
AN ACTION PLAN

for Addressing Educational and Economic Recovery in America

Across the country, we face complex questions about whether and how to restart our schools in the fall. But although the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, two things are clear. First, we must do everything we can to educate our children this fall – no one disputes this. Second, our economic recovery depends in part upon our education policies. Parents and teachers want to return to work, but only if it will be safe.

Given these challenges, it's vital to not let politics obscure the reality on the ground today. State and local school leaders are working overtime to develop plans to provide instruction to children starting in the fall, many of which will necessarily require a mix of in-person and remote learning. These leaders need support.

We can simultaneously help provide for the educational needs of our nation's students and expand the educator workforce. **There are more than 450,000 individuals enrolled in teacher-preparation programs nationwide who are ready, willing, and able to help.** And in two relatively simple steps, we can harness this large workforce-in-training to support student learning and stimulate economic recovery.

HERE'S HOW

1 Create opportunities for future teachers to provide tutoring to students

This past spring, after school buildings were closed nationwide, educators rapidly shifted to providing instruction online to students. In many states and school districts, this remote learning will continue this fall. The question is how to do it well.

The answer is by having more humans involved, not less. Future teachers can support distance learning through small-group tutoring, preparing materials, and providing feedback to students. In addition, aspiring teachers can potentially provide instruction to individuals or groups of students in person. During these unprecedented times, we should be creative in thinking about how to increase access to instruction. For example, in Tennessee the state temporarily waived the requirement that clinical hours take place in traditional school-based settings, opening up the potential for aspiring teachers to work with students in Boys and Girls Clubs across the state.

This approach will expand access to both academic support and increased hours of childcare for families who do not have the means to afford such support, as well as creating additional capacity for social distancing in schools. For example, schools or organizations could help parents in high-need, low-income neighborhoods form "pods," leveraging aspiring teachers to staff them, and reducing the inequities that will result without bringing resources to families who can't afford to hire additional help.

Aspiring teachers should be paired with full-time teachers of record who are either also teaching remotely, or else working in-person with smaller cohorts of students due to physical distancing. Further, teacher-preparation programs should partner with high-need schools and districts, and organizations that serve low-income students, ensuring that the additional staffing support goes to students in communities most adversely impacted by the pandemic.

In conjunction with this, states should allow teacher-candidates to fulfill clinical requirements in non-traditional ways, including virtual and in-person experiences. To a degree, this is already happening. Last spring, **many states allowed teacher-candidates to fulfill clinical requirements via virtual instruction.** While a few states have extended this flexibility into the next academic year, more must follow. States should ask teacher-preparation programs to provide evidence that these clinical experiences are **well-designed**, and that future teachers will be paired with **strong mentors** and supported by program faculty. Students are in dire need of support, and teacher-candidates need clinical experience. States and preparation programs need to ensure that they are providing the flexibility necessary to meet the moment.

2 Expand the capacity of the current workforce with aspiring teachers

Currently, we do not have the workforce to provide socially distanced instruction to kids across the country. There are 150,000 future teachers who have completed initial preparation requirements able to immediately fill this dire need. The federal government, states, districts, teacher-preparation programs, and nongovernmental agencies need to work together to ensure that this incredible resource is brought to bear on the national priority to maximize safe in-person instruction. Prospective teachers can provide support by:

- Partnering with experienced teachers of record to team teach, allowing vulnerable teachers to provide critical support with lesson planning, hybrid virtual teaching and mentoring from home while younger teachers provide in-person instruction
- Providing additional capacity needed to maintain social distancing by providing instruction to small groups, or floating between classes

One way states can accomplish this is by creating an “**associate teacher license.**” Similar to a residency program, this model will allow future teachers to meet the requirements for their programs by taking on duties that fall between a paraprofessional and a novice teacher. These “associate teachers” will not supplant existing full-time teachers, but will provide critical support to students and schools while gaining valuable, practice-based experience. “Associate teachers” should be compensated to allow them to earn a living and contribute to our economic recovery. This should be open to individuals who are currently in teacher-preparation programs, as well as paraprofessionals and other teaching aides who have critical experience, but may not be able to pursue a teaching degree without simultaneously earning a salary.

WHAT CONGRESS SHOULD DO

Congress must support states to develop the educator workforce needed to meet student academic and social-emotional needs this fall. Below is a sample of actions lawmakers should consider:

- 1 Pass S.3964 (The CORPS Act)** and prioritize the eligibility of future teachers as awardees.
- 2 Fund an optional 1% set-aside** to expand access to tutoring by funding innovative partnerships between teacher-preparation programs, community-based organizations, and/or other non-governmental organizations.
- 3 Identify these ideas as an allowable use of funds** in the next stimulus package for innovative partnerships that seek to increase the capacity to reopen schools and support students.
- 4 Increase funding for Title II of the Higher Education Act** in the FY2021 Labor-HHS-Education bill by \$500 million to directly support states to develop plans that leverage future teachers.
- 5 Allow tutoring – as described above – in high-need or low-income schools to satisfy TEACH Grant service requirements** for the duration of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, we can provide meaningful educational opportunities to students and foster economic recovery. This is a win-win opportunity for our country and we urge policymakers to act swiftly to make it happen.

Deans for Impact is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring every child is taught by a well-prepared teacher. At present, Deans for Impact is working with over 60 educator-preparation programs preparing 12,000 teachers every year.

If interested in learning more about how to implement this proposal, please contact
PATRICK STECK | Director of Policy | psteck@deansforimpact.org | 512-636-9524

For more on the evidence-base surrounding these ideas see:
“Sustaining Teacher Training in a Shifting Environment”
(Goldhaber & Ronfeldt, 2020)



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