applicable classroom practices taught by an instructor who has demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom.

1. Instructors With Classroom Experience

Teacher preparation programs should employ instructors who have had experience in the classroom with demonstrated effectiveness in their field.

Rationale: It is essential for teacher preparation instructors to have experience as highly effective teachers in their field. The skills required for success in the classroom can be taught best by instructors who were highly effective themselves, because they are more readily able to teach how to put theory into practice.

What this looks like: Teacher preparation programs

should employ and tenure instructors who are proven expert practitioners, with experience as highly effective teachers. While research is critical for the advancement of education in theory and practice, teacher preparation programs should preference instructors with proven track records as classroom teachers for their teacher preparation courses. This means only hiring instructors who've been rated "highly effective" for multiple years or who can demonstrate that they have made significant gains in terms of student achievement.

2. Connecting Curricula to Standards

Teacher preparation curricula should cover five areas of knowledge: strategies, content, diversity, context and theory, and design.

Rationale: Teacher education should directly connect to standards and rubrics that align to the skills educators need to be highly effective in the classroom. In New York City, starting in September 2013, those skills will be assessed through a series of observations using Charlotte Danielson's rubric, *The Framework for Teaching*. These observations will assess 22 components of teaching; for



example, Designing Coherent Instruction (1e), Establishing a Culture for Learning (2b), Managing Student Behavior (2d) and Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques (3b). Teacher preparation coursework should directly align to these new standards to prepare teachers to the logistical and pedagogical challenges of teaching. However, current programs are not meeting this need. Twenty-one percent of recent E4E survey respondents reported that “classroom management skills” are the most important skills a teacher preparation program can emphasize, but only 7 percent reported their graduate

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program prioritized “classroom management.”¹⁶ Building expertise in these competencies before entering the classroom will create more prepared and effective teachers starting on day one of instruction.

What this looks like: This practical, relevant and direct curricula should be structured such that the following five areas of knowledge and skill are mastered:

Strategies

A well-run and organized classroom lends itself to happier teachers and more successful students. This area of knowledge should cover the daily classroom procedures, systems and routines that enable prospective teachers to manage the classroom successfully and develop strong classroom culture. With these skills teachers can deliver content and impact student learning in a safe and respectful environment.

Content

Teachers need to feel comfortable and knowledgeable in their content area. Preparation programs should ensure

48% of teachers feel that their program did not prepare them to teach students with disabilities.

52% of teachers feel that their program did not prepare them to teach English Language Learner (ELL) students.

SOURCE: Teacher survey (n=170).
Educators 4 Excellence-New York, May 2013.

Preparation programs should ensure all prospective teachers have a deep understanding of the CCSS and their specific content areas with emphasis on pedagogy and practice that lead to student mastery.

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Diversity

Teachers need to meet students where they are in order to help them grow to where they need to be. This curriculum area should prepare candidates to teach diverse learners, including:

- Students with special needs;
- Students with different styles of learning (e.g., visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners); and
- English Language Learners (ELLs).

Additionally, we want to ensure teachers have the diversity training and empathy required to teach students

from many diverse backgrounds, regardless of race or socioeconomic status.

This area of knowledge should not be satisfied in a one-course requirement; it should be approached as a coherent and systematic thread that it is present throughout the entire program.

Context and Theory

Preparation programs should work to build their candidates' fluency in the theory and science of childhood learning and development. This area of knowledge should encourage candidates to focus on real-world application of theories on child and adolescent development and the learning process, empowering the candidate to connect theory to practice.

Design

This area of knowledge should introduce the skills of lesson and unit planning, activity outlining, creating assessments, grading and providing student feedback. Special attention should be paid to assessments and performance tasks referencing skills required by the CCSS. There should be an emphasis on training for data-driven instruction. Candidates should practice skills and techniques for sourcing, sorting and using data to improve and differentiate their classrooms.

Live It

A Yearlong Meaningful Clinical Practice with Support from Master Educators

52% of teachers feel that the most important thing a teacher preparation program could have provided to prepare them to be an excellent teacher was student teaching opportunities with a master teacher

SOURCE: Teacher survey (n=170).

Educators 4 Excellence-New York, May 2013.

Residency and Support from Master Teachers

Meaningful, rigorous clinical practice, similar to a medical residency, is possibly the most important component in an effective teacher-training model. We recommend that student teachers in traditional certification programs, after developing thorough theoretical and practical knowledge through university coursework, apply their knowledge in a live, functioning classroom as a student teacher for one full year. Observing excellent teachers is a crucial element of clinical experience, and research has shown that what's most meaningful for student teachers is ample time to practice, refine and reflect on the skills and techniques they have learned. Unfortunately, cooperating teachers

who welcome student teachers into their classrooms and serve as mentors and models often don't have significant experience or training as a mentor, nor are they required to have demonstrated their effectiveness as teachers. Furthermore, no program that we are familiar with requires a full year of full-time student teaching, which we think is ideal so that a prospective teacher can see the full arc of instruction, routines and management over the course of an entire school year. In addition, extended observation of a master teacher has the potential to lead to increased gains for student teachers.

Clinical Practice for Alternatively Certified Teachers

Teachers who enter the classroom through an alternative certification program can also benefit from additional mentoring and coaching. We recommend that, in their first year of teaching, alternatively certified teachers are paired with a master teacher in their school and with a coach provided by their alternative certification program or university. The first-year teacher in the alternative certification program should:

- Observe one 15-minute period per week in the master teacher's classroom;
- Be observed by the master teacher for one 15-minute period per week; and
- Be observed twice a month for one full lesson by his or her program or university coach.

These observations should be followed up with informal reflection and feedback.

1. Thoughtful Placement

Prospective teachers should be thoughtfully and deliberately paired with experienced, highly effective cooperating teachers who take responsibility for their success in the classroom as student teachers for one full year.

Rationale: The current placement of student teachers with mentors is haphazard. The act of mentoring a future teacher should be an opportunity and an honor, not a

“Everyone wants to be prepared for their career. Teacher prep programs have a responsibility to make their programs applicable and practical!”

Kris10 Ritter, High School Math,
Facing History High School

burden. The cooperating teacher with whom a teaching candidate is paired plays an integral role in shaping the incoming teacher’s practice and pedagogy.

What this looks like:

Intentional and Thoughtful Matching

The candidate should be matched intentionally and thoughtfully with a highly effective cooperating teacher. The partnership should be one of mutual consent, allowing the cooperating teacher and teaching candidate some degree of choice in finding a placement that will be mutually beneficial to both partners.

Transfer of Responsibilities

The partnership between candidate and cooperating teacher should be structured to evolve over time, utilizing a “gradual release” model in which the candidate gains greater responsibilities as she demonstrates growing proficiency. The master teacher would guide the candidate through the complex dynamics of a full school



Valuing Student Teaching Across the School System

The act of taking on and effectively training teaching candidates should be considered the mark of a healthy, effective and sustainable school community.

A high-quality student teaching program should be accounted for in school report cards and in a school's quality review.

year from the first day of school to the last day of school, and everything in between.¹⁷ As the candidate reaches predetermined benchmarks, the master teacher would take a step back from the day-to-day leadership of the class and allow the candidate to gain experience as the primary teacher in the classroom.

Building on the Lead Teacher Program

We recommend building a more robust student teaching program into the existing leadership path for New York City teachers – the Lead Teacher Program. Lead Teachers currently assume a leadership role in their school, spending 50 percent of their time in their own classrooms and the rest providing professional development to other teachers. Lead Teachers are eligible to receive an additional \$10,710 stipend per year in the program.¹⁸ We recommend Lead Teachers be given the option to serve as cooperating teachers and train student teachers in their classrooms, in lieu of the 50 percent of their time currently allotted to other professional development.

The current criteria for selecting Lead Teachers includes NYC district tenure, evidence of successfully impacting student achievement and successful adult leadership.¹⁹ These criteria should be maintained for cooperating teachers until the full implementation of the New York City teacher evaluation system allows for the use of the four-tiered rating system to select only highly effective teachers. It is critical that cooperating teachers have a demonstrated record of success in impacting student achievement, especially working with high-need students,

so that student teachers can observe and learn from our most effective practitioners.

The cooperating teacher should receive extensive training on how to support candidates. The training should focus on how to provide effective, actionable feedback, diagnose a teaching candidate's most urgent needs, use a standardized rubric for evaluation, and set and support professional development goals.

2. Diversity of Observations

Early in their studies, student teachers should observe a wide variety of classroom settings.

Rationale: Early exposure to a variety of grades, subjects and settings will provide student teachers with opportunities to interact with diverse groups of learners in diverse settings, imparting them with a nuanced understanding of the wide spectrum of teaching assignments. It will also allow student teachers to focus their studies on the areas of their greatest interest for their teaching careers and to begin to understand the full range of possibilities of what teaching and learning can mean.

What this looks like: Teacher preparation programs should create a system for prospective teachers to briefly observe a variety of school settings and teaching assignments before their year of student teaching. This will give each prospective teacher the opportunity to make an informed decision about what he or she would



like to specialize in and choose a student teaching role in this area.

3. Effective Feedback

Student teachers should be observed and receive concrete, targeted and actionable feedback.

Rationale: An effective feedback loop is vital to ensuring that student teachers are actively learning from the process of student teaching.

What this looks like: Cooperating teachers, administrators, teaching coaches and other school colleagues should all be included in observing, evaluating and coaching student teachers. The entire school community should be actively invested and involved in the development and success of each teacher candidate. Student teachers should be observed regularly using the Danielson Framework, so that when they become certified teachers, they are familiar with the current evaluation system and expectations.

4. Making Teacher Preparation Programs Financially Sustainable

Teacher preparation programs should identify creative ways to make extended student teaching financially feasible for their students.

Rationale: Student teaching is a full-time job, and a very demanding one. The intensity of this training will most likely preclude teacher candidates from seeking other sources of income.

What this looks like: Institutions of higher learning should take into consideration the financial burden that this might place on teacher candidates and also carefully consider the effects that this reality could have on their applicant pool. Teacher preparation programs should work with local school districts to have the district compensate student teachers for their year of student teaching, if candidates commit to teach in the district after completing the program.

Prove It

A Demonstration of Mastery, Effectiveness and Professionalism

“Implementing a holistic, well-rounded evaluation of teacher candidates as they exit teacher prep programs helps raise the bar for future teachers, thereby raising the bar for the teaching profession.”

Dennis Yacobucci, Special Education, P.S. 369

Assessing Classroom Readiness

After completing classroom and clinical training, prospective teachers must demonstrate their readiness to teach by proving their effectiveness in the classroom through a series of formal assessments.

Currently, there are three exams for incoming teachers in New York – a content specific exam (CST), a general knowledge exam (LAST) and one that evaluates the candidate’s ability to understand school-specific protocols and the nature of childhood development (ATS-W). These tests do not mirror the requirements of the new NYC teacher evaluation system or the content and pedagogy required by the CCSS. Certification exams should reflect what teachers will be evaluated on as a full-time classroom teacher.

Student teachers should demonstrate evidence of student learning, basic mastery of teaching practice through a CCSS-aligned exam and a portfolio defense. Together

these assessments will provide a complete picture of whether student teachers are ready for their own classes.

1. Assessing Preparedness

After completing a teacher preparation program, prospective teachers should pass a Common Core aligned examination, demonstrating their ability to teach to the new standards.

Rationale: Due to the current shift toward more rigorous standards, our teacher certification exams are outdated, and a new exam is needed to reflect the CCSS. In the 2014-15 school year New York’s standardized tests for students will be aligned to the CCSS, the results of which will be used to help inform promotion decisions for students and personnel decisions for teachers. As a result, it is vital that teachers be fluent in these standards before their implementation.

What this looks like: Student teachers should complete a comprehensive exam focused on teaching aligned with

the Common Core State Standards and corresponding pedagogy to help ensure effective comprehension by each teacher candidate prior to leading a classroom.

2. Masters Defense

To earn a degree, student teachers should pass a rigorous defense that incorporates observation, reflection and a demonstration of adequate student growth.

Rationale: Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, New York City teachers will be evaluated using a more rigorous multi-measure system, which includes evidence of student learning and multiple observations. Student teachers should be held to a similarly high standard before they reach the classroom by requiring a formal defense, including exams, observations of student teaching, a work portfolio, and assessment of their

effective communication, professionalism and community engagement. It is critical that before being awarded their degree, student teachers have demonstrated that their students have made adequate progress as a result of their instruction.

What this looks like: Prospective graduates should defend their work in front of a panel of experts in the field. This panel should be made up of a combination of the following people: principal, district administrator, a parent, a mentor or master teacher, and a professor from the candidate's teacher preparation program.

Teaching candidates should have two chances to submit their portfolio. If they fail to obtain a passing score after their first submission, candidates will have up to six months to resubmit it.



Focusing On...

The Components of Teaching Candidates' Portfolios

Evaluation Evaluations from cooperating teacher.

Observation The teacher candidates' observations and analysis of their cooperating teacher's execution in the classroom, with personal reflections on its implications on their own practice.

Reflection Reflections on their educator philosophy, growth through their training, and involvement in extracurricular activities or involvement in the school community.

Data Data and case studies in which teaching candidates present evidence of student growth, including specific interventions and strategies used to help their students grow academically and meet personal goals.

Goals Individualized Education Program goals and SMART²⁰ goals, in which all teaching candidates, including general education teaching candidates, read a case study on a student with special needs, write two IEP goals (one academic and one social skills/activities of daily living) and include a written SMART goal for the current classroom environment in which they are teaching or observing.

There are multiple programs currently using similar strategies.

- **Relay Graduate School of Education** is the first graduate program to link the success of its participants to the academic progress of the participants' students. Relay's participants are typically already full-time classroom teachers utilizing temporary licenses. To earn their degree, Relay's teachers must demonstrate that their students have made a minimum of one year's academic growth.
- **Alverno College in Milwaukee** uses a portfolio assessment as part of its undergraduate teaching degree. "After the fourth field experience, and prior to student teaching, the Alverno students go through the most comprehensive and rigorous assessment of their careers. They must assemble a portfolio (including a video record of their teaching performance) that is evaluated by the student, the faculty, and external assessor including local principals, assistant superintendents, alumni, and other educators with whom the college has relationships."²¹

Conclusion

We have everything to gain from adopting more rigorous entrance, training and preparation standards for teachers. Imagine if all new teachers walked into their first day in the classroom with the confidence and skill needed to help all their students achieve. Imagine what could happen if the first years of teaching were not seen as a “trial by fire” but rather as the culmination of a demanding, but also thoughtfully planned and supportive, process. We owe it to our students, the future nation-builders, scientists, artists – and teachers – to train their educators in a way that will honor their limitless capabilities.

Definitions

Cooperating teachers

are current classroom teachers who open their classroom to the student teacher and act as their model and mentor.

Prospective teacher

refers to individuals who are interested in applying to a teacher preparation program, are in a teacher preparation program or are petitioning to graduate from a teacher preparation program.

Student teacher

refers to prospective teachers who are engaged in a clinical practice with a cooperating teacher.

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17. Currently in teacher education programs, one in three teacher candidates are not provided a mentor by their graduate program. Additionally, more than half of teacher candidates did not feel that their teacher-training program provided them with meaningful opportunities to teach while being observed and supported by a master teacher. Over 70 percent of teacher candidates rated the feedback and support provided by their mentor from their training program as average or below average. (E4E survey)
18. "Teacher Development: Lead Teacher Program." *NYC Department of Education*. *Teacher Page: A Resource for Teachers*. Retrieved from http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/TeacherDevelopment/Lead_Teacher_Program.htm
19. *Teacher Development: Lead Teacher Program*, http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/TeacherDevelopment/Lead_Teacher_Program.htm
20. SMART is a mnemonic for characteristics of well-written goals. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.
21. Levine, A. (2006). *Educating School Teachers*. p. 84.

Our Process and Methodology

Identifying E4E's Policy Focus

We surveyed E4E members to identify the most important and impactful policy issues.

Reviewing Research

E4E's Teacher Policy Team met over two months to review research on different models of teacher preparation as well as local strategies. Additionally, we hosted conversations with leaders from New York State Department of Education, The New Teacher Project, Teach For America, City College, Columbia University's Teachers College, Bank Street College of Education and other teacher preparation education experts.

Conducting Local Research

Our Policy Team conducted peer and administrator interviews to gather critical stakeholder feedback. We also conducted a survey open to our entire New York membership and all current NYC classroom teachers, receiving 170 complete surveys from E4E members and nonmembers to understand the most essential strategy components of a teacher preparation program for teachers.

Teacher Policy Team

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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 at **Educators4Excellence.org**.

