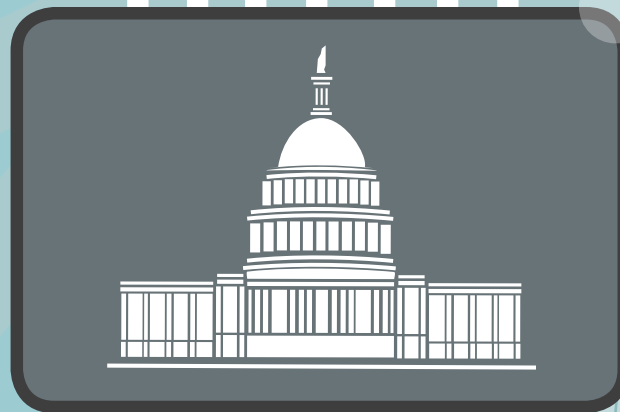


# PREPARING AND ADVANCING TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

## A NEW APPROACH FOR FEDERAL POLICY



### TO THE POINT

- ▶ Too many of today's teacher and leader preparation programs don't address the demands educators will face once they graduate or the needs of the districts that will hire them.
- ▶ These failings are unfair to teachers and devastating to students, especially the low-income students and students of color who are most likely to have newly minted teachers.
- ▶ Federal policy can help change this by requiring more useful information on prep programs, promoting meaningful action in low-performing programs, and sparking innovation in how districts and states manage educator pipelines.



The Education Trust

As states, districts, and leading education organizations begin to address the problems with teacher and leader preparation, so too must the federal government.

It must play its part by bolstering states' efforts to address the quality of educator preparation, and encouraging and enabling states to follow the examples of the leaders.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teachers and principals are the most important in-school factors in determining whether our students succeed and our schools improve. But, to effectively do their jobs, they could use some help. State and local leaders have offered support by providing rigorous learning standards and new educator evaluation systems that aim to identify differences in teacher effectiveness and customize supports and professional opportunities accordingly. However, far too little attention has been paid to preparing teachers and principals for the students and classrooms of today and tomorrow. Too many preparation programs fail to address either the demands educators will face once they graduate or the needs of the districts that will hire them.

This inattention is unfair to educators, who are sent into schools without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Inadequate preparation programs are also detrimental to students. Low-income students and students of color in particular suffer because they are the most likely to be taught by recent graduates. Thus, improving teacher and principal preparation programs is critical to raising student achievement and closing the gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from their peers. With some focused attention and a new approach, federal policymakers can encourage states to support their teachers and leaders by improving their preparation programs and increase achievement for all students.

The problems with today's preparation programs range from markedly low acceptance standards to

instruction that lacks a focus on practical skills. Teachers are rewarded for earning credits and degrees that do not correlate with their ability to teach effectively. Moreover, recent revisions to Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) have been ineffective at determining which programs are producing low-performing teachers and holding them accountable.

*In Preparing and Advancing Teachers and School Leaders: A New Approach for Federal Policy*, The Education Trust offers policy solutions to improve educator preparation programs nationwide and, in turn, create better student outcomes. As outlined in this report, a number of states have taken promising steps toward addressing this problem. Ed Trust's proposal calls for the federal government to bolster their efforts and encourage and enable other states to follow the examples of the leaders. The reauthorization of HEA provides an opportunity to make improvements, such as requiring the disclosure of more useful information, promoting meaningful action in low-performing programs, and sparking innovation in how districts and states manage educator pipelines.

To accomplish this, we offer two primary recommendations. First, states need to assess educator preparation programs on meaningful measures and use this information to truly hold programs accountable. This involves updating

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This EdTrust report was written by Sarah Almy, director of teacher quality, Melissa Tooley, teacher quality data and policy analyst, and Daria Hall, director of K-12 policy development. For a full copy visit [www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/Preparing\\_and\\_Advancing\\_0.pdf](http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/Preparing_and_Advancing_0.pdf).

reporting requirements, designing and implementing performance standards, realigning program requirements, and actually removing funds from low-performing programs. Second, the federal government should reallocate current Title II funds, creating a competitive grant that allows states to redesign their current pipeline and incentive systems.

If we want to see better results from all students, we must hold teacher and principal preparation

programs accountable for producing effective teachers and leaders. Preparation programs that fail their graduates also fail students and our nation. We can't afford to lose any more ground for our students. The federal government must take an active role in making sure our teacher and principal corps is highly trained to prepare our nation's future workforce and leaders. ■

## RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

### RECOMMENDATION ONE: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As a condition of federal funding, require states to assess the performance of teacher and principal preparation programs on a range of output metrics and use this information to truly hold programs accountable for preparing good teachers and school leaders.

- Radically pare back the useless and burdensome reporting requirements for educator preparation programs, and require states, instead, to assess the performance of programs on a small number of measures that provide more meaningful information on differences in program quality;
- Require states to use these measures to design a performance assessment and accountability system that holds teacher and principal preparation programs responsible for preparing good candidates who meet district needs;
- Require the alignment of licensure exams and approved preparation course content with college- and career-ready standards and the instructional strategies necessary to teach a wide range of students to those standards; and
- Give weight to the threat of pulling federal financial aid dollars from consistently low-performing programs by making the performance designation count, regardless of state approval or funding status. This would correct a flaw of the previous authorization that only withdrew federal funds for low-performing programs after the state had terminated their approval or financial support — a scenario that almost never occurred.

### RECOMMENDATION TWO: FEDERAL COMPETITIVE FUNDS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Reimagine the use of federal competitive dollars currently allocated in Title II — and supplement these dollars with additional resources from ESEA Title II — to enable a select number of states each year, in coordination with districts and programs, to redesign the pipeline and incentive systems that are currently so dysfunctional.

- Reallocate the \$43 million that currently funds Teacher Quality Partnership Grants to a competitive funding stream that funds state grants for comprehensive redesigns of pipeline and advancement systems; and
- Link Title II of HEA with Title II of ESEA in order to provide those states awarded a competitive grant the capacity to truly overhaul systems. States that receive money through the competitive grant would be permitted to set aside a portion of the state's ESEA Title II dollars to use in conjunction with their HEA dollars.

## **ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST**

The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college. We work alongside parents, educators, and community and business leaders across the country in transforming schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Lessons learned in these efforts, together with unflinching data analyses, shape our state and national policy agendas. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people — especially those who are black, Latino, American Indian, or from low-income families — to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.



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