

Improving Teacher Preparation Programs

Challenge:

The education reform movement, data-driven decision-making, state standards-setting, and outcomes-based assessments all come to a confluence in current policy conversations on teacher education. Teacher preparation programs are seen as a key piece in the puzzle of fixing our nation's K-12 public schools. Teacher preparation programs – whether federally funded or not – are under increased scrutiny to ensure that their graduates are high quality, and that the students they teach can perform well on outcomes-based assessments.

Private nonprofit colleges and universities have a long history of preparing highly-qualified teachers for America's classrooms. These institutions range from relatively small institutions with modest teacher education departments, to large research institutions with distinct colleges of education encompassing doctoral programs, and traditions of multi-disciplinary research in teaching, learning, and human development.

The most recent effort to reform teacher preparation programs came through the regulatory process at the Department of Education. However, the more appropriate place to discuss teacher preparation accountability and improvement is through the deliberative legislative process. Title II of the Higher Education Act is still relevant in today's teaching world. Teacher Quality Partnership Grants fund college and school district partnerships, which serve to disseminate the innovation in teaching taking place at colleges and in schools. Title II institutional and state reporting requirements remain useful, and have not been found to be particularly burdensome.

As a response to the administrative rulemaking process, the Educator Preparation Reform Act has been introduced by Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Representative Mike Honda (D-Calif.) – [S. 1062 and H. R. 2172](#) respectively – that seeks to encourage a productive approach to teacher education reform through reauthorization. Integral to that reform are accountability based upon valid and reliable research, evaluations based upon multiple measures, data for improvement rather than punitive purposes, and the active participation of states that are principally responsible for teacher preparation. The legislation encourages colleges to make the programmatic changes that are already revolutionizing teacher education on many campuses.

Recommendation:

Incorporate the Educator Preparation Reform Act into reauthorization proposals. Key provisions of the legislation include:

1. **Improve and expand the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants program.** The core mechanism of the program is to recruit and prepare teachers who commit to serve at least three years in a high-need school. This central purpose should be maintained. However, expanding the program to support principals, librarians, school counselors, and other educators would provide more holistic reform within these partnerships.

2. **Revamp reporting by teacher preparation programs.** All teacher preparation programs qualifying for federal student aid, whether higher education or non-higher education based, should be required to report key indicators of program quality and performance.
 - Allow for institutions that use teacher performance assessments to report on those outcomes, rather than on outcomes of traditional certification exams.
 - Include data reporting by program on selectivity and type of clinical preparation.
 - Require outcome measures – including placement, retention, and performance – *only if the teacher preparation entity has such data available.*
 - Require states adopt transparent processes in their development of criteria for *low performing* programs, and require states to consult with their education stakeholders (including teacher educators) in the development of such criteria.
 - Clarify that it is a state -- not federal – responsibility to develop criteria for assessing program performance levels, and that proposed criteria must be submitted for public comment.
 - Prohibit the federal government and states from using the data collected under this legislation to rank programs.

3. **Reform TEACH Grants in Title IV of HEA:** To ensure federal dollars are targeted to students committed to entering the teaching profession, limit TEACH Grant eligibility to juniors, seniors, and master’s degree students only.
 - Restrict eligibility to offer TEACH grants to institutions not designated as *low performing* or *at risk* by the state.
 - Create a proportionate payback provision for TEACH grant recipients who do not complete their full service obligation, linking the amount they must pay back to the length of service they have completed.