

## Recommendations for preparing the TN teacher workforce during times of crisis

As leaders of seven diverse EPPs, we are committed to ensuring that all students have access to great schools and great teachers. Over the course of the last four months, our nation has faced multiple crises. The crisis of systemic racism that has plagued our nation for hundreds of years is made more apparent when we face natural disasters and international pandemics. While truly addressing the root of these problems requires massive overhauls to our nation's judicial and social systems, those of us in education have an opportunity to reflect and act on some of our profession's most fundamental assumptions about teaching in Tennessee.

As our programs and candidates continue to navigate ever-changing routines and practices in light of the pandemic, and we confront the stain of racism on our country's collective conscience, we will continue to rely on the State Board of Education (SBE) and Department of Education (TDOE) for guidance and support to ensure all Tennessee's children -- especially those who are most affected by structural inequities -- have access to effective educators. We encourage our leaders to take bold, swift action.

Accordingly, the state should take the following proactive steps:

- **Build a teacher workforce that reflects the students we serve.** In the ensuing years, it will be critically important for the teacher workforce to better reflect the students they serve. As such, it is important that we consider the structural barriers that prevent a more diversified workforce.
  - **Expand access to postsecondary education.** Tennessee stands out as a leader in efforts to increase access to and affordability of college. Yet, there is still opportunity to improve. Currently, the state provides [loan forgiveness programs](#) for college-going-students who intend to become teachers. State leaders should reimagine these loan forgiveness programs to ensure that these funds are scholarships, rather than loans, and that students receiving these scholarships have expanded access to counselors and mentors, as well as academic tutoring.
  - **Expand access to teacher preparation programs.** The state should examine the types of structural barriers that perpetuate racism by systematically preventing those with less access to high quality education from pursuing opportunities like teaching. There is little evidence to suggest that any single indicator (e.g., GPA or score on a basic skills test) is predictive of future teacher effectiveness. In addition, there is evidence that assessments, like the Praxis CORE, unfairly screen out Candidates of Color. As preparation programs, we should lift up students who need additional support instead of prohibiting them from entering our programs.
- **Update and refine data used to aid decision-making** Tennessee has a rich history of collecting and reporting data related to the preparation and licensure of teachers. To promote ongoing use of data to drive improvement and ensure that all students have access to effective teachers, we believe the state should:
  - **Collect and analyze data on the usage of waivers and/or flexibilities for teacher candidates issued a license under COVID-19 flexibilities.** For decades, there have been debates about the value of candidate assessments and other licensure requirements.
    - We should use COVID-19 shifts related to licensure to interrogate the relationship between requirements and desired outcomes, such as program completion, employment and teacher effectiveness. We should seek to understand whether and how these specific requirements have a disproportional impact on Black, Latinx and other Candidates of Color. We are not advocating for lower standards, but rather just and fair expectations.
  - **Examine the effectiveness of teachers issued a Tennessee teaching license based on holding an out-of-state license.** In light of recent changes to state regulations regarding out-of-state licensure

requirements, state leaders should analyze teacher effectiveness data for these teachers, disaggregated by state. This analysis can inform our understanding of the readiness of teachers from other states to work in Tennessee public schools.

- **Adopt policies that allow teacher-candidates to provide online tutoring to students to satisfy clinical requirements.** Here's how we believe this should be implemented:
  - Require participating EPPs to submit a *single* letter of assurance acknowledging a commitment to providing virtual tutoring experiences that maintain standards of the quality and rigor of clinical teaching requirements.
  - Allow EPPs to recruit a cadre of teacher-candidates as tutors<sup>1</sup> to support student needs. EPP leaders should prioritize recruitment of candidates enrolled in Tennessee educator preparation programs.
  - Match content- and- grade-specific tutors via TNCompass with students who need additional support, beginning with students in Title I schools.
  - Matched tutors with students for ongoing support that includes multiple opportunities each week<sup>2</sup> for at least 15 weeks.
  - Provide standardized content (scope and sequence) to support Tennessee tutors in their implementation of high quality tutoring activities (quizzing, interleaving content, high quality questioning).
  - Candidate-led tutoring should be supervised by teacher-educators who provide specific, actionable, and timely feedback that we know is critical for teacher development.

By adopting these recommendations Tennessee will be providing children, especially Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other Children of Color, access to caring, passionate adults equipped to address specific academic and emotional needs. Simultaneously, they will be providing teacher-candidates access to rich practice-based experiences with students that are needed to complete pre-service training now and for the foreseeable future.

In the near future, we must also begin to consider *how we support novice teachers, especially Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Teachers of Color, who begin their careers in dramatically atypical circumstances*. Through continued collaboration - built on a decade of positive relationships - we know that our programs, completers, and the students they serve will emerge from the pandemic more prepared and ready to lead than ever before in the fight for equality and justice.

The **Tennessee Ed Prep Impact Coalition** consists of leaders from *Carson-Newman University, Freed-Hardman University, Lipscomb University, Nashville Teacher Residency, Tennessee Technological University, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and University of Tennessee, Knoxville*. The coalition is facilitated by **Deans for Impact**, a national nonprofit committed to ensuring that every child is taught by well-prepared teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, the Haslam Foundation is supporting a summer tutoring program that pays tutors. This program differs by giving students access to individuals with formal training in meeting their needs.

<sup>2</sup> Tutoring is most effective when students engage in tutoring activities at least twice a week. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service. (2001). [Evidence that Tutoring Works](#).