

National Association of State Boards of Education

➔ Aligning Teacher Preparation with Student Learning Standards

By Nickta Hoss and Francis Eberle

Newly minted teachers are often not adequately prepared to help students achieve today's learning standards. Despite states' efforts to improve teacher preparation, this mismatch persists.¹ One reason is that the content and instructional strategies that teachers acquire in their preparation programs are not always well aligned with states' student learning standards.

Because there are so many preparation programs—whether traditional or alternative—and so little coordination, it is hard to definitely say how many teachers leave their programs well prepared. With their systems view of education, state boards of education (SBEs) can play an important role in aligning preparation programs with

student learning standards and can thereby make the system more coherent.

A standards-based leadership model, developed by the National Association of State Boards of Education, shows the critical policy areas that should be aligned to student learning standards; expectations for new teachers is one such area (figure 1). Within teacher preparation, key policies that many SBEs have the authority to examine are courses of study in teacher preparation programs, program standards and approval processes, and teacher certification and licensure requirements (figure 2).

The American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) recommended in 2013 that teacher preparation be better aligned and cohere within teacher preparation programs and with state learning standards such as the Common Core State Standards.² The International

Literacy Association reported that teacher preparation programs were often misaligned with student learning standards dealing with literacy: "State guidelines for preservice teacher preparation should make explicit references to what candidates should know and be able to do in relation to literacy instruction," the group said.³

TEACHERS' COURSES OF STUDY

SBEs can ensure that courses of study for prospective teachers reflect competencies needed to teach states' student learning standards. Alignment with these standards should permeate all aspects of teacher preparation programs;

new teachers should enter classrooms with knowledge of student learning standards as well as experience helping students meet the expectations set for them. As 2012 National Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki said, "The classroom is the only thing that can prepare you for the classroom. The longer you have in that experience, the better you're going to be once you get started."

States establish what they expect of new teachers. Many use the Council of Chief State School Officers' Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards as a basis. An updated version released in 2011 was designed to "be compatible with the range of nationwide teacher and leader standards."⁴ The standards indicate teachers should have "deep knowledge of student content standards" and should incorporate them into curriculum.

PROGRAM STANDARDS AND APPROVAL

Nearly all states rely on the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) to accredit their teacher preparation programs. CAEP requires providers to ensure "that candidates demonstrate skills and commitment that afford all P-12 students access to rigorous college- and career-ready standards," but this language fails to deliver a clear message to program designers on the importance of close alignment of program components and student learning standards. In talking with deans of education in their state, SBEs can learn about the scope of teacher preparation programs and the degree to which they are aligned. But most state boards can go further, reviewing program requirements themselves and making recommendations for achieving better alignment.

There can be no guarantee that teachers can help students meet high expectations unless those teachers first have high-quality clinical practice experiences in which they work with the state's student learning standards. Teachers want this experience: The AFT found that 77 percent of teachers believed that

Figure 1. Expectations for New Teachers Align to Educational Standards

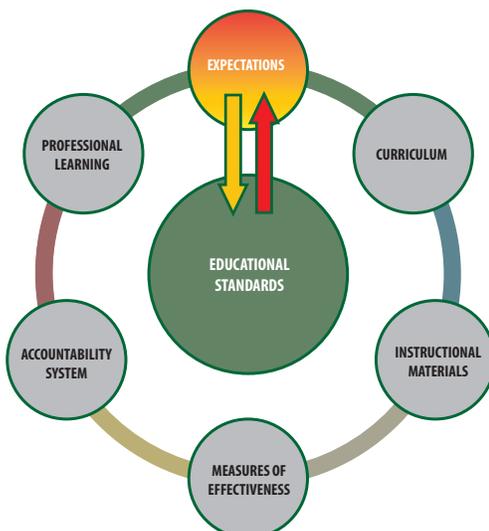
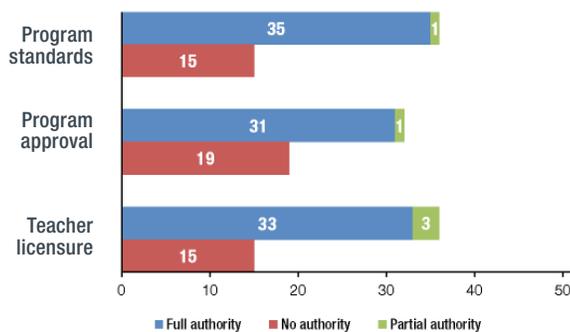


Figure 2. States with Authority over Teacher Preparation



“aligning curricula with field experiences” will help “improve teacher preparedness.”⁵ States require, and teacher preparation programs provide, a range of experiences, including internships, student teaching, clinical practice, and yearlong or multiple-year classroom experiences in which new teachers spend substantial time connecting standards with instructional strategies. State boards should go beyond simply setting a requisite number of hours of clinical practice and work toward requiring that programs seeking approval provide teachers with high-quality classroom experiences, no matter the model.

The US Department of Education is expected to release revised guidance for teacher preparation programs this fall. The draft regulations purport to align with CAEP standards but do not mention alignment with state student learning standards.⁶ Educator preparation program requirements should include a clear link between program coursework, curriculum, and student learning standards, and this task will fall to states working with the institutions that offer these programs.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE

Most SBEs have authority to determine teacher licensure and certification requirements, which outline expectations for new teachers. These requirements typically include the type and number of courses needed for licensure, completion of an approved teacher preparation program, assessments, and hours of classroom experience.

A number of states have adopted or are considering adopting assessments such as edTPA, a company that helps states

implement its multiple-measure assessment system. edTPA designed its assessment to align to the Common Core and InTASC. Other states have developed their own aligned assessments. By selecting assessments for new teachers that are designed with alignment to student learning standards in mind, state boards can close alignment gaps.

Whether or not teacher preparation falls under SBE authority directly, all boards can convene stakeholders to determine how well preparation programs are aligned. By asking questions, they increase transparency on teacher preparation practices in their state. State boards can also exercise their influence by reviewing current policies and making appropriate changes, or they can encourage partner institutions with authority over teacher preparation to examine those programs and act to align them with student learning standards.

STATE EXAMPLES

Arkansas, Maryland, and Colorado are examples of states that have already made significant strides in this area.

Arkansas. The Arkansas State Board of Education requires that the curriculum of teacher preparation programs contain “appropriate content knowledge and pedagogical competencies for the respective licensure areas” for program approval. The educator competencies directly reference specific parts of the state’s student learning standards.

Maryland. The Program Approval and Assessment Branch of the Maryland State Department of Education requires “programs provide strong academic background for teacher candidates that align with the Maryland College- and Career-Ready Standards.” Programs must show how “teacher candidates possess knowledge and skills that are consistent with the MCCRS” and ways the institution’s education faculty partners with the arts and science faculty or with local school systems and community colleges to attain preK-16 standards alignment. The institutional performance criteria also include

extensive internships for teacher candidates that span two consecutive semesters with at least 100 full days in a school.

Colorado. The Colorado Department of Higher Education reviews teacher preparation programs to ensure they meet the required performance criteria, including “integration of theory and practice in coursework and field-based training.” Initial endorsement programs must include at least 800 hours of experience. The Colorado Department of Education prepares a report on program content review based on teacher standards and makes a recommendation to the state board of education, which then approves the program.

Teacher preparation is of necessity multifaceted. State boards have an opportunity to better align student standards with these facets by convening and asking questions. New teachers make a vision of education a reality, and state boards can improve the system to help them do so.

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RESOURCES

edTPA, <http://edtpa.aacte.org/about-edtpa>.

InTASC, http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2013/2013_INTASC_Learning_Progressions_for_Teachers.pdf.

CAEP Standard 1, <http://caepnet.org/standards/standard-1>.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Green, *Building a Better Teacher: How Teaching Works and How to Teach It to Everyone* (New York: Norton & Company, 2015).
2. American Federation of Teachers, “Raising the Bar: Aligning and Elevating Teacher Preparation and the Teaching Profession” (Washington, DC, April 2013), <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/raisingthebar2013.pdf>.
3. International Literacy Association, “Preliminary Report on Teacher Preparation for Literacy Instruction,” (Newark, DE, 2015), <http://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/teacher-preparation-report.pdf>.
4. Council of Chief State School Officers, “InTASC Learning Progressions for Teachers 1.0: A Resource for Ongoing Teacher Development,” (Washington, DC, 2013), http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2013/INTASC_Progressions_FAQ.pdf.
5. AFT, “Raising the Bar.”
6. US Department of Education, “Improving Teacher Preparation: Building on Innovation,” <http://www.ed.gov/teacherprep>.