Recommendations for Teacher and Leader Preparation in the Higher Education Act

There is wide, bipartisan agreement, backed by research, that the quality of a school’s teachers and leaders is the most important school factor in promoting student learning. But while we currently collect little useful information about the quality of the initial preparation educators receive, the evidence we do have points to much opportunity for improvement. In particular, research shows that adults learn best when engaging in active, hands-on learning, yet many prospective teachers receive little meaningful real-world experience before entering the classroom full time. We also know that students benefit from access to teachers that reflect their cultural, racial, and linguistic background, but the workforce far from mirrors our student population. Additionally, many teacher candidates who go to work in high-need schools or with special needs students have little prior exposure to or preparation for meeting the needs of the students in those schools.

The federal government stands to play an important role inremedying these issues, given historical challenges to preparation programs and/or states proactively doing so. The next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) should strive to strengthen educator preparation by promoting a stronger focus on innovation, quality, and equity through 1) grant programs to promote high-quality, evidence-based preparation and to address educator shortages, 2) improved data collection, reporting, and accountability requirements, 3) support for the preparation of school leaders, and 4) promotion of greater diversity among the educator workforce.

1) Grant Programs to Promote High-Quality Evidence-Based Preparation and to Address Educator Shortages

Reauthorize and Expand Teacher Quality Partnership Grants (TQP)
In Title II of HEA, TQP grants competitively fund teacher-preparation programs to partner with high-need districts with the goal of better meeting students’ needs within these districts. To date, the $43 million program has supported the spread of empirically-based practice and the development of innovative approaches in the teacher preparation field, including the expansion and evaluation of teacher residencies. It has also provided an opportunity for the field to learn and improve by requiring formal evaluations of funded initiatives, in order to highlight practices that were found to be effective or ineffective.²

We encourage Congress to reauthorize TQP grants with some enhancements and modifications. First, the program should be renamed Educator Quality Partnership Grants. Make school leader preparation programs eligible in partnership with any high-need LEA, not just rural ones, as research shows that leaders have a strong impact on the culture and success of a school, including on teacher satisfaction and retention.⁶ TQP should also require the faculty at the partner institution to be spending substantial time in the field engaging with and learning from current practitioners to incentivize practice-based professional development.

We also recommend expanding eligibility and funding for the TQP program to include other evidence-based pathways for educators that utilize a school-based preparation model, such as “Grow Your Own” (GYO) programs and Registered Apprenticeships. GYO programs are a promising strategy for diversifying the educator workforce and increasing teacher retention, but are also ripe for more research on their influence on improving student outcomes.⁷ Partnership grants for GYO programs should focus on supporting collaboration between educator preparation programs, school districts, and community organizations that recruit and prepare local community members (e.g., parents, paraeducators, and uncertified school staff) to enter the teaching profession and teach in their own communities. Registered Apprenticeships, a proven earn-while-you-learn education and workforce development model, could be particularly valuable for building a more qualified, stable early education workforce.⁸ These preparation program models should be made available to candidates with and without bachelor’s degrees and should prioritize diversity.

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Finally, HEA reauthorization should ensure that TQP grants can be more easily used to support preparation of early childhood educators. For example, language should clarify that clinical/professional work experiences can be carried out in licensed, regulated child care centers and Head Start programs and include these early education employers as eligible partners, in addition to public schools. In order to achieve the desired impact of these expanded efforts, Congress should double the current funding support for the program.

**Enhance Educator Quality for English Learners**

English learners (ELs) are a rapidly growing segment of the U.S. student population, making up nearly 10 percent of K–12 enrollment and almost one-third of the early childhood population. However, key outcomes for this group of students have lagged behind national averages. For example, the average graduation rate is 85 percent, but only 66 percent for EL students.\(^9\) National data suggest that a majority of teachers rarely receive professional development on how to best support these students, and that many also feel unprepared to serve them effectively.\(^10\) At the same time, 31 states and the District of Columbia report shortages in English as a Second Language (ESL), dual immersion, and bilingual educators—shortages that have only grown over the past 20 years.\(^11\) The reauthorization of HEA should include new competitive grant funding for the recruitment, training, and retention of English learner educators. Competitive grant funding should also target teacher preparation programs that embed dual certification in special education and/or instruction for English learners.

**Encourage Alignment Between Educator Preparation Policies and Other PreK–12 Educator Policies**

Tweaks to educator preparation programs are not sufficient to attract, develop, and retain the level of talent needed to ensure all students can succeed. State policies that impact the educator pipeline are often incoherent at best, and contradictory at worst, leading to discontent within the profession and poorer outcomes for students. Title II of HEA should also include a new competitive Educator Pipeline Innovation grant that works to ensure alignment in state educator policy from preparation program approval/reauthorization, to initial educator certification and licensure renewal, to career and professional development pathways. This grant program would help create a necessary link between the efforts to support improvements in educator quality and access in Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and those in Title II of HEA, creating synergies to strengthen the impact of each.

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2) Improve Data Collection, Reporting, and Accountability for Educator Preparation Programs

Collect and Report Meaningful Program-Level Data Based on Outcomes

Currently, the data that Title II require to be collected on educator preparation programs are focused on inputs to preparation that provide little insight into which aspects are most related to strong in-service performance. As New America and others have previously recommended, states and teacher/principal preparation programs should collect and report more meaningful data that are focused on recent program graduates’ outcomes—such as job placement and retention rates, recent graduates’ perceptions of how well their programs prepared them to enter the profession, employer feedback, student feedback, and a measure of recent graduates’ performance in the classroom that reflect their individual impact on student growth. (See Appendix on page 7 for our full list of recommended data measures for collection and reporting.) These measures should replace the current data collection requirements that create unnecessary burden while failing to provide value to stakeholders.

Additionally, data collected currently are at the educator preparation entity level (i.e., an institution of higher education or alternative route provider), despite the fact that many entities house several different educator preparation programs with different approaches to preparation as well as outcomes. To provide more useful data that could be used to guide program improvement, prospective educators’ program attendance, and local educational agency hiring decisions, data should be collected and reported at the program-level in addition to the entity level, where applicable. States should be required to leverage their longitudinal data systems to collect data on program graduates’ outcomes and share those data with the appropriate preparation program in order to minimize burden in the reporting process, as well as to promote program learning and improvement.

Enhance Accountability for Program Performance

Any HEA reauthorization should promote the use and reporting of educator preparation program quality measures to rate program performance to help prospective educators, hiring districts, and state and federal policymakers make more informed decisions, and to ultimately drive program changes that will improve the quality of educators teaching in and leading our PreK–12 schools.13

States should reflect on the findings from their respective data collections to design and implement an educator preparation program assessment system that reflects best practices14 for program

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12 During the five years since the release of Time to Improve, a new policy context and new research have led us to revisit our recommendations for the federal role in improving educator preparation through data collection, reporting, and accountability. An updated list of data measures, and accompanying rationale for any changes, is included in the Appendix of this recommendations document. See Melissa Tooley and Laura Bornfreund, Time to Improve: How Federal Policy Can Promote Better Prepared Teachers and School Leaders (Washington, DC: New America, March 2014), https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/time-improve-federal-state-educator-preparation-policies/.

13 The federal government should provide states guidance on the most valid and reliable measures and approaches for ensuring some data consistency and comparability across states.

accountability. The assessment systems should be based on a set of meaningful performance measures, including graduates’ impact on preK–12 student learning outcomes, and should clearly define criteria for at least three performance categories, with the bottom category being “low-performing.” Each state should provide a description of its rating system criteria, and how those criteria are combined in the assessment system to assess overall preparation program performance. States should be required to engage stakeholders in the development of these systems; they should include current and prospective educators in order to promote alignment with the work and goals of preK–12 systems, a variety of preparation entities to weigh in on creating effective feedback loops to drive improvement, and program evaluation experts to ensure the systems will result in valid and reliable results.¹⁵

States should have substantial autonomy in determining how to rate preparation program quality, while benefiting from some federal requirements on which measures will best assess program performance (see Appendix for the specific required measures recommended for inclusion). Retaining a federal role will ensure some data consistency and comparability across programs in different states, which would benefit hiring school districts and prospective educators.

The federal government should authorize funds to support the initial development of these data reporting and accountability systems, and to help states provide technical assistance to programs in identified areas for improvement. Additionally, the entities responsible for educator preparation program approval and accreditation should analyze and use these data in their reviews of institutions, including in order to identify programs in need of improvement or action.

3) Support the Preparation of School Leaders

Research has demonstrated that effective school leaders are crucial to improving student achievement, teacher satisfaction and retention,¹⁶ and school culture.¹⁷ While policy has mostly focused on how to improve and assess teacher quality, school leaders create the conditions necessary for teachers' success. Principals are increasingly expected to excel as "instructional leaders" in addition to their roles as "building managers," meaning that principals are expected to provide feedback and coaching to teachers on their practice, and connect instructional approaches and curricular resources to state standards. Any reauthorization of HEA should support the preparation of school leaders throughout Title II. For example, it should include and expand relevant definitions for school leaders, such as a definition of


“leadership skills” and expand definitions of mentoring and induction programs that are currently only defined for teachers. It should also expand grant programs and preparation program quality report cards to include school leader preparation programs.

4) **Promote Greater Diversity Among the Educator Workforce**

In 2015–16, 51 percent of students in public schools were non-white, more than double the share of minority public school teachers (19.9 percent in 2015–16.) This demographic mismatch between teachers and students is especially problematic as research demonstrates that students benefit from having access to teachers that reflect their cultural, racial, and linguistic background. Any reauthorization of HEA should include a definition for “diverse educators” that includes linguistic and racial diversity, and should promote the recruitment, training, and retention of diverse educators throughout. For example, grant criteria should reward efforts to increase candidate/graduate diversity, and data collection and reporting requirements should ensure that states and programs consistently share data on candidate/graduate diversity.

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APPENDIX: HEA Title II Data Measures to Collect and Report

Programs, entities, states, and the federal government will each play a role in collecting and reporting data in order to inform prospective teachers, hiring districts, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders. The following appendices outline the measures that each actor should collect and report. Italics indicate revisions to the original recommendations in our *Time to Improve* brief.

Appendix A: Preparation Program and Entity Measures

**Part 1: Performance Measures (required for reporting and use in states’ Quality Assessment Systems)**

Teacher preparation performance measures

Programs and entities will report to the state, in a uniform and comprehensible manner established by the Secretary, the following performance measures for the most recent three cohorts of graduates (defined here as those who either graduated or completed state requirements to be the teacher of record), as well as for all three cohorts combined, where applicable:

- Number and percent of recent graduates who are teaching in full-time positions:
  - 1 year out
  - 2 years out
  - 3 years out
  - For 3 consecutive years
- For recent graduates who are employed as full-time teachers:
  - Average impact on statewide measure of student growth (defined as a change in student achievement between two or more points in time) in statewide tested subject areas
- Number and percent of recent graduates employed as full-time teachers who are identified as well-prepared on the following measures, based on state-administered surveys of their principals (or other supervisors); AND number and percent of recent graduates employed as full-time teachers who are identified as well-prepared on the following measures, based on state-administered surveys of their students; AND number and percent of recent graduates employed as full-time teachers who, based on state-administered recent graduate surveys, felt their preparation program trained them to be effective in:

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20 Defined as the overall institution of higher education or other organization that operates individual educator preparation programs.


22 Measures yielding insufficient base sizes should be pooled at higher levels (e.g., combining the past two or three years of programs’ recent graduate outcomes as opposed to single years). No measure would be required for reporting for an individual program or entity if base sizes are too small to be meaningful after all data pooling options have been exhausted.

23 Student surveys are a new recommendation in light of the fact that any survey of competence is at risk of the Dunning-Kruger effect, a type of cognitive bias where people with little expertise or ability in an area overestimate their own, and others’, skill and competence levels in those areas. Having three sets of survey data to triangulate will help combat this effect, where it exists, and create more valid and reliable data.
Principal preparation performance measures

Programs and entities will report to the state the following measures for the most recent three cohorts of graduates (defined here as those who completed the program within the last year), as well as for all three cohorts combined, where applicable:

- Number and percent of recent graduates who are employed full time in a school leadership role (principal or assistant principal)
  - 1 year out
  - 2 years out
  - 3 years out
  - For 3 consecutive years

- For recent graduates who are employed in a full-time school leadership role:
  - Number and percent of recent program graduates whose annual school-wide growth exceeded or matched the districtwide or statewide (whichever allows for a more relevant comparison) growth average for schools with similar grade spans
  - Number and percent of recent graduates employed in a full-time school leadership role who are identified as well-prepared on the following measures, based on state-administered surveys of the school leaders’ supervisors; AND number and percent of recent graduates employed in a full-time school leadership role who are identified as well-prepared on the following measures, based on state-administered surveys of their school staff; AND number and percent of recent graduates employed in a full-time school leadership role who, based on state-administered graduate surveys, felt prepared to be effective in:
    - Producing student learning and raising achievement for all students
    - Hiring diverse teachers
    - Developing, supporting, and retaining effective teachers
    - Managing school operations and administration, and related staff
    - Creating a culture of high expectations
    - Using a data-based approach to instructional leadership and student learning

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24 Staff surveys are a new recommendation in light of the fact that any survey of competence is at risk of the Dunning-Kruger effect, a type of cognitive bias where people with little expertise or ability in an area overestimate their own, and others’, skill and competence levels in those areas. Having three sets of survey data to triangulate will help combat this effect, where it exists, and create more valid and reliable data.

25 Recent research indicates that the quality of a school’s overall management has an impact on staff satisfaction and retention, and is likely also to impact students’ school experience. For example, see Melissa Tooley, *From Frenzied to Focused: How School Staffing Models Can Support Principals as Instructional Leaders* (Washington, DC: New America, June 2017), [https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/frenzied-focused/](https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/frenzied-focused/).
Part 2: Educator Preparation Enrollment, Licensure, and Other Data (reported but not required in states’ Quality Assessment Systems)

Teacher and leader preparation programs/entities to report to the state

- Number and percent of recent graduates by race (those who identify as Black, Latinx, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, White, multiracial); 2) gender (number and percent of graduates who identify as male vs. female vs. other); and 3) language diversity (number and percent of graduates who have bilingual/dual language immersion endorsements)\(^{26}\)
- Number and percent of enrolled students taking state licensure assessment(s), first-time pass rate (percent) of enrolled students, and overall pass rate (percent) of enrolled students
- Average scaled score on the licensure exam, and any other state-required pre-service exam, of all enrolled students compared to the state-mandated pass score on the exam
- Number and percent of recent graduates who work in high-need (high-poverty, high-minority, or low-performing) schools
- Number and percent of recent graduates who remain in high-need schools for at least three years
- Average number of hours of clinical experience
- Overall rating in statewide Quality Assessment System (in applicable reporting years) for each of the past three years—and for entities, also the number and percent of programs rated in each Quality Assessment System category for each of the past three years
- For recent graduates who are employed as full-time teachers or school leaders in states that require districts to have a multi-measure educator evaluation system that includes a statewide measure of impact on student growth as a significant part of the evaluation:\(^{27}\)
  - Number and percent of recent graduates falling in each evaluation category
- Whether programs are accredited by a national education program accrediting agency (e.g., Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation)
- Whether programs are nationally recognized by a specialty area association (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children or National Council of Teachers of Mathematics).

Additional measures for only teacher preparation programs/entities to report to the state

- For the most recent class, average GPA (high school or undergraduate, as appropriate) of entering students and average GPA of entrants to the institution as a whole, as applicable

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\(^{27}\) After observing uneven fidelity in the implementation of new educator evaluation systems, we no longer recommend using these data measures for program accountability, but only for reporting purposes. If evaluation ratings are not comparable across districts because of fidelity of observation implementation or other reasons, then it could create perverse incentives for preparation programs to push graduates to “easy” performance evaluation districts. This could lead to a race to the bottom as districts/schools with teacher shortages lower evaluation standards further to make themselves more attractive to preparation programs and prospective teachers.
● For the most recent class, average SAT, ACT, or, if applicable, GRE score of enrolled students and average SAT, ACT, or GRE score of entrants to the institution as a whole and compared with the national average
● For the most recent class, number, and percent of students enrolled by race/ethnicity compared with the institution as a whole
● For states that require all districts to have multi-measure evaluation systems, number and percent of all recent graduates participating in a clinical experience who had a supervising teacher rated in the top rating category on their most recent evaluation, and number and percent who had a supervising teacher rated in the top two categories
● Number and percent of recent graduates who teach in state-identified high-need subject areas
● Number and percent of recent teacher graduates who are working in a full-time position, but are considered “out-of-field” in one or more subjects, specialization areas, or grade levels
● Number and percentage of recent graduates who have taken the state certification assessment and average scale score for first-time passers vs. all passers, disaggregated by various candidate diversity indicators

Appendix B: State Measures

States must annually report to the Secretary, in a uniform and comprehensible manner established by the Secretary, data on all measures in Appendix A above in the aggregate, and reported separately, for:
● All programs and entities in the state
● Traditionally—vs. alternatively—licensed graduates
● Baccalaureate vs. post-baccalaureate vs. master’s programs (where applicable)

States must also report:
● For each Quality Assessment System measure, the median score, as well as scores for state-determined “below” and “above” average percentiles (e.g., the 20th, 50th, and 80th percentiles)
● A detailed description of their respective program rating system criteria, and how those criteria are combined in the Quality Assessment System to assess overall preparation program performance
● The number and percent of programs in each rating category for each of the past three years (in applicable reporting years)
● The number and percent of graduates receiving each license type offered by program and for the state as a whole

States must make these reports easily accessible to the public via their own platforms as well.

Appendix C: Federal Measures

28 Some research finds that states’ current certification exams are a barrier to ensuring racial and linguistic diversity. States need input on how they can raise the rigor of certification exams while ensuring that they are not unfairly reducing diversity. Collecting and reflecting on these data in terms of diversity indicators is a first step toward understanding how to do so.
The Secretary’s report to Congress and the public will be similar to current Title II, Part A, Section 205 (d) and (e), in that it will summarize and compare states’ efforts to assess and improve educator preparation program quality.

But in addition to providing national mean and median scaled scores and pass rates, the report will include state data in the aggregate (where feasible), and reported separately, on program graduate job performance and impact on student learning, job placement and retention, and graduate and employer satisfaction, per the measures reported by states in Appendix B. Baseline data in the form of means and medians will also be provided for each measure, where feasible.