

MODERNIZING TEACHER PREPARATION POLICY



At Deans for Impact, we know that teachers make hundreds of instructional and non-instructional decisions everyday. Through our programmatic work, we aim to ensure that those decisions create challenging, affirming, and inclusive classrooms for all students. However, outdated and narrowly focused policies are formidable barriers to achieving a system that ensures every child is taught by a well-prepared teacher. This document offers three areas in educator preparation that are ripe for improvement and that policy can meaningfully influence.

Policy should ensure aspiring teachers:

Apply the Science of Learning

Too many classroom teachers begin their careers without an understanding of how young people learn and the practical implications for teaching. Policy can address this.

What does this look like in **POLICY?**

In accordance with the state's Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted several policies to align expectations for preparation in literacy to the science of reading. These expectations include new coursework requirements for elementary education candidates, training for teacher-educators and in-service teachers, new program approval/renewal guidelines for educator-preparation programs, and the creation of a state-wide pilot for K-12 schools and educator-preparation programs to work together to implement the approved policies.

What does this look like in **PRACTICE?**

Since 2019, educator-preparation programs participating in Deans for Impact's Learning by Scientific Design Network have redesigned coursework and clinical experiences around principles of learning science. [Data released in 2021](#) found consistent and statistically significant improvement among future teachers who were prepared differently as a direct result of the network. And in a December 2021 feature titled "Why So Many Kids Struggle to Learn," reporter Natalie Wexler found that "things are beginning to change" in schools of education, basing her conclusions in part on extensive interviews and observations at programs in the Learning by Scientific Design Network.

RECOMMENDATION: *States should align expectations in all content areas, not just reading, with the science of learning.*

*Policymakers and philanthropic partners interested in learning more about how to activate the tools of policy to modernize teacher preparation are encouraged to reach out to **PATRICK STECK** | psteck@deansforimpact.org*



Practice with Purpose

When aspiring teachers have early opportunities to engage in the actual work of teaching, they are more successful in their first years in the classrooms. Opportunities for practice should be intentionally woven throughout a teacher-candidate's experience, and increase in complexity over time.

What does this look like in POLICY?

One silver lining of the pandemic has been a heightened focus on aligning practice opportunities for aspiring teachers with the actual work of teaching and learning in K-12 schools. For example, the Vetted Texas Tutor Corps (VTTC), created in 2021, includes a pathway whereby educator-preparation programs are incentivized to mobilize aspiring teachers as tutors—a win-win whereby future teachers gain practical experience and simultaneously provide support to students.

What does this look like in PRACTICE?

Since July 2020, a broad coalition has advocated for federal and state policymakers to incentivize partnerships between K-12 schools, educator-preparation programs, and other community-based organizations to mobilize the nation's 450,000 aspiring teachers as high-quality tutors. The New Jersey Tutor Corps is one such example. Read more about this and other partnerships in [Strengthening Pipelines and Serving Students](#).

RECOMMENDATION: *States should ensure that aspiring teachers can fulfill regulatory requirements via tutoring and that they are supported by high-quality mentorship and supervision.*



Use Well-Sequenced Curriculum

The past decade has seen significant growth in what are termed “high-quality instructional materials,” or HQIM, which are often well-sequenced curriculum designed by expert educators. Aspiring teachers should be able to identify, evaluate, and, where necessary, modify existing curriculum.

What does this look like in POLICY?

In passing the Literacy Success Act of 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly laid the foundation for the state board and the department of education to initiate literacy standards reforms, including new standards regarding the use of high-quality instructional materials. Importantly, though, the state also invested in the development of modules that prepare aspiring teachers to make use of high-quality instructional materials.

What does this look like in PRACTICE?

The Tennessee EPP Innovation Network is a collaboration between Deans for Impact, the Tennessee Department of Education and four educator-preparation programs to develop and pilot modules around the use of high-quality instructional materials. The modules will help aspiring teachers learn to use HQIM to deliver consistent, standards-aligned instruction.

RECOMMENDATION: *States should promulgate new standards related to a well-sequenced curriculum and build the capacity of teacher-educators through resources like the Tennessee modules and direct training on how to use them.*