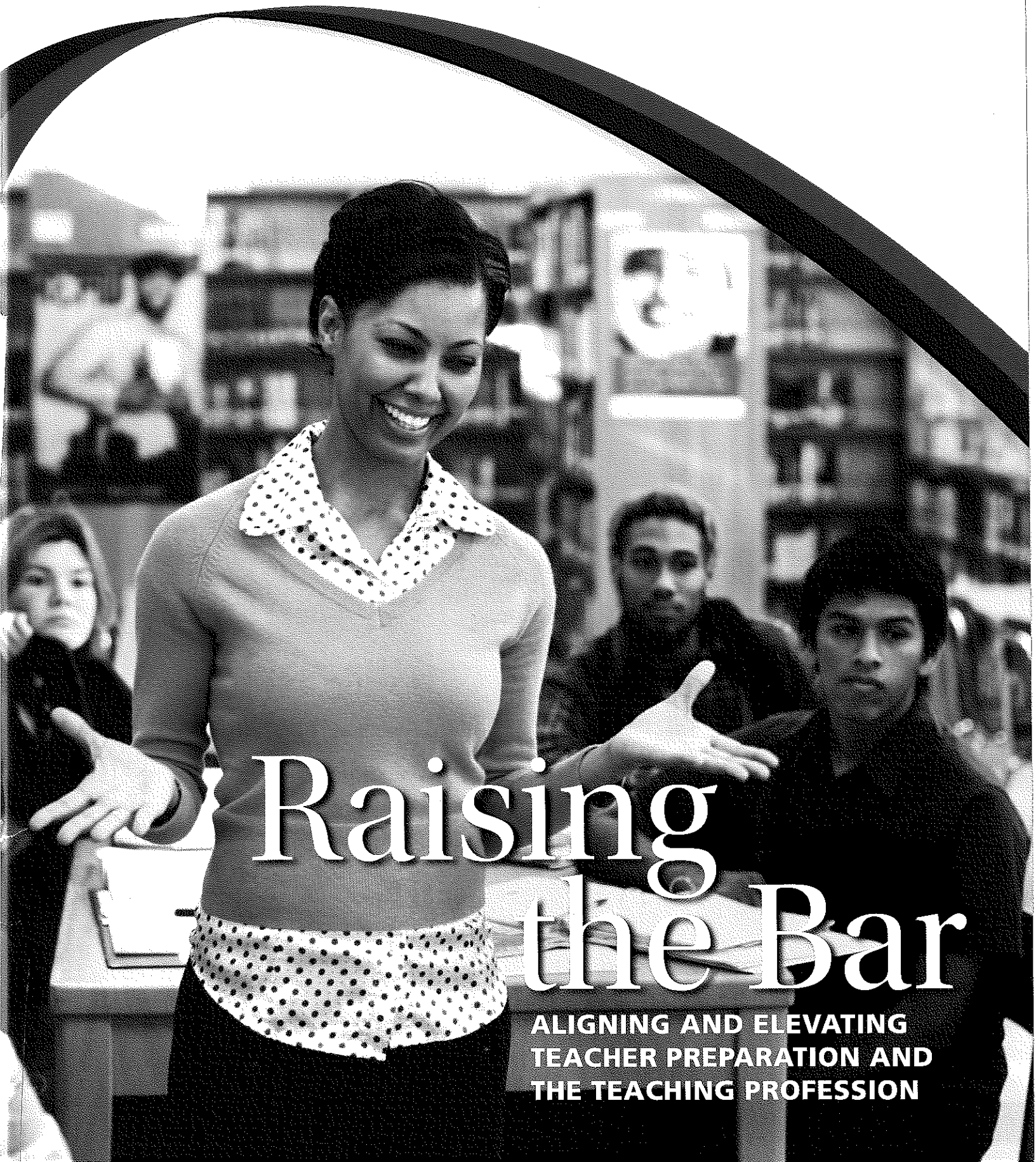
A Union of Professionals



Raising the Bar

ALIGNING AND ELEVATING TEACHER PREPARATION AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

A Union of Professionals

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Executive Summary

What will enable systemic reform of our teacher preparation system to ensure teachers are adequately prepared to meet the demands of teaching in the 21st century? This is the question we must answer if we are serious about improving the standards for student learning in this country. It is all the more timely and important given that the majority of states have committed to raising the standards for all students by adopting the Common Core State Standards. We must do the same for the teaching profession.

No educational issue today attracts more attention from the public and policymakers than ensuring that students are college- or career-ready and that America's schools have the highest standards of teaching so we can meet that goal. Rightly so, since it is well-documented that the quality of teaching is the most important in-school factor in student learning. Concerns with improving the quality of teaching in our schools have led to renewed interest in improving teacher preparation. This is not surprising, in light of the strong evidence that teacher preparation matters, and also given the high turnover rate for new teachers and an impending wave of retirements. Consequently, multiple reports and policy statements have been released in the last several years calling for a host of changes to teacher preparation programs in an effort to better prepare beginning teachers. While the organizations and policymakers putting forth these proposals have a variety of perspectives, many of their ideas about how to improve teacher preparation are similar.

The American Federation of Teachers Teacher Preparation Task Force was established to examine the research on what works and what does not work in the field of teacher preparation as a basis for making policy recommendations. Just as important, the task force considered how best to implement such policy recommendations in a way that takes into account all stakeholders—teacher education institutions, K-12 schools, teacher accrediting agencies, state education boards, federal government regulators, education associations and unions—and leads to real improvement in the field as measured by the quality of new teachers entering the profession.

The task force recommends three significant changes that must be made to truly improve teacher preparation and, by extension, improve teaching and learning in our schools.

- All stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that teacher preparation standards, programs and assessments are aligned with a well-grounded vision of effective teaching.
- Teaching, like other respected professions, must have a universal assessment process for entry that includes rigorous preparation centered on clinical practice as well as theory, an in-depth test of subject and pedagogical knowledge, and a comprehensive teacher performance assessment.
- Primary responsibility for setting and enforcing the standards of the profession and ensuring the quality and coherence of teacher preparation programs must reside with members of the profession—practicing professionals in K-12 and higher education.

Alignment and Coherence: The teacher preparation system in the United States is at best confusing and at worst a fragmented and bureaucratic tangle of stakeholder groups with varied, sometimes overlapping, responsibilities and blurry accountability lines. An array of generally unaligned standards and assessments aimed at improving teacher preparation and candidate readiness furthers the frag-

We must do away with a common rite of passage, whereby newly minted teachers are tossed the keys to their classrooms, expected to figure things out, and left to see if they (and their students) sink or swim. Such a haphazard approach to the complex and crucial enterprise of educating children is wholly inadequate. It's unfair to both students and teachers, who want and need to be well-prepared to teach from their first day on the job. At a time when we are raising the standards for students through the Common Core State Standards, we must do the same for teachers.

We need a systemic approach to preparing teachers for a successful career in the classroom and a more rigorous threshold to ensure that every teacher is actually ready to teach. If both are done well, a teaching credential will be meaningful. The top-performing countries spend substantial time and resources to ensure that standards, programs and entry assessments are aligned and coherent, while the United States' system is a patchwork lacking consistency.

To that end, all those involved in preparing future teachers must collaborate to ensure that the standards, programs and assessments are aligned to a well-grounded vision of effective teaching. As in medical, law and other professions, all prospective teachers—whether they come to the profession by the traditional or an alternative route—should meet a universal and rigorous bar that gauges mastery of subject matter knowledge and demonstrates competency in how to teach it. Also, the primary responsibility for setting and enforcing the teaching profession's standards and ensuring the cohesion of teacher preparation programs must reside with practicing teachers in K-12 and higher education.

Raising the bar for America's teachers will send a necessary signal that teachers are well-prepared to enter the classroom and ready our children for the 21st century.

Randi Weingarten, President
American Federation of Teachers

mentation. Stakeholders—including states, school districts, teacher preparation programs, accrediting agencies, teachers and teacher educators (and the various groups that represent these stakeholders)—must come together in an effort to seek better alignment of standards, programs and assessments around a vision of teaching and teacher preparation that is well-grounded in research on best practices. That work also must seek to put in place structures to facilitate better collaboration between school districts and teacher preparation programs. Without such a commitment, a fragmented system of teacher preparation will prevail and the implementation of consistent best practices will be uneven at best.

Rigorous and Universal Assessment: Just as in professions widely recognized for having a set of rigorous professional standards, such as law or medicine, teaching must raise standards for entry into the profession through a process similar to the bar process in law or the board process in medicine. The process must require candidates to demonstrate competence in essential dimensions of successful teaching before being allowed to take responsibility for a classroom and become a teacher of record. Such an assessment system would entail several components aligned with clearly articulated essential dimensions of professional teaching that together would constitute a threshold for entrance into the profession.

There has been significant debate about the quality of teacher preparation programs—both traditional and alternative. By requiring all teacher candidates to pass a universal assessment, we ensure *all* teachers who enter the classroom, whether trained in a traditional program or alternatively certified, meet the same standards of competence.

A Profession Governed by Professionals: A singular oversight organization is necessary to establishing a widely agreed-upon set of standards, coherent programs and a common set of professionally rigorous assessments to ensure only well-qualified teachers enter the classroom, as is the case in other professions. That organization should be composed of predominately teachers and teacher educators. Professionals in the field must take primary responsibility for designing coherent standards, identifying what teaching practices are essential for beginning teachers, and designing teacher training so that students are given opportunities to experience and learn these practices. They also must be responsible for ensuring assessments adequately and appropriately identify who is ready to enter the profession. The logical home for such work is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which already has widely respected standards for accomplished teachers, set by educators in the field.

To drive these changes, the AFT recommends that:

1. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards take the leading role in bringing together all stakeholders, including state standards boards and education agencies, to define a rigorous entry bar for beginning teachers, just as it has established a process for becoming an accomplished, board-certified teacher.

2. An entry bar for the profession must include rigorous preparation centered on clinical practice as well as theory, an in-depth examination of subject and pedagogical knowledge, and a demonstration of teaching ability through performance assessment.

3. The process of establishing the bar and ensuring its professional standards are maintained should involve all stakeholders but be driven by teachers and teacher educators, just as it is

for the current NBPTS accomplished-practitioner certification process.

4. The stakeholders involved should commit to collaborating to bring their current work and knowledge on teacher preparation programs, standards and assessments together to create a more coherent and genuine profession for all teachers.

A clear developmental arc should extend from the time a teacher enters a program, through the clinical experience, to the entry into the classroom, through ongoing professional development and evaluation, to becoming an accomplished teacher. The AFT is committed to working with the NBPTS and other stakeholders to achieve these large and long-term goals. We are also committed to working with our K-12 and higher education affiliates to improve the collaboration and coherence of teacher preparation at the local level, and will seek opportunities to work with our brothers and sisters at the National Education Association, which also recently released a thoughtful agenda for teacher preparation reform.

The introduction to the AFT's first report on teacher preparation in 2000, *Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction*, quoted the late AFT president Albert Shanker, who wrote in 1986 that:

> To be considered a true profession, an occupation must: have a distinct body of knowledge—acknowledged by practitioner and consumer alike—that undergirds the profession and forms the basis of delivering high-quality services to clients; define for itself the nature of training required of those who wish to enter the field; require rigorous training to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to practice the profession; control the standards for entry into the profession; have its practitioners be a major voice in determining working conditions; have its practitioners exercise independent judgment about client needs to ensure those needs are met; evaluate the performance of practitioners and remove from the profession those whose performance fall below standards; require that practitioners continue to learn about advances in the field; induct its members into the profession in a systematic and rigorous fashion; and have the respect of the larger society.[1]

That description of what teaching as a profession must strive for is as true today as it was then, and that work must begin with our teacher preparation system. It is not that we have failed to recognize the importance of teacher preparation. Rather, we have failed to simultaneously establish the professionalism of teaching by building a mechanism to sustain high standards that will ensure only those who are qualified can enter the profession. After more than two decades of unprecedented attention to teaching, most recently evidenced by a nationwide focus on evaluation as a route to improvement, it is time to finally act on addressing teacher preparation in a sustainable way: through action to accept common professional standards, align preparation to those standards, and enable the profession itself to ensure candidates meet them. Without that, other efforts to improve teaching quality and ensure a core of highly competent professionals who are committed to students' ongoing learning are, by definition, piecemeal and inadequate, and will leave us perpetually chasing new teacher candidates in the short term rather than building the profession for the long term.

Introduction

The American Federation of Teachers has long led and been involved in efforts to improve instruction and teaching standards in the United States. Among the most recent examples are:

- The deep engagement of AFT teachers in the development and implementation of the Common Core State Standards;
- The innovative teacher development and evaluation programs incorporated into AFT teacher contracts all over the country;
- The engagement in launching and sustaining new teacher residency programs to prepare urban teachers; and
- The launch of Share My Lesson, the nation's largest free online collection of classroom resources created by teachers, for teachers, including a new section of materials for curricula based on the Common Core State Standards.

This new AFT task force report on initial teacher preparation in this country takes another critical step in the union's Quality Education Agenda—toward ensuring that the teachers of today and tomorrow receive the kind of preparation they need to serve new generations of American students. Formed by AFT president Randi Weingarten, the task force consists of 14 AFT leaders drawn equally from our members in K-12 and higher education. In their deliberations, task force members drew from their own experiences, heard from a variety of scholars and practitioners, and reviewed some of the most important research and best practices from other countries as well as our own. In addition, the task force commissioned a national survey of teachers who were new to the profession. *For more information about the task force, see Appendix A.*

The task force learned, and often relearned, a great deal about key elements of teacher preparation, including entry and exit standards, curriculum, clinical experience and induction. But we begin here with a few of the facts and forces in the climate and context for teacher preparation in the United States today. These contextual realities create a moment of unprecedented opportunity—as well as challenge—in putting teacher preparation on a productive course nationally:

- In the most recent year for which data are available, first-year teachers constituted nearly 10 percent of the teacher workforce.[2] It is often reported that nearly half of new teachers leave the classroom within five years.[3] And an expected wave of retirements is becoming larger due to teachers' negative responses to excessive high-stakes testing and lack of support for addressing instructional and environmental challenges. The pipeline running across the entire teaching profession has been a leaky one at best, but we continue to rely on policy patches instead of systemic approaches that address the entire career continuum and attempt to link supply and support more closely with need.
- The development and implementation of the Common Core State Standards provides the unprecedented opportunity to improve the rigor and quality of teacher preparation programs to ensure teachers are able to help students meet these critical career- and college-readiness requirements. These ambitious goals also demand a shift away from the narrow, managed instruction approaches that have often been adopted in the No Child Left Behind

era, especially for lower-performing schools.[4]

- Technology pervades the daily lives of today's prospective teachers and students of all ages, yet many programs lack the resources to create technology-rich programs that can train and develop teachers to integrate technology effectively into instruction and assessment.

- More students are coming to our public schools feeling the effects of poverty and with special educational, language and support needs, and these students are most likely to be assigned to newer teachers who often feel underprepared to meet all their diverse needs, especially when both high-needs students and novice teachers are concentrated in low-income schools with little veteran support.[5]

- In recent years, teacher quality has been under increasing attack, and the solution too often has been to impose ever more restrictive government regulations that divide programs into winners and losers but fail to supply the support teachers and students need to succeed. Unfortunately, this regulatory attitude is spreading to teacher education, and some of the same wrong-headed "name-and-blame" accountability metrics are being applied, as are program cutbacks disguised as ideas that have not, to date, produced widespread or sufficient results.[6] Despite the need to address the variation in quality of teacher preparation programs, particularly weak programs that exist, overregulation is not the answer.

Beyond this current context are longer-standing systemic realities. In the year 2000, another AFT task force of K-12 and higher education leaders issued a set of highly regarded, and sometimes prescient, recommendations for improving teacher education. A review of contemporary programs demonstrates that there have been numerous innovations since then. In fact, some of the recommendations of the 2000 report have become common wisdom and have been adopted. Sparked, in part, by the recommendations in *Building a Profession*, a National Academy of Education panel produced *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*, which has been used as a guide to transform many preparation programs—although not nearly enough.[7] Largely unchanged since 2000 are the lower status and funding of teacher preparation within colleges and universities, and the varying state standards for such programs. In addition, the quality of teacher preparation programs varies significantly, and there is not a research-based consensus around how to best teach prospective teachers. Consequently, it is of little surprise that we continue to see report after report calling for improvements to teacher preparation.[8]

Survey of New Teachers

The survey of new teachers conducted by the AFT bears this out as well. Recent improvements in teacher preparation programs such as a more rigorous focus on subject-area knowledge, extending programs to five years and other changes seem to be helping better prepare new teachers for the classroom. However, a significant number of new teachers do not feel as prepared as they should to be effective beginning teachers.

- New teachers report feeling particularly underprepared in the areas of classroom discipline, time management and lesson preparation.
- New teachers feel teacher preparation could be improved most with more mentorship for first-year teachers, establishing peer networks for new teachers, requiring better coordination and alignment between teacher preparation programs and K-12[9] districts, and requiring that clinical preparation start at the beginning of the school year and/or earlier in the college experience.
- Fewer than half of new teachers describe their training as very good, and more say that on-the-job learning or assistance from other teachers was more helpful than their formal training.
- 1 in 3 new teachers reports feeling unprepared on his or her first day.
- The top problem experienced by teachers in their own training was a failure to prepare them for the challenges of teaching in the "real world."
- Teachers who received alternative certification are much more likely to report feeling unprepared than are teachers who received traditional training, and they give their training lower marks.
- The survey findings are also consistent with the AFT's focus group discussions with new teachers and teacher candidates, who felt a significant gap between their preparation and the reality of teaching in a classroom. *For more on the survey, see Appendix B.*

With this backdrop, it's no surprise that calls for teacher preparation reform persist. What must be different this time around is how we respond to this continuing call. The challenge is not only to develop strong, evidence-based proposals for programmatic change, but also to obtain the commitment of multiple stakeholders to actively collaborate for that change.

Policy Recommendations

Three major shifts in teacher preparation are needed if we as a nation are committed to real improvement.

- All stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that teacher preparation standards, programs and assessments are aligned with a well-grounded vision of effective teaching.
- Teaching, like other respected professions, must have a universal assessment process for entry that includes rigorous preparation centered on clinical practice as well as theory, an in-depth test of subject and pedagogical knowledge, and a comprehensive teacher performance assessment.
- Primary responsibility for setting and enforcing the standards of the profession and ensuring the quality and coherence of teacher preparation programs must reside with members of the profession—practicing professionals in K-12 and higher education.

Recommendation One: All stakeholders in the teacher preparation system must collaborate to ensure that teacher preparation standards, programs and assessments are aligned with a well-grounded vision of effective teaching. Fundamental to this alignment is an ongoing collaborative partnership between the colleges and universities and the school districts, especially between first-line professionals and their unions in both institutions.

International Lessons

As documented in *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States*, no matter where a country is on the development spectrum, alignment and coherence—the degree to which the parts and pieces fit well together and reinforce each other—are important features of system effectiveness.[10] This is particularly important for the United States precisely because its state-driven, decentralized public education system is inherently less coherent and aligned than that of many other countries. So the challenge of building much higher-quality teacher preparation programs does not sit only on the doorstep of higher education institutions and other providers; it requires coordination and collaboration among K-12 educators, higher education teacher educators, state certification agencies, and state and national policies.

Program Diversity

This is not to suggest that all teacher preparation programs and certification processes should be identical or standardized. Diversity within our educational institutions is not only a strength but a necessity, as programs are designed to train teachers from different backgrounds and experiences for different settings, challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, neither better alignment within the system nor a universal threshold for beginning teachers precludes programs being tailored to meet the particular needs of a community or state.

That said, as Figure 1 shows, the web of stakeholders responsible for standards, program design, assessment and certification as well as program review appears to be a fragmented and bureaucratic tangle of stakeholder groups with varied, sometimes overlapping, responsibilities and blurry accountability lines, rather than a rational system of diverse programs aimed at producing the best teachers we can.

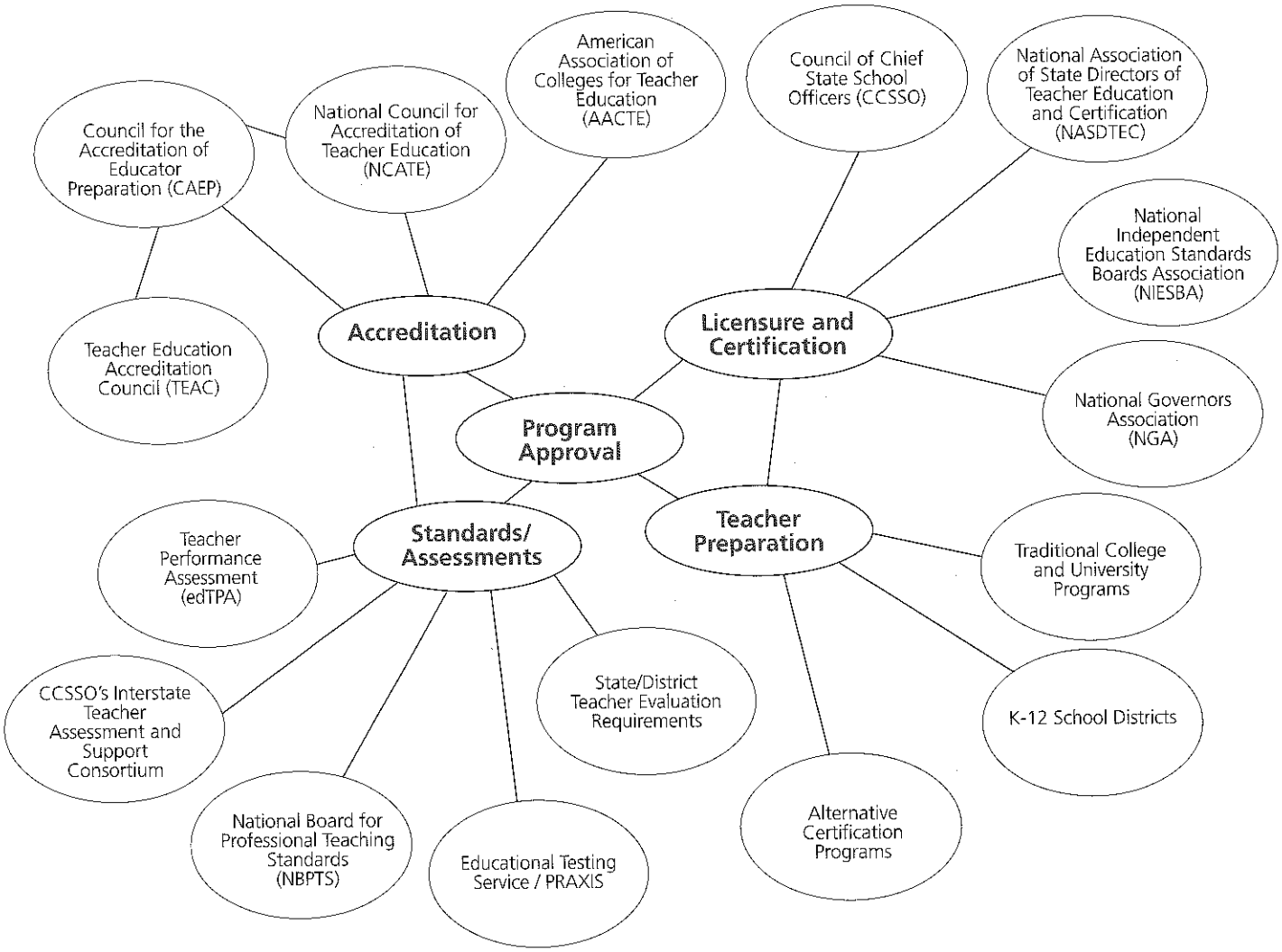

Figure 1: The Tangled Web of Teacher Preparation Stakeholders

As in all multistakeholder processes, the tendency toward protecting organizational turf is a potential stumbling block. However, in the case of teacher preparation, certain contextual realities provide a potential path to achieving better alignment.

1. The ideas, standards, programs and assessments advocated by most of the stakeholders regarding how to improve teacher preparation share more commonalities than differences.

2. The stakeholders are both national- and state-level actors who can assist in rationalizing the system from a national perspective but with states still maintaining principal oversight of teacher preparation and licensure.

3. We have historical models for such transformation in other professional fields such as law and medicine, where nationally agreed-upon standards were set for the profession with additional state-specific requirements and state-driven assessments.

4. States and districts are already working to align K-12 curricula and processes with the Common Core State Standards, providing a prime opportunity for realigning teacher preparation along similar lines.

5. Many states and districts are implementing teacher development and evaluation systems; developing stronger relationships between school districts and higher education institutions will support alignment of best practices that will be evaluated throughout a teacher's career.

Curricular Coherence and Content

This work is all the more important when we look at the impact of the current system on program coherence. The lack of systemic alignment leads, in too many cases, to fragmentary coursework, a stubborn divide between practice and theory, and a gap between mastery of content and its application. Teacher preparation curricula should be structured around a conceptual framework that explicitly describes what highly competent beginning teachers need to know and be able to do, and also lays out the necessary knowledge base, ethics, dispositions and skills, and leadership and collaborative competencies. Such a framework would connect discrete courses, providing a mental structure for organizing, integrating, remembering and appropriately applying what teacher candidates are learning. Moreover, clinical practice ought to be seamlessly connected to courses and the framework.

This inter-institutional cross-pollination—which has been achieved in some professional development schools, teacher residency programs and other collaborative settings—grounds teacher education in classroom realities while bridging the divide between theory and practice, knowledge and skills, reflection and action. As often as possible, teacher candidates should develop their pedagogical skills and the ability to teach their subject matter within the K-12 setting.

Past critiques of teacher preparation have tended to favor the lens of curriculum content over the lenses of systemic alignment and curricular coherence. While the AFT Teacher Preparation Task Force chose a different entry point, significant changes in all areas will be required to achieve a high-quality, more practice-oriented program. We also recognize that this work must address the significant gaps in the research and what we know about the connection between program curriculum, instruction, and clinical experiences and who becomes a successful beginning teacher.

Recommendation Two: Teaching, like other respected professions, must have a universal assessment process for entry that must include rigorous preparation centered on clinical practice as well as theory, an in-depth test of subject and pedagogical knowledge, and a comprehensive teacher

Coherence and Connection of AFT's Work

Teacher development is a concept that must start at teacher preparation and continue throughout a teacher's career. Elevating and aligning teacher preparation with the reality of today's classrooms will create a coherent system where teachers continuously grow—starting before they enter a classroom and through to the end of their careers.

Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE): The AFT developed a framework for TDE that is guiding teacher evaluation in school districts and state legislatures across the country. This framework focuses on continuous improvement of all teachers by enhancing instructional practice that creates increased student learning.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): The AFT supports aligning professional teaching standards with the instructional expectations of the CCSS. All teachers should demonstrate the core knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to implement these new standards. The AFT continues to support teachers in this endeavor by providing an array of materials, resources, networks and ongoing professional opportunities focused on the CCSS.

Alignment: The AFT continues to work with national partners to support and align the implementation of TDE and CCSS. The goal is to help teachers and administrators effectively connect high-quality teaching with rigorous curriculum and formative assessment. Aligning teacher development in a coherent way is critical to the success of our members and the future of the students they teach.

performance assessment. Quality teacher preparation programs must be marked by higher entry standards, continuing performance standards, and exit standards, and must conclude with a strong induction program that is the responsibility of both colleges and K-12 schools and districts.

There must be not only a concerted effort on the part of stakeholders to align standards, programs and assessments, but also a coordinated effort to ensure those standards and assessments establish a rigorous and unwavering professional bar that all teacher candidates must clear to enter into the profession. That entry bar should include multiple dimensions of effective teaching, and all teacher candidates must demonstrate competence in these dimensions before taking responsibility for a classroom. Ensuring such competence would include:

- Completion of a set of program requirements including a minimum GPA, documentation and demonstration (through midpoint and exit examinations) of an understanding of fundamental or "high-leverage" practices needed to be an effective beginning teacher, and at least a full year of successful clinical experience. Mastery of subject-matter knowledge and competence in content-specific pedagogical approaches, as demonstrated by passage of a rigorous written exam. Successful application of knowledge as demonstrated by a rigorous teacher performance assessment, including actual instruction and reflection on instruction and its impact on individual learners.

Program Requirements

Teacher education programs create the intellectual and performance foundation for continuous learning throughout the teacher's career. But in order to serve children well, teacher

Linking Theory and Practice

Every report of the past 25 years on teacher preparation or quality has addressed the need for more, deeper and more-sustained opportunities for prospective teachers to learn about and practice teaching in real-world settings—schools. The programmatic exit requirements proposed by this task force (see Appendix C) are no exception and, for many, raise the stakes further. Fortunately, many promising examples exist, but not enough to ensure that all beginning teachers have sufficient, high-quality clinical opportunity and experience—especially with some of the "high-leverage practices" considered central to the craft of teaching.

Professional development schools have been around for decades and have been compared to teaching hospitals in their structure and approach; most offer yearlong residencies in conjunction with university-based preparation. At their best, they are places where children and adults learn well, and prospective teachers receive regular supervision and feedback as well as embedded opportunities for collective planning and reflection with peers and more-experienced teachers.

More recently, urban teacher residencies have begun to show promise for improving retention of new teachers in challenging urban settings. Something like paid apprenticeships, urban teacher residencies (UTRs) are designed for their participants to have an immediate impact on urban classrooms. Extensive preparation occurs in the context of one-to-one mentoring of beginning teachers by experienced teachers, while the candidates pursue master's-level course work. The residents work with a cohort of their peers, and both the theory and practice are deeply influenced by the contextual specifics of the particular urban district. UTRs pay special attention to high-needs areas and to the recruitment of teaching candidates of color.

A number of school districts have co-developed highly respected teacher preparation and development programs with a local higher education institution, where school and university faculty interact seamlessly in support of tailored preparation and induction based on local strengths and needs.

Less important than the structural approach or the "traditional" or "nontraditional" label is the quality, depth and duration of the clinical experience, including the key features of expert-novice interaction and mentoring, peer-to-peer support, opportunity to demonstrate practice, and reflective assessment of teaching and its impact on students.

To be successful, clinical experiences for preparation and induction must respect and support both the novice teachers and their expert teachers, coaches and mentors in schools and colleges. Research universities have a role to play in rigorously studying and disseminating the effects of such programs and knowledge about "what works." And creative collaborations and rethinking resource deployment within and between K-12 districts and schools and higher education institutions is also essential. This critical area is ripe for creative incentive funding by the federal government and philanthropic foundations.

preparation programs must also ensure that teachers are competent and confident on the first day they become teachers of record. Consequently, the design of teacher education programs is crucial, and teacher education programs must be accountable to districts, schools, students and their parents, the profession and the general public. Moreover, it is essential that teacher education programs provide "coherence and connection"[11] for pre-service teachers—that is, they must establish a conceptual framework around which to weave course learning and clinical experiences, avoiding fragmentation and encouraging internalization and application.

This begins with preparation programs having appropriate entrance requirements that ensure those students who choose to pursue a teaching career are academically ready and committed to working with children. Program entrance requirements should be rigorous enough to challenge students who wish to enter the program to prepare as thoroughly as possible, but also flexible enough to include multiple mechanisms for assessing potential teacher candidates. Students with the commitment and demonstrated potential to be good teachers should have the opportunity and the support needed to pursue their dream, regardless of prior disadvantage or discrimination.

Evaluation of teacher education students should be frequent and formative, based on multiple measures designed to provide immediate professional feedback on teaching efficacy without sanctions for imperfect performance—it should be about growth, not "gotcha."

Similarly, evaluation of teacher education programs by states, accrediting agencies or other bodies constituted for that purpose should be based on multiple measures, ensuring that teacher candidates are:

- Being provided the resources they need to learn and succeed, both in the college and the school district where they study and work;
- Receiving highly qualified supporting mentorship; and
- Receiving feedback and evaluation using an effective performance assessment.

For a full description of the task force's recommendations on teacher preparation program design, see Appendix C.

Assessment for Entry

Perhaps nowhere is the nonalignment of teacher preparation and certification more visible than in states' differing approaches to pre-service examinations. (See Appendix D for an overview of state-level teacher candidate entrance exams.) With the exception of a handful of states with more rigorous custom-designed exams, most examinations required for initial licensure have been widely considered to be insufficiently rigorous, limited in scope and unconnected to practice—usually covering basic skills and subject-matter knowledge—and measuring different knowledge and skills depending on grade level and content area. Just as most teacher preparation programs need to include far more clinical experience, and just as practice and theory need to be far better integrated to help beginning teachers, entry into the profession needs to be based on more than a written exam.

Assessment of a teacher candidate's performance, like all good assessment, should be both formative and summative and should assess discrete tasks as well as overall performance. The results should be

informative to license grantors, preparing institutions (colleges and schools) and, of course, the candidates. As noted at the beginning of this report, some progress is being made in states and individual institutions. Examples include written tests covering general and subject matter as well as professional knowledge, capstone presentations at the end of a full year of clinical experience, portfolios documenting instructional practice, and university-developed exit performance assessments of discrete skills and practices.[12] The largest-scale example of a performance-based assessment is the edTPA, which is currently being piloted in 25 states and more than 160 campuses and is student-centered, subject-specific and uses multiple measures.[13]

From these and other promising examples, we may be able to build all three components of the entry bar outlined above as well as meet the key tests of rigor, consistency, reliability, validity, scalability and consumer confidence—but only if there is collective will to take on the assignment. Examining promising assessment practices, testing their effectiveness and potential, identifying gaps and creating a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts should be central tasks of a professional standards body.

The Professional Continuum

The task force's charge was limited to initial teacher preparation. While it is critical to get that right, it's also important to state our conviction that achieving and maintaining professional excellence is a career long pursuit. For example, effective induction experiences and early career mentoring form a natural bridge between preparation and competent novice practice. Commitment to ongoing professional development is the responsibility of every teacher and support for it is the responsibility of every employer. As a classroom teacher's career progresses, opportunities should be available for differentiated roles and responsibilities that link student and school-system needs with educators' personal and professional goals. Locally designed and negotiated "career ladders" can significantly improve teacher retention, performance and morale. These programs can create opportunities for teachers to assume additional curriculum, instructional and school improvement responsibilities and leadership. They can support and reward veteran and exceptional teachers who not only volunteer for placement in the most difficult teaching assignments but also achieve measurable student academic results in these assignments. A fully developed career continuum is also likely to lead more teachers to seek advanced certification of accomplished practice through the National Board.

Recommendation Three: Primary responsibility for setting and enforcing the standards of the profession and ensuring the quality and coherence of teacher preparation programs must reside with members of the profession—practicing professionals in K-12 and higher education.

As noted above, teacher preparation takes place within a complex web of systems, none of which has adequate authority to enforce professional relationships or adequate incentives to work collaboratively on a coherent teaching education curriculum. There are teacher education institutions, K-12 schools, teacher accrediting agencies, state boards and federal government regulators, and unions. However, when all is said and done, there is no substitute for the leadership of practicing teachers and teacher educators, and the system for setting and enforcing standards in the teaching profession should be significantly changed to ensure that kind of leadership. Personnel systems should provide for these roles and opportunities and unions can be very helpful in furthering this goal.

All our nation's children deserve to be taught by well-prepared professional teachers. For too long, teachers have been treated as technicians, and as implementers of others' ideas. They have been subjected to contradictory accountability demands arising from policymakers and politicians who are often in ideological battles with one another. Consequently, teachers have far too few opportunities to provide input into curricular and pedagogical decisions, and the result is more failed reforms than successful ones. Despite these challenges, upholding teaching as a profession is a task that begins with members of the profession themselves, and it is crucial to improving the learning of K-12 students. The following attributes are essential for the professional teacher and echo those of other professions:

1. A distinct and essential knowledge base, recognized by both teaching professionals and the public.

2. Trustworthy judgment, based on continuous learning in the knowledge base, reflection on experience, continuous inquiry and improvement, and careful consideration of unique contexts and individuals.

3. Rigorous entry standards into preparation programs and into the profession itself.

4. Preparation programs with a rigorous curriculum and a significant clinical practice component.

5. Participation in developing and sustaining school cultures that can provide systematic, supportive and rigorous pre-service and induction experiences for teacher candidates and novice teachers.

6. Strong, internalized commitments to students and the larger society instantiated in a professional code of ethics.

7. Strong peer-to-peer feedback and evaluation within the ranks of the teaching profession to ensure lateral accountability for high-quality professional performance and continuous professional development.

Finally, to fully place the preparation of teachers in the hands of the profession, the profession must be treated as such. The teacher educators responsible for preparing teacher education candidates, whether employed in schools or in colleges and universities, must be experienced, committed to the profession and financially supported as they engage in this critical enterprise for our country.

The cost of college and the associated debt burden for college students and their families is now making college less accessible for many students. This is especially true for students who wish to pursue a four-year degree or beyond. College costs can be a particular challenge to those wishing to enter the teaching profession, as many candidates fear that the level of compensation for a beginning teacher will not be sufficient to meet the financial burdens associated with achieving a teaching credential. Other high-achieving nations such as Finland, Singapore, Canada, or Australia, for example, actually cover the cost of teachers' preparation so they can afford to take a uniformly rigorous course of study.

If we are to attract the best-qualified students into teaching, we must provide the necessary support to allow them to do so without creating a financial hardship for those students. Likewise, if we intend our teacher preparation programs to be rigorous and comprehensive to help develop the best teachers, we must also support teacher candidates so they can focus on excelling in those programs rather than earning enough income to pay for the programs.

At the same time, those responsible for the preparation of teacher candidates face continued deprofessionalization. Like most disciplines, a disproportionate number of faculty members in schools of education are hired contingently in adjunct or part-time faculty positions. These educators are typically paid low salaries and not included in the academic decisions of the departments or institutions in which they work. In short, the profession of teacher education is fragmented and undersupported. If we want new teachers to receive the best education and training possible, we cannot make it happen by disinvesting in those most responsible for that work. We also cannot expect better alignment between teacher education programs and school districts, or more coherence between program design and what is needed in our schools, if those involved in the process are not connected in any real way with the program, college or school district. For example, faculty members in teacher preparation should also have taught at the K-12 level and have current connections to K-12 classroom practice.

An Agenda For Action

The recommendations outlined above, and the principles and design features on which they are based, are essential to building the kind of professionalism, alignment and coherence needed for high-quality teacher preparation.

At the same time, articulating these principles and design features is not enough. Numerous task forces and commissions have been convened and scores of recommendations offered by many in teacher preparation, including the AFT. There have been early adopters of the approaches outlined in this report and its appendices, and creative steps have been taken at the institutional level to achieve the coherence and professionalization we seek. But the level of systemic change needed to institutionalize excellent teacher preparation has not been achieved. Why not?

The answer is both simple and difficult: No set of recommendations will become common practice by themselves, and no single actor in the teacher education system has the wherewithal to ensure systemic change—not college presidents, not school superintendents, not the faculty, not the teachers, not the unions, not the district, not the teacher education program, not the accrediting agency, not the government. Teacher preparation is an intricate system unto itself, and one interconnected with other elements of our complex and ill-aligned public education system. No amount of compelling proposals, soaring rhetoric or drumbeats from outsiders will make it easy to create change.

Making sustainable improvement will require:

- Persistent advocacy that has not been demonstrated before;
- Committed cooperation among significant actors in the system that is unprecedented but is necessary to success; and
- Increased but well-targeted investment.

In our view, the answer is neither to create an endless array of externally driven requirements by government and accrediting agencies, nor to create endless alternative certification models designed to save the system, but rather to team with all the actors in the process to create the conditions under which the profession can assume responsibility for training, evaluation and effective practice. At the same time, a mechanism and a structure must be available through which we can pursue these goals.

The NBPTS and the Bar

Based on both the needed structural changes identified by the task force and the firm belief that those changes must be shepherded by the profession itself, the task force concluded that there is only one existing organization with the mission, history and governance structure that could lead this process: the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

The NBPTS process for certifying who is an accomplished teacher is exactly the type of process the task force imagines for establishing standards for teacher preparation programs and for entry into the profession. The NBPTS's process is teacher-developed and teacher-driven, rigorous and comprehensive, and widely respected across states and districts. Therefore, we recommend that the NBPTS pursue the following, with the support and engagement of the key stakeholder organizations included in Figure 1, and we affirm the AFT's commitment to this effort.[14]

1. Establish a commission of stakeholders made up predominantly of teachers and teacher educators and the organizations that represent them, but also including representatives from:

    - State standards boards and state education departments;
    - Accrediting agencies;[15]
    - Organizations or representatives of school leaders, parents, business and community;
    - Federal government; and
    - Key academic researchers on teacher preparation and educational assessments.

2. Charge the members of the commission and others recommended by the commission to develop the criteria for an entry bar for the teaching profession. That work would include:

    a. Assessing what beginning teachers need to know and be able to do upon entering the classroom, identifying what the research-based best practices are for helping prospective teachers attain the necessary knowledge and skill base to be successful, both on discrete tasks and more holistically.

    b. Establishing a common core set of standards for the teaching profession and, by extension, teacher preparation programs based on that assessment and research.

    Those standards should be informed by those already established by stakeholder groups such as the program standards outlined in Appendix C, those identified by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Blue Ribbon Panel, and those established by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. In addition, those standards should be informed by the ongoing work around the Common Core State Standards.[16] The teacher preparation standards that are established must be research-based and have wide agreement among stakeholders.

    c. Assessing current state licensure and certification assessments and working with assessment experts to develop a new, more rigorous and comprehensive test that addresses subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical and context-specific teaching knowledge, and dispositions.

3. The NBPTS would then establish a set of assessments, including both written and performance assessments, based on this work, which together would create an entry bar into the profession.

4. The NBPTS would then:

    a. Establish a structure to govern the maintenance and promotion of these standards that is teacher- and teacher educator-driven with a strong connection with states and districts as well as accrediting agencies to continuously promote better alignment and coherence throughout the system.

b. Create a mechanism and incentive for promoting the adoption of the bar at the state, postsecondary and K-12 level.

Adequate initial educator preparation is neither a complete guarantor of educational quality nor an excuse for ignoring meaningful, ongoing professional development. However, it is fundamental to a beginning teacher's success and, by extension, to the likelihood that a teacher will continue to grow, professionally develop and ultimately make a career out of teaching.

But we must acknowledge that the teaching profession in the United States will never get the respect or support it deserves until its members band together to own common, high-quality standards and demonstrate commitment to those standards through a required and rigorous bar for joining the ranks of teaching. And that is where the next, critical phase of our collective work begins.

Appendix A

About the AFT Teacher Preparation Task Force

The AFT Teacher Preparation Task Force was convened in January 2012. Members were appointed by AFT President Randi Weingarten, and the task force was chaired by AFT Executive Vice President Francine Lawrence. The task force was charged with examining what pre-service programs in the 21st century should look like, how those programs should be evaluated, and what resources those programs need to ensure every child has access to high-quality teaching. In fulfilling its charge and articulating an urgent agenda for action, the task force considered:

- Advancements in research-based understanding of what works and doesn't;
- The current state of the field of teacher preparation practice;
- Examples of effective practice at the institutional and system levels, domestically and internationally;
- The voices of new and experienced teachers and teacher educators; and
- The implications of its recommendations for policy, practice, partnerships, resources and sustainability, and for all key stakeholder groups.

Members of the task force met three times in person as well as by conference call, and shared feedback on written drafts electronically. Several outside experts and organizational representatives met with the task force to share ideas, research and proposals for consideration.

The 15 members of the task force are:

Chair: Francine Lawrence, AFT Executive Vice President

Kevin Ahern, President, Syracuse Teachers Association
William Buxton, Associate Professor, State University of New York Cortland
Arthur Hochner, President, Temple Association of University Professionals
Jerry Jordan, President and AFT Vice President, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Catherine Lugg, Professor, Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education
Marlene Morales, Faculty, Miami Dade College School of Education
Derryn Moten, Co-President, Alabama State University Faculty-Staff Alliance
Lynn Nordgren, President, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
Sandra Schroeder, President, AFT Washington
Brenda Smith, President, AFT Colorado and Douglas County Federation of Teachers
Andrew Spar, President, Volusia Teachers Organization
Melissa Stinnett, Assistant Professor, Western Illinois University, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Deborah Tully, State Education Issues Coordinator, Ohio Federation of Teachers
Kenneth Zarifis, President, Education Austin

The task force was supported by several AFT staff members:

Marla Ucelli-Kashyap, AFT Assistant to the President for Educational Issues
Lawrence Gold, Former Director, AFT Higher Education
Craig P. Smith, Director, AFT Higher Education
Kathy Buzad, AFT Assistant to the Executive Vice President
Dyan Smiley, Assistant Director, AFT Educational Issues
Robin Vitucci, Associate, AFT Educational Issues
Ben Miller, Intern, AFT Educational Issues

Appendix B

AFT Survey of New Teachers (conducted and prepared by Peter D. Hart Research Associates)
On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers, Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey on April 2-4, 2012, of 500 new K-12 public school teachers (three years' experience or less) who also are AFT members. The survey's margin of error is ±4.5 percentage points. The study explored new teachers' experiences and opinions on teacher training and certification programs. This memorandum highlights the key findings that emerged from the research.

Key Findings

- Fewer than half of new teachers describe their training as very good, and more say that on-the-job learning or assistance from other teachers was more helpful than their formal training.
- Although new teachers feel that the ability to maintain discipline and run a classroom are the most important qualities for effective teachers, they give their own training programs lower marks in these areas.
- One in 3 new teachers reports feeling unprepared on his or her first day. New teachers feel most prepared in their subject matter and less prepared in pedagogy and knowledge of students.
- The top problem experienced by teachers in their own training program is a failure to prepare them for the challenges of teaching in the "real world."
- Teachers who received an alternative certification are much more likely to report feeling unprepared than are teachers who received traditional training; these teachers also give their training low marks.
- Teachers with a master's degree and those with content training in the subject they teach report feeling more prepared.
- New teachers are more likely to feel unprepared if they teach large numbers of special needs students or teach in a low-income or low-performing district.
- New teachers think that there are many good things about the way teachers are trained in the United States, but they also think that the system needs many changes.
- New teachers point to mentor programs and peer networks as the top ways to improve teacher preparation.
- Other helpful measures include better alignment between districts and training programs, and requiring that clinical preparation start at the beginning of training programs.

In-Depth Findings
Most new teachers felt prepared when they began teaching, but 1 in 3 felt unprepared.

Two-thirds (66 percent) of new teachers felt completely (19 percent) or mostly (47 percent) prepared when they first started teaching while 34 percent say they felt just somewhat or not prepared at all.

- Teachers in their third year on the job look back at their first year and remember feeling more prepared (74 percent felt completely or mostly prepared) than teachers in their first (62 percent) or second (66 percent) year, for whom the day is a more recent memory.

- Teachers who completed an alternative training or certification program recall feeling less prepared (only 42 percent felt completely or mostly prepared) than teachers who followed the traditional path (72 percent).

- Just 55 percent of math and science teachers felt prepared on their first day. Among teachers who say a majority or many of the students in their class have special needs, just 61 percent remember feeling prepared.

- Teachers in urban schools (63 percent) are less likely to remember feeling prepared than teachers in non-urban settings (71 percent). While just 61 percent of teachers who describe the economic background of their students as poor say they felt prepared, teachers who describe the economic situation of their students as primarily working class (70 percent) or middle/upper class (72 percent) are more likely to remember feeling prepared.

- While just 59 percent of teachers in low-performing schools say they felt prepared on their first day, 72 percent of teachers in schools not identified as low-performing felt prepared.

New teachers felt substantially more prepared on the content of their classes than on pedagogy or knowledge of students.

More than 4 in 5 (84 percent) new teachers felt completely or mostly prepared on content. Fewer teachers, but still 7 in 10 (70 percent), felt completely or mostly prepared on pedagogy.

Teachers remember feeling least prepared when it comes to knowledge of students. In this case, just 62 percent of new teachers remember feeling prepared. This theme repeats throughout the study as new teachers consistently report feeling more prepared to handle the academic components of their job than real-world classroom interactions such as managing a classroom and keeping students' interest.

Thinking back on what helped to make them feel prepared in their first year, teachers remember on-the-job learning as more important than their formal education.

When asked what was most helpful in preparing them as a teacher, 49 percent of all new teachers cite "learning as I go" or "on-the-job training" as most helpful, and an additional 42 percent mention informal assistance from other teachers. In contrast, only 30 percent of new teachers say their formal education and teacher-training programs had been the most helpful in preparing them as a teacher. Seventeen percent of teachers say instincts or innate ability was most helpful, 15 percent say professional development courses, and 7 percent say support or advice from their principal.

- Just 17 percent of teachers who received an alternative certification say their formal training was most helpful when it came to helping make them feel prepared, compared with 32 percent of teachers who followed a traditional training path.

- Importantly, half of teachers who felt unprepared on their first day (53 percent) say they relied most on informal assistance from other teachers to help them feel prepared. Only 1 in 3 (36 percent) teachers who did feel prepared on their first day report relying on informal assistance. Teachers who felt prepared are nearly three times as likely to remember their formal education as being the most helpful factor in feeling prepared than are teachers who felt unprepared (38 percent to 13 percent).

About half of new teachers describe the teacher training they received as very good.

Forty-seven percent of new teachers describe the value of the teacher training they received before beginning in the classroom as very good. About the same proportion of new teachers (45 percent) say it was okay but could have helped them more, and only 7 percent say the value of their training was no good at all.

Teachers who had traditional training (52 percent) are nearly twice as likely as those who had alternative training (27 percent) to describe the value of their training as very good.

A majority of new teachers report that their program struck an even balance between its emphasis on pedagogy and content training (59 percent). Only 1 in 3 teachers (31 percent) say their program focused more on pedagogy and methods, while 9 percent say their program emphasized content training.

New teachers also say their training programs placed equal focus on clinical training and academic training. Sixty-two percent of teachers say both were given equal attention, while 19 percent say more attention was paid to clinical training and 16 percent say more attention was paid to academic training. It is worth noting that this question asked new teachers to assess how much attention was paid to each, not how much attention they thought should be paid.

At the same time, new teachers give their training programs poor marks in the areas they describe as most important.

When asked to rank different teacher qualities on importance in becoming an effective teacher, 96 percent of new teachers say maintaining classroom discipline is very important or absolutely essential, and 95 percent of new teachers say the ability to run a class and manage time is very important or absolutely essential. Understanding of state standards and tests (69 percent) and knowledge of child development (66 percent) are less important to new teachers.

When asked to rank their own teacher training in terms of how well their programs prepared them in these areas, only 46 percent said their program prepared them well or extremely well in classroom discipline, and only 57 percent said their program prepared them well or extremely well in the ability to run a class.

New teachers give their training programs higher scores when it comes to preparing them to set high expectations for students (72 percent) and encouraging a commitment to lifelong learning (68 percent).

The top problem experienced by new teachers in their training programs is a lack of preparation for the challenges of teaching in the real world. Of the 50 percent who cite this as a problem they experienced with their training program, 71 percent categorized their program as just okay or not good.

New Teachers Say Their Training Programs Fall Short in Essential Areas

	Absolutely Essential Quality	Program Prepared Me Well
	%	%
Able to maintain classroom discipline	66	46
Able to run class, manage time, prepare lessons	64	57
Able to set high expectations for students	58	72
Commitment to lifelong learning	56	68
Able to provide differentiated instruction	52	56
Deep knowledge of subject they teach	43	54
Know how to work with state standards, tests, accountability	29	45
Strong knowledge of childhood development/learning	27	60

While new teachers believe there are good things about the teacher training system, they also feel major changes are necessary.

Two-thirds (65 percent) of new teachers feel that although there are many good things about the current teacher training system, it also needs many changes. Just 20 percent of new teachers believe the system works well and only needs minor tinkering. On the other side of the spectrum, 13 percent of new teachers believe the system needs a fundamental overhaul to overcome its many problems.

Teachers identify mentor programs and peer networks as the top ways to improve teacher training programs (90 percent say mentor programs would improve preparation a great deal or fair amount; 84 percent say peer networks would improve preparation a great deal or fair amount).

Additionally, teachers suggest better coordination between teacher preparation programs and the school districts (82 percent), starting clinical preparation at the beginning of training (80 percent), and aligning curricula with field experiences (77 percent), each of which they believe will improve teacher preparedness.

Teachers are less enthusiastic about reforms that would increase support for or promote alternative teacher training opportunities. At the bottom of the list of possible reforms are: making it easier for college graduates or professionals without education training to become teachers (43 percent), and expanding alternative training or certification programs such as Teach For America (37 percent). New teachers are also less supportive of making teacher licensure and certification exams more difficult (31 percent).

New teachers have significant concerns about the preparedness of teachers who complete alternative certification programs.

When asked to compare the preparedness of teachers who complete alternative training programs with those who complete traditional training programs, only 40 percent find graduates to be equally prepared. Forty-two percent say teachers who complete alternative training programs are LESS prepared than traditionally trained teachers, and only 7 percent say they are MORE prepared.

Evaluations of alternatively trained teachers vary dramatically based on the type of training received. Fifty-six percent of alternatively trained teachers say that alternatively and traditionally trained teachers are equally prepared compared, with 35 percent of traditionally prepared teachers. A full 49 percent of traditionally prepared teachers believe that alternative training leaves teachers less prepared (only 19 percent of alternatively trained teachers say the same).

Alternatively trained teachers tend to be predominately female (72 percent), young (only 25 percent are age 40 or older), enrolled in continuing education or pursuing teaching as a second career (32 percent and 54 percent respectively), teaching in a secondary school (65 percent), and/or working in a poor district (55 percent). Only 59 percent of teachers who received alternative training say they received training in their specific subject, compared with 85 percent of traditionally trained teachers.

However, the certification and licensing system is seen as appropriate.

Overall, 60 percent of new teachers feel that while the certification or licensing system they went through took time and effort, it was appropriate. One in 5 (20 percent) says the system was streamlined and easy to understand, while 19 percent found it frustrating and overly bureaucratic.

Teachers are confident about their state and local systems' ability to ensure that only qualified teachers are certified (80 percent say the system does a very or fairly good job).

Teachers are also generally positive about the tests and standards they took before becoming certified. Three-quarters (76 percent) of new teachers say the tests were about the right level of rigor, 14 percent say they were too easy, and 8 percent say they were too demanding.

One in 5 teachers says he or she is likely to leave the profession within five years.

Twenty-one percent of new teachers say it is very or fairly likely they will leave the teaching profession within the next five years. Those particularly likely to say they plan to leave the teaching profession include teachers who completed alternative certification programs (32 percent), felt unprepared initially (26 percent), are age 40 or older (27 percent) or are Hispanic (31 percent).

The primary reason teachers leave is lack of help and support. Two in 5 (39 percent) new teachers say not receiving enough help and support is the factor most responsible for nearly half of new teachers leaving the profession within five years, followed by low pay (31 percent) and not enough respect for the profession (29 percent).

Survey Background Information

New Teacher Demographics			
	%		%
Age 18 to 29	57	Classroom/Subject teacher	74
Age 30 to 39	22	Special education teacher	15
Age 40/older	20	Other	11
Single/never married	43	**Subject Area:**	
Married, living with partner	49	General classroom teacher	36
Other	8	Math	15
		Science	12
Caucasians	68	Language arts/English	13
Hispanics	14	Arts/Music	6
African-Americans	10	Social studies	5
		Foreign language	5
First year teaching	37	Government/History	2
Second year teaching	44	Physical education	1
Third year teaching	19	Vocational training	1
		Other	3
Elementary/Younger	46		
Middle/Junior high	23		
High school	26		

School Demographics

	%		%
School location		**Low-performing school**	46
Large city	35		
Medium/Small city	22	**ELL Students**	
Suburbs	21	Majority/Many	30
Small town/Rural area	20	A few/None	68
Students' Economic Background		**Special needs students**	
Poor	47	Majority/Many	43
Working class	32	A few/None	55
Middle/Upper middle class	19		

Preparation Overview

	%		%
Type of training		**Educational Attainment**	
Traditional, university based	78	Bachelor's degree	42
Alternative	20	Some postgraduate work	9
		Master's degree/Higher	47
First/Second Career			
Teaching is first career	67	Currently taking classes toward graduate degree in education	25
Teaching is second career	33		

Appendix C

AFT Principles And Standards For Effective Teacher Preparation

The AFT is committed to advancing an agenda that provides educational opportunity, lifts the disadvantaged, rebuilds the middle class, improves the American economy and public infrastructure, and fosters the democratic principles of respect, dignity and economic security for all those who call America home.[17] While skills and knowledge are at the core of teaching, and thus teacher preparation, unlike many critics, the AFT also believes that teaching itself has a moral core connected to values of equity and opportunity, dignity and democracy. The task force endorsed the following knowledge, skills, commitments and dispositions that represent a general consensus from the field about what is truly required of professional teachers.[18]

Table 1: Knowledge, Skills, Commitments and Dispositions of Professional and Effective Teachers

1. Knowledge of how children learn and develop (physical, cognitive, emotional, social, cultural development) as well as what motivates and engages them.
2. Mastery of academic content in fields they are preparing to teach.
3. Ability to teach academic content to diverse groups of students, using culturally responsive practices.
4. Knowledge about and use of a repertoire of pedagogical strategies (including use of technologies) that engage learners in collaborative and self-directed learning.
5. Ability to organize, plan and manage instruction aligned with local and state standards, and in recognition of the instructional shifts required by the Common Core State Standards.
6. Expertise in valid and appropriate use of formative and summative assessments; use of empirical evidence to inform teaching and guide student learning.
7. Capacity to keenly and systematically observe students singly and in groups in order to determine their needs and interests and adjust pedagogical strategies accordingly.
8. Capacity for "adaptive expertise"[19]—that is, the ability to analyze and diagnose teaching and learning problems, reflect on pedagogical choices, choose strategies to address problems, assess results and continuously refine practices in order to meet students' needs.
9. Ability to engage, inform, learn from and relate to parents/guardians regarding their children's academic progress.
10. Active, effective and ethical collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians, social agencies and community members in order to promote individual and collective responsibility for student learning.
11. Capacity for articulating and pursuing questions about student learning and teaching practices.
12. Active leadership in meeting learning needs of all students, contributing to democratic ideals and processes, and fostering a commitment to providing equitable, caring and just learning environments for all students.

Connecting Criteria, Standards And Assessments

The following criteria for high-quality teacher preparation programs must be supported, reinforced and refined by rigorous and continuous assessment processes. Each standard's implementation should be regularly scrutinized and evaluated based on multiple data sources— e.g., pre-service teachers' written and oral work, the written and oral work of students being taught by pre-service teachers, performance tasks, observations, portfolios, videotapes, and supervising faculty and mentor assessments, among others. Following the criteria, the task force lays out specific entry, continuation and exit standards, and proposes assessments to ensure criteria for high-quality programs are adequately incorporated. Particulars of implementation will depend, in part, on the judgments of professionals in the institutions involved.

Table 2: Proposed Design Criteria for High-Quality Teacher Preparation Programs

1. Rigorous entry, continuation and exit standards.
2. Courses built around a clearly articulated and frequently revisited conceptual framework of high-quality teaching.
3. Courses taught using exemplary pedagogical practices; university professors who teach pre-service teachers model an effective and engaging pedagogical repertoire.
4. Partnership between teacher education faculty and liberal arts faculty in teacher preparation.
5. Integration of course work with clinical experience; seamless courses that make clear and frequent connections between clinical practice and content.
   - Clinical experiences at the beginning of and throughout the program.
   - Minimum of one year of intensive clinical experience beginning on the first day of school and ending on the last day of school.
6. Multiple opportunities to apply course content, including "guided observations" of teachers and students, interactions with actual teaching materials, and interactions with exemplary veteran teachers.
7. Opportunities to learn crucial teaching strategies—e.g., promoting discussion, asking questions, connecting to prior knowledge, anticipating misconceptions, differentiating instruction, explaining, and promoting active and collaborative learning.
8. Participation in collegial and critical learning communities with peers and mentors in face-to-face and online venues.
9. Opportunities to systematically and carefully observe students, to articulate and diagnose student learning problems, to systematically and collaboratively inquire into those problems, and to develop and defend strategies to address the problems.
10. Opportunities for sustained work with expert practitioners as mentors.
11. Development of ongoing partnerships between schools and teacher education programs to ensure relevant preparation.[20]
12. Documentation by the program of graduates' hiring, field success (using multiple measures), retention rates and job satisfaction over time to inform continuous program improvement.

Alignment of Design Criteria with Program Assessments

The recommended design criteria for teacher preparation programs must be aligned with assessments used to determine candidates' entry into the program, their continuation in the program, and ultimately their completion of the program and induction into the profession. The task force recommends close alignment among:

1. What teachers need to know and be able to do;
2. Design criteria for teacher education programs; and
3. Assessments used to determine pre-service teachers' performance.

Entry, continuation and exit standards are specifically enumerated below. After each, a parenthetical reference is made to Table 1's list of what effective teachers need to know and be able to do.

This outline, which is based on a traditional four-year undergraduate degree, is meant to be illustrative and demonstrate the type of design we believe will lead to successful beginning teachers. However, we recognize that program structure may vary based on the type of program (five-year undergraduate, master's inclusive, residency, etc.). More important than the particular kind of program used in this example is the qualities of the design (e.g., rigor, integration of theory and practice, rich clinical experience, and continuous assessment and feedback).

Entry Standards

To attract academically capable students with authentic commitments to work with children, the task force recommends the following standards for entry into a teacher preparation program:

- Completion of two years or 60 credits of college work (#2).
- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 for both elementary and secondary programs (3.0 GPA in the teaching field for secondary; for elementary teachers, 3.0 GPA in mathematics, English and one of the following: science, history, languages or the arts) (#2).
- All transferable grades C or better (#2).
- Recommendation from undergraduate professor (for secondary candidates, a professor in a major teaching field; for elementary candidates, a professor in one possible teaching field) (#2).
- Passing score on Praxis I, SAT (1100 composite), ACT (24 composite) or GRE (1000 composite on verbal and mathematics) (#2).
- Formal interview with teacher education faculty (#2 and 12).
- A minimum of a 10-hour documented experience working in an educational or developmental environment (tutoring, after-school programs, educational camps, co-curricular activities, coaching and so forth) with children (#12).

- Writing sample describing the field experience described above and explaining what was learned from it (#12).

Continuation Requirements

At approximately the midpoint of the program, the performance of pre-service teachers should be assessed to ensure each of them is making adequate progress toward gaining the knowledge, skills, commitments and dispositions necessary for effective teaching. Based on evidence from these assessments, most of which should be built into the expectations for the program's course work, faculty can decide whether a particular student should be encouraged to continue or asked to leave the program.

- Midpoint examination and performance assessment requiring candidates to analyze and diagnose classroom learning problems and make recommendations for addressing problems (#7, 8 and 11).

- Midpoint performance assessments in:

  - Planning, organizing, differentiating and enacting instruction aligned with standards, which integrates available resources, including technologies, to engage students (#1 and 5).

  - Using formative assessments to guide student learning (#6).

  - Using multiple forms of empirical evidence to diagnose learning problems and adjust instruction accordingly (#1, 4, 6 and 7).

- Midpoint portfolio with evidence of:

  - Providing evidence of professional collaboration and learning and an account of its effects on practice (#8).

  - Development of a unit of study aligned with district and state standards, including appropriate teaching strategies and student assessments consistent with the core curriculum (#3, 4, 5 and 6).

  - Successful teaching of specific content characterized by differentiated, engaging, effective pedagogical strategies and accompanied by completed and graded/scored student assessments and plans for subsequent teaching (#2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8).

  - Creation of a positive, safe, norm-based and productive learning environment (#1 and 4).

  - An accounting of a teaching mistake or dilemma, an analysis of it, and how it has changed thinking and practice (#6, 7, 8 and 11).

- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 (#2).

- Subject-matter exam, such as Praxis II or other state-specific tests (#2).

Exit Requirements

Before a teacher education program can recommend a pre-service teacher to become licensed as a teacher of record, the following criteria and assessments must be satisfactorily completed. Many of the assessments below should be built into course work. The professional portfolio could be a collection of assessments completed in various courses, accompanied by reflections on evolving learning.

- Cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Professional portfolio that contains:
  - A professional philosophy reflecting a strong commitment to student learning, including equitable, just and caring learning environments that prepare students for economic independence and democratic citizenship (#10 and 12).
  - Development of a comprehensive unit of study aligned with school and state standards, tapping into available resources and differentiated for diverse classroom populations (#7, 8, 9 and 10).
  - Evidence of successful, differentiated and culturally responsive instruction of a segment of the above unit, including formative student assessments and graded/scored student assessments (#1, 2, 3 and 5).
  - Evidence of learning from student assessment data and plotting subsequent pedagogical strategies (#6 and 8).
  - Evidence of building a positive learning environment and a respectful classroom community, while establishing routines and encouraging learning-focused behavior (#1 and 7).
  - Evidence of participation in a collaborative learning community with colleagues (#10).
  - Evidence of effective and collaborative work with parents/guardians (#9 and 10).
  - Accounting and analysis of a difficult teaching experience, providing evidence of "adaptive expertise," that is, careful reflection, connection to theory and steps toward improvement (#8 and 11).
  - Evidence of active leadership in meeting learning needs of all students (#12).
- Performance assessment:
  - Videotapes of three successful teaching episodes for purposes of critical analysis and reflection (#1-9).
  - Formal observations by a practitioner mentor and a university supervisor (#1-9).
- Exit interview with teacher education faculty (#1-12).
- Interview with teachers in the field (simulation of a job interview) (#1-12).

Appendix D

Inventory of State-Level Teacher Candidate Entrance Exams

State	PRAXIS I	PRAXIS II	OTHER/ STATE EXAMS	edTPA (Policy in Place or Pending)	NCATE REQUIRED	NASDTEC 2010–2015 Interstate Agreement Signees (as of 6/30/2012)
Alabama		✓	✓		✓	✓
Alaska	✓	✓			✓	✓
Arizona			✓			
Arkansas	✓	✓			✓	✓
California			✓			✓
Colorado		✓*	✓			✓
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓*			✓
Delaware	✓	✓			✓	
D.C.	✓	✓			✓	✓
Florida			✓			✓
Georgia			✓		✓	✓
Hawaii	✓	✓			✓	✓
Idaho		✓			✓	✓
Illinois			✓	✓		✓
Indiana		✓			✓	✓
Iowa		✓*				✓
Kansas		✓			✓	✓
Kentucky		✓			✓	✓
Louisiana	✓	✓				✓
Maine	✓	✓				✓
Maryland	✓	✓			✓	✓
Massachusetts			✓	✓		✓
Michigan			✓			✓
Minnesota			✓	✓		✓
Mississippi	✓	✓			✓	✓
Missouri		✓				✓
Montana					✓	✓

State	PRAXIS I	PRAXIS II	OTHER/ STATE EXAMS	edTPA (Policy in Place or Pending)	NCATE REQUIRED	NASDTEC 2010–2015 Interstate Agreement Signees (as of 6/30/2012)
Nebraska	✓	✓*			✓	
Nevada	✓	✓	✓			✓
New Hampshire	✓	✓				✓
New Jersey	✓	✓			✓	
New Mexico			✓			
New York			✓	✓ (eff. 5/1/2014)		
North Carolina	✓	✓			✓	
North Dakota	✓	✓			✓	✓
Ohio		✓		✓	✓	✓
Oklahoma			✓			✓
Oregon			✓			✓
Pennsylvania		✓	✓			✓
Rhode Island	✓	✓			✓	
South Carolina		✓			✓	✓
South Dakota	✓	✓			✓	
Tennessee	✓	✓		✓		✓
Texas			✓			✓
Utah	✓	✓			✓	✓
Vermont	✓	✓				✓
Virginia		✓	✓			✓
Washington			✓	✓		✓
West Virginia	✓	✓			✓	✓
Wisconsin	✓	✓		✓		
Wyoming		✓*	✓		✓	✓
Puerto Rico			✓			
Guam	✓	✓				✓
U.S. Virgin Islands	✓	✓*				

Key for *

Colorado: Praxis II acceptable for meeting content knowledge testing requirement.

Connecticut: Connecticut Foundations of Reading Test (Pearson) is required for anyone seeking endorsement in elementary education or integrated early childhood/special education.

Iowa: Required for any candidate graduating after Jan. 1, 2013.

Nebraska: Elementary candidates are required to complete the EECIA (Praxis II) before recommendation for certification.

Wyoming: Praxis II is required for candidates seeking first-time licensure in elementary education or social studies composite, and is considered an acceptable method to add endorsement for specific areas.

Endnotes

[1]American Federation of Teachers, Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction; Report of the K-16 Teacher Education Task Force (April 2000), www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/buildingprofession0400.pdf.

[2]U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), "Current and Former Teacher Data Files," 2008-09; and Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2007-08.

[3]DiCarlo, Matthew, "Do Half of New Teachers Leave the Profession within Five Years?" Shanker Blog, http://shankerblog.org/?p=4534.

[4]Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, The Common Core State Standards and Teacher Preparation: The Role of Higher Education (2011), www.aplu.org/document.doc?id=3482.

[5]National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, Qualified Teachers for At-Risk Schools: A National Imperative (2005), www.learningpt.org/pdfs/tq/partnership.pdf.

[6]Adam Bessie, "The Myth of the Bad Teacher," Op Ed News (Oct. 15, 2010), www.opednews.com/articles/The-Myth-of-the-Bad-Teache-by-Adam-Bessie-101010-570.html.

[7]Linda Darling-Hammond and John Bransford, eds., Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

[8]See, e.g., NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel, Transforming Teacher Education Through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers (Nov. 2010), www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3D&tabid=715; U.S. Department of Education, Preparing and Credentialing the Nation's Teachers (Nov. 2011), www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/teachprep/2011-title2report.pdf; NASBE, Gearing Up: Creating a Systemic Approach to Teacher Effectiveness (2011), http://media.navigatored.com/documents/Gearing+Up+Teacher+Workforce+Report+-+Summary+-+NASBE+(1).pdf; Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching, Transforming Teaching: Connecting Professional Responsibility with Student Learning (report to the NEA, 2011), www.nea.org/assets/docs/Transformingteaching2012.pdf.

[9]In school systems where preschool programs are district-run and teachers are state-certified, the standards and alignment proposed in this report should apply across the system.

[10]OECD, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States (OECD Publishing 2011), http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264096660-en.

[11]Darling-Hammond and Bransford, Preparing Teachers for a Changing World.

[12]E.g., University of Michigan, "Teaching Works," www.teachingworks.org. The website also identifies and describes several core capabilities considered to increase the likelihood of teaching positively affecting student learning. www.teachingworks.org/work-of-teaching/high-leverage-practices

[13]edTPA, "About EdTPA," http://edtpa.aacte.org/about-edtpa.

[14]National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, "History," www.nbpts.org/about_us/mission_and_history/history. The AFT has been at the forefront of the teacher-standards effort, beginning with former AFT president Albert Shanker's call for this movement and the AFT's role in the task force that led to the development of the NBPTS.

[15]Historically, there have been two accrediting agencies for teacher preparation programs: the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). Those agencies have now merged into a single entity, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), making CAEP an important stakeholder in this process.

[16]The standards established by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium have been updated to incorporate the Common Core State Standards.

[17]American Federation of Teachers, "Our Work," adopted by the AFT Executive Council, October 2011.

[18]Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle, Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research in the Next Generation (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, and D. John McIntyre, eds., Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Enduring Questions in Changing Contexts (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group and the Association of Teacher Educators, 2008); Darling-Hammond and Bransford, Preparing Teachers for a Changing World.

[19]Darling-Hammond and Bransford, Preparing Teachers for a Changing World.

[20]Jane Neapolitan, Taking Stock of Professional Development Schools: What's Needed Now (National Society for the Study of Education 2011 Yearbook, Vol. 110, Issue 2); Frances Rust and Renee Tipton Clift, "Moving from Recommendations to Action in Preparing Professional Educators," working paper from AERA Division K summit, September 2012; Linda Darling-Hammond, "Teacher Education and the American Future," Journal of Teacher Education 61(1-2) 35–47.