



TAKING STOCK:

A Teacher Perspective on
Informing and Improving
Teacher Preparation Programs

Summer 2018

Copyright 2018, Teach Plus

All rights reserved

AUTHORS

Kevin Cormier, Timothy Hilton, and Mark Teoh

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kevin Cormier is a middle school math teacher in Pepperell, Massachusetts. He also serves as the District Data Coordinator for the North Middlesex Regional School District and is a Teach Plus Massachusetts Senior Fellow. In addition to his work in the classroom, Kevin is a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Lowell in Math and Science Education.

Timothy Hilton teaches high school social studies in Los Angeles, California. He primarily teaches English Language Learners and is a Teach Plus Senior Alumni Researcher. Timothy is also a doctoral candidate at Claremont Graduate University studying Education: Policy, Evaluation, and Reform.

Mark Teoh, Ed.D., is the Senior National Director of Research and Knowledge at Teach Plus. Mark is a former high school history teacher, teacher leader, and district administrator.

This research was conducted across several states and involved both current and alumni members of the Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellowship. The research team included:

Dane Butts, Anthony Castro, Jennifer Coopman, Sandra Davel, Krista Finke, Chris Green, Tameka Holcomb, Laura Laywell, Kristian Lenderman, Debra Lomax, Anne Riello, Justin Robinson, Melissa Sherle Collins, Stephanie Stoebe, and Monica White.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the following individuals for providing feedback on the research: Peter Fishman, Hannah Putnam, Saroja R. Warner, and Tracey Weinstein. Any errors and omissions are our own.

In addition, we thank several Teach Plus staff who contributed to the development and design of this study, including Lindsay Sobel, Andrea Aguilera, Alice Cain, Sarah Campbell, Anya Grottel-Brown, Erin Haggerty, Zach Newirth, Roberto Rodríguez, and Will Wiggins.

Finally, we want to thank the 755 teachers who helped provide their perspectives and experiences that were used in this study. We appreciate their contributions to this research as well as the work they do in schools every day.

ABOUT TEACH PLUS

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success.

TAKING STOCK: A TEACHER PERSPECTIVE ON INFORMING AND IMPROVING TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Every student deserves a great teacher — and one of the best ways to accomplish this is to provide the best training and preparation to aspiring teachers so that they are ready to serve their students on day one. Every year, over two thousand teacher preparation providers and their respective programs train hundreds of thousands of aspiring teachers across the country.¹ While some new teachers will be ready for their first classrooms, many will not — in a 2015 Teach Plus poll of 1,020 teachers, 77 percent said they were either not fully prepared or not at all prepared to be effective teachers in their first year of teaching.² Recognizing that teachers are the single most important school factor contributing to student learning and therefore concerned about the quality of the training these teachers are receiving, states have been looking for strategies to spur program improvement and identify examples of effective teacher preparation.³

Until recently, knowledge and information about how well graduates of teacher training programs performed was generally limited to the institutions that trained them. Teacher preparation programs could collect data on their graduates through surveys or other feedback tools to hear how their training prepared them for their work in schools — but the results of these data collection efforts largely remained available only to program administrators. Moreover, lacking a set of common measures, results would be difficult to compare across institutions and thus limited for informing program improvement.

States have begun to address the need for systemic solutions to improving teacher preparation. Utilizing the vast stores of information gathered through various administrative systems, state-level departments of education have begun to collect, analyze, and report data about the teacher preparation programs in their state. While these reports vary from state to state, they can include characteristics and information about teachers in training as well as how graduates of the program fare once they are in schools. They could also include data on teacher candidate diversity, academic achievement, and employment placement as well as program graduate retention rates and performance in schools.

Teach Plus' focus on teacher preparation is not incidental. Effectiveness in the classroom is a key component of teacher leadership — the growth of which is central to Teach Plus' mission. With Teach Plus' guidance in research, advocacy, and communications, Teach Plus teacher leaders across the country have been working alongside teacher preparation program administrators, state policymakers, school and district leaders, and fellow teachers to identify strategies and support efforts to improve how new teachers are prepared. These Teach Plus teacher leaders have been learning — and experiencing — the role that data can play in helping support improvement efforts in teacher preparation programs. A consistent recommendation from teacher leaders has been to urge programs to use data and feedback from graduates to inform and support ongoing program improvement.⁴ They emphasize that the value of this data is truly realized when preparation programs and schools and districts can incorporate this feedback into how new teachers are trained, recruited, hired, and inducted.



How can these reports help improve teacher preparation?

As various stakeholders sift through the various indicators of supposed “program quality” contained in the reports, a fundamental question arises concerning these measures and metrics:

What’s important and what’s not?

Which of the multitude of metrics captured in these state reports should the public pay attention to? In what areas should teacher preparation providers focus on for program improvement? What should policymakers include and weigh when they’re considering if and how to hold programs accountable? And how about individuals hoping to one day be educators?

If you are aspiring to be a teacher, how can you tell if a program is right for you and will fully prepare you for your classroom and students?

There are clearly many stakeholders who want to know how well future teachers are being prepared to meet the demands of classrooms and students. When it comes to figuring out what really matters and is worth measuring and paying attention to, current teachers can offer a unique perspective on what’s important when it comes to preparing aspiring educators.

Teachers are best positioned to know where their training excelled, where it fell short, and what really matters when it comes to preparing the next generation of teachers.

As states collect, analyze, and report on the performance of their teacher preparation programs, Teach Plus asked teachers directly what they consider to be important measures and indicators used by states to determine the quality of such programs, with a goal of giving states feedback on how best to determine and highlight program effectiveness and what to consider for improving program quality.

Teach Plus conducted survey and focus group research encompassing the voices of more than 750 teachers to determine what teachers believe are important measures of program quality, what they think about using reports for accountability, and what they want to share with states as they craft reports on teacher preparation programs.



MAKING SENSE OF THE MEASURES

How does one measure, quantify, or describe the quality of a program that prepares teachers? A 2016 study by Teacher Preparation Analytics (TPA) identified impactful ways and corresponding measures by which programs can prepare teacher candidates for long-term success in the profession.⁵ Their research identified four domains which group facets of teacher preparation: candidate selection and completion; knowledge and skills for teaching; performance as classroom teachers; and contribution to state needs. Within those four domains, twelve Key Effectiveness Indicators (KEIs) are used to measure the effectiveness of the programs. The KEI, organized by domains are:

- + **Candidate selection and completion**
 - Academic strength
 - Teaching promise
 - Candidate/completer diversity

- + **Knowledge and skills for teaching**
 - Mastery of teaching subjects
 - Subject-specific pedagogical knowledge
 - Completer teaching skill
 - Completer rating of program

- + **Performance as classroom teachers**
 - Impact on K-12 student learning
 - Demonstrated teaching skill
 - K-12 student perceptions

- + **Contribution to state needs**
 - Entry and persistence in teaching
 - Placement/persistence in high-need subjects/schools

Within the indicators, TPA recognizes that some of these are easier to grasp in terms of measurement — for example, the *academic strength of candidates* and *candidate and completer diversity*. However, they also recognize that some indicators could present challenges in precise measurement, such as *general teaching skill* and *entry and persistence in teaching*.⁶ While these indicators are important measures by which a preparation program can be described, there remains work to be done in calibrating any gathered data on them, as well as additional analysis that may illuminate differences between programs and what those differences mean.

DRAWING MEANING FROM THE MEASURES

In 2012, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Taskforce on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession released the report *Our Responsibility, Our Promise* as a call to action to state chiefs to use their authority over three policy levers to ensure every teacher is learner-ready and every principal is school-ready on Day One.⁷ One key policy recommendation centered on states using data collection, analysis, and reporting of multiple measures for continuous improvement and accountability for preparation programs. The following year CCSSO launched the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP), an aligned action network of seven states working together to better understand and support strong teacher preparation. Through their work in NTEP, state education agency leaders worked in close collaboration with educator preparation programs to examine and revamp existing data systems. Over the course of four years, 15 states participated in NTEP and led significant changes to support program improvement.⁸ An additional study in 2016 by TPA for CCSSO of state educator preparation program reports showed that, by then, over 30 states were sharing annual or biennial data on effectiveness of their teacher preparation programs directly with programs and sometimes with the public.⁹

To more fully understand how some states are implementing these measures, in 2018, CCSSO documented work across six states in NTEP that have been collecting, analyzing, and reporting data on the effectiveness of their states' pre-service programs.¹⁰ This report illustrates the complexity and variation in how states measure and determine the effectiveness of various aspects of their programs — as well as the value that comes from generating common definitions and concepts of program quality.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Teach Plus believes that improving teacher preparation can be a powerful lever for putting great teachers into every classroom and ultimately improving learning outcomes for students. In this research, Teach Plus seeks to further the extensive research and analysis conducted by TPA and CCSSO on both indicators and reports by giving teachers the opportunity to weigh in on what they value when it comes to teacher preparation.

Research questions reflect teacher leaders' interests in learning what their colleagues believe about program quality, what they think about using data for accountability purposes, and what advice they have for states and aspiring educators.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1.

What indicators do teachers value when it comes to describing the quality of teacher preparation programs?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2.

Do teachers believe states should use program data to hold teacher preparation programs accountable? If so, what measures do teachers believe states should use to “grade” program quality?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3.

What advice do teachers have for state policymakers and teacher preparation programs on how these reports and data measures should be used?

RESEARCH QUESTION 4.

What measures and data do teachers recommend aspiring teachers consider when choosing a preparation program?

To address these questions, Teach Plus used a mixed-methods research approach that included holding focus groups in several states and conducting a national survey of current public school teachers.¹¹ We used the Key Effectiveness Indicators established by TPA as the basis for asking teachers about the measures and data that states should include in program reports.¹² In total, 755 teachers from across 26 states and the District of Columbia participated in our research. Their perspectives, voices, and ideas helped us learn more about what they value and what they identify as important when it comes to teacher preparation.

In the following sections, we summarize our key findings drawn from focus groups and survey data, suggest recommendations for states, and provide a closer examination of the results of our analyses and research.

FINDINGS

FINDING 1.

Teachers believe the quality of a preparation program is best measured by the performance of its graduates as classroom teachers and believe that the diversity of its candidates and their retention in schools and districts are important factors in the attractiveness of the program.

FINDING 2.

Teachers overwhelmingly support the idea that states should hold teacher preparation programs accountable for how well they train future educators.

FINDING 3.

Teachers want states to regularly release reports on teacher preparation programs that are transparent and accessible.

FINDING 4.

Teachers believe aspiring educators should pay attention to the indicators of classroom performance of program graduates, but also to how well teacher preparation programs provide them with a strong knowledge base on which to grow as professionals.



The following are recommendations to states as they plan, develop, and revise their reports on teacher preparation programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATES

1. Promote accountability for the performance of teacher preparation programs in relation to how well they prepare their graduates for success in the classroom.

Teachers are clear in their desire that teacher preparation programs be held accountable for how their graduates do in the classroom.

2. Provide technical assistance to preparation program providers as well as to schools and districts in understanding and using the data for improving training, recruitment, and induction practices—collecting and reporting data is not enough.

States should release reports regularly and provide sufficient training and support to teacher preparation programs to understand and apply the results of this data to improve program quality.

3. Bring stakeholders together to make meaning of the reports — including preparation program providers, school and district leaders, policymakers, teaching candidates and current classroom teachers.

States can convene sessions that bring together key actors in the educator preparation pipeline – higher education staff and administrators and school and district leaders, of course, but also state leaders, aspiring teachers, and current teachers.

4. Use clear, comprehensive indicators and multiple measures of classroom performance.

States should work with their key stakeholders, including teachers, to develop measures that evaluate the impact of teacher preparation program graduates on student learning and effective teaching.

5. Use simplified language but not oversimplified metrics.

Where possible, states should strive to use similar and substantive metrics that are understandable but not oversimplified beyond usability.

6. Make long-term investments and take the long view in preparing teachers.

States should take a developmental approach to teacher growth by collecting and analyzing data on the effectiveness of the ongoing professional growth and development of teachers across their careers by reporting in bands of teacher experience.

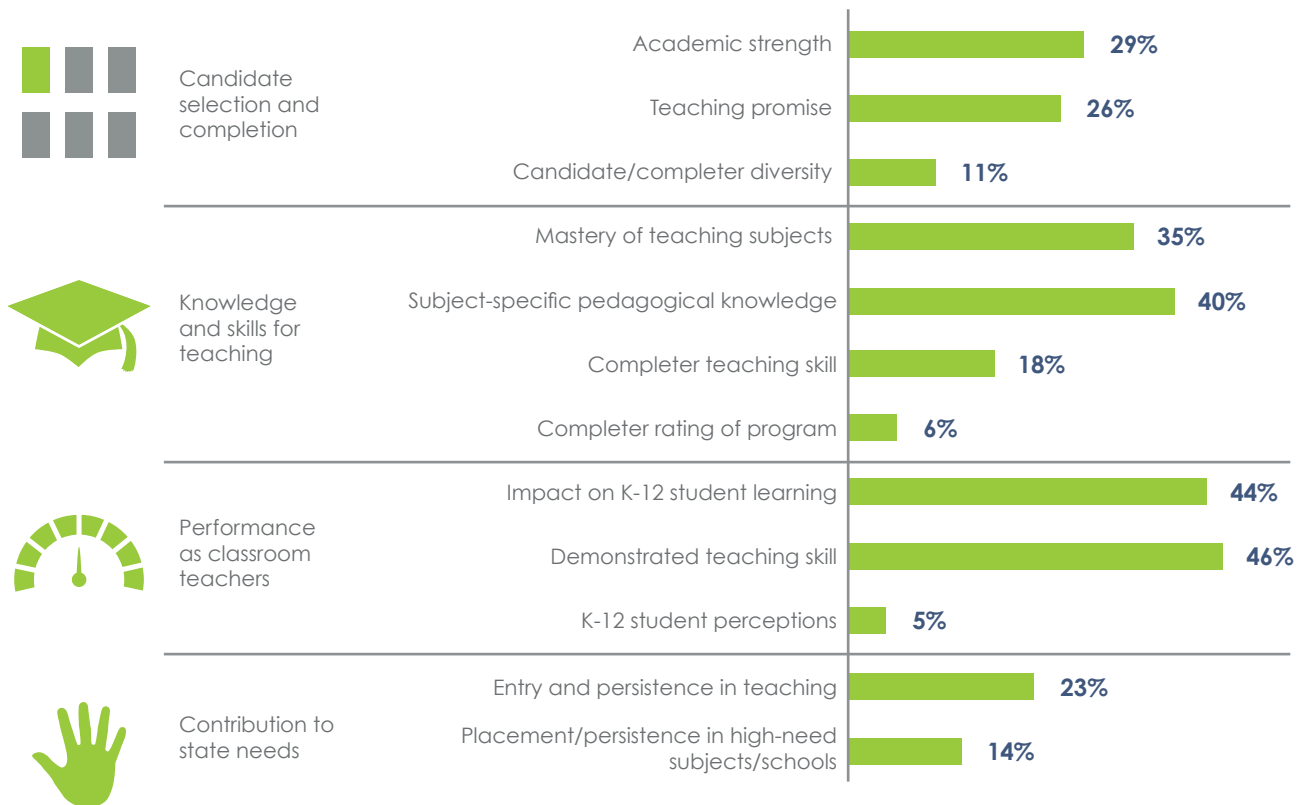
FINDING 1. Teachers believe the quality of a preparation program is best measured by the performance of its graduates as classroom teachers and believe that the diversity of its candidates and their retention in schools and districts are important factors in the attractiveness of the program.

A key interest in conducting this research is to learn what teachers believe are important indicators of teacher preparation program quality. Using the twelve metrics established by TPA, Teach Plus asked teachers for the measures they believe are most important in describing program quality.¹³ Four measures were heavily favored by many teachers (see Figure 1).¹⁴



Figure 1

What teachers consider to be important measures of program quality.



When asked to choose the most important measures of program quality, almost half of the teachers (46 percent) believe that “demonstrated teaching skill” is among the most important determinants of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. This is followed by “impact on K-12 student learning” (44 percent); “subject-specific pedagogical knowledge” (40 percent); and “mastery of teaching subjects” (35 percent).

The selection of these four measures suggests that teachers gauge the value of a program on how well their graduates fare in the classroom, i.e. their demonstrated teaching skill and impact on student learning, and graduates’ understanding of how and what to teach, i.e. pedagogical knowledge and mastery of teaching subjects.

One teacher characterized this long-term focus on classroom performance and outcomes this way:

“The measure of good teaching is student learning, so the best way to measure the success of a teacher prep program is the level at which the students of program alumni/ae perform over the long term. Measuring impact of first-year teachers is not consistent, but by the third year and beyond a teacher’s skills should be demonstrably in place. Additionally a program should help new teachers build the community, resilience, and growth mindset in their own skills and practices to allow them to persist long-term in an imperfect system...”¹⁵

To measure the quality of a program according to teachers, then, is to determine how well graduates perform in the classroom. Another teacher wrote:

“When thinking about effectiveness in teacher preparation, it’s important to think of the long-lasting impact that these teachers will have on students and schools. Additionally, while it’s important to have knowledge of pedagogy, it’s another thing to effectively execute it consistently with student success. As such, K-12 learning growth, demonstrated teaching skill, and placement/persistence in high-need subjects/schools (which shows greater execution overall of teaching) are the strongest indicators for teacher effectiveness and their preparation programs help in that regard.”¹⁶

Alongside the ability of programs to provide candidates with the skills to teach successfully in the classroom, teachers believe that programs should provide candidates with content knowledge and skills. Teaching skills and knowledge differ from subject to subject. How well graduates understand and are prepared to implement these skills and utilize this knowledge have consequences on their effectiveness in the classroom:

“These indicators are important to me because I feel it is necessary that the program provides pedagogical content knowledge for candidates. I work with too many student teachers who take an elementary math class to learn content, but they are not learning the content in the form of also learning pedagogical skills. Many feel confused and feel like they have not learned enough skills to teach within the subject areas.”¹⁷

The teachers surveyed believe that producing graduates who know what and how to teach both generally and within their specific content areas, is critical:

“I chose those indicators (now having taught) because I think pedagogical knowledge is something that many students from my program left still lacking. I also think that impact on learning and teaching skill directly impact student performance, which is the ultimate goal of the classroom teacher. Potential candidates should direct their time and money to programs that produce teachers with knowledge and skills.”¹⁸

The responses from teachers demonstrate the importance of how well programs prepare graduates to be skillful teachers and content masters. As states begin to consider how they measure program quality, these particular indicators are the foundation on which any report should be built.

What other measures do teachers believe are important?

While teachers gravitated towards classroom performance and knowledge and skills for future teachers as key measures for program quality, they also highlighted the importance of teacher diversity and teacher retention when asked about other key indicators worth reporting. When given the opportunity to describe additional choices, diversity emerged as being qualitatively important to teachers. This was often in reference to being able to teach diverse student populations:



“When a program serves a diverse population the pool of teachers prepared by the program should be as diverse or at least look more like the communities these teachers will eventually teach in. The diversity of the teacher candidates also speaks to the outreach of the institution in making their program stand out to the candidates and other possible employers.”¹⁹

It became evident in the voices of teachers that having a diverse faculty was important for many reasons, particularly for preparing teachers who would reflect the populations of students they serve. Other reasons were also voiced by teachers as they supported the idea of diversity-related measures, including the idea that having a diverse cohort of teaching candidates would help advance equity in schools, that diversity helps create richer learning environments for students of all races and ethnicities, and for schools that support recruiting and retaining teachers of color.

Teachers also had strong feelings about teacher retention and turnover and reflected that when discussing reports showing how many candidates remained in the profession after being in the classroom for a short time was important to determining the success of a program.

“Longevity and willingness to stay. High-need schools and subjects have higher turnover rates. Teacher preparation programs should be evaluated on the extent to which they can promote a long-term plan for educators to stay in the classroom.”²⁰

Many teachers believe that coherence in a grade, department, or school is vital to the success of the learners — a preponderance of new teachers concentrated in one school can stunt the progress of students. As such, the desire for teacher preparation programs to be proactive in this area, and to provide more support to new teachers during what are certain to be emotionally-grueling times early in their careers was common among respondents.

FINDING 2. Teachers overwhelmingly support the idea that states should hold teacher preparation programs accountable for how well they train future educators.

Teachers surveyed and interviewed by Teach Plus overwhelmingly believed that teacher preparation programs should be rated based on various indicators and that states should hold them accountable based on their performance. Furthermore, when asked which indicators should be used to “grade” programs, teachers believed that how well graduates teach and impact student learning are most important.

When asked if programs should be given a rating based on teacher preparation program data, a vast majority of teachers surveyed—85 percent—either somewhat or strongly support the idea of rating programs (see Figure 2).²¹

Figure 2

85 percent of teachers support the idea of teacher preparation programs being rated.



A vast majority of teachers—81 percent—also believe that state departments of education should hold programs accountable based on various indicators (see Figure 3).²²

Figure 3

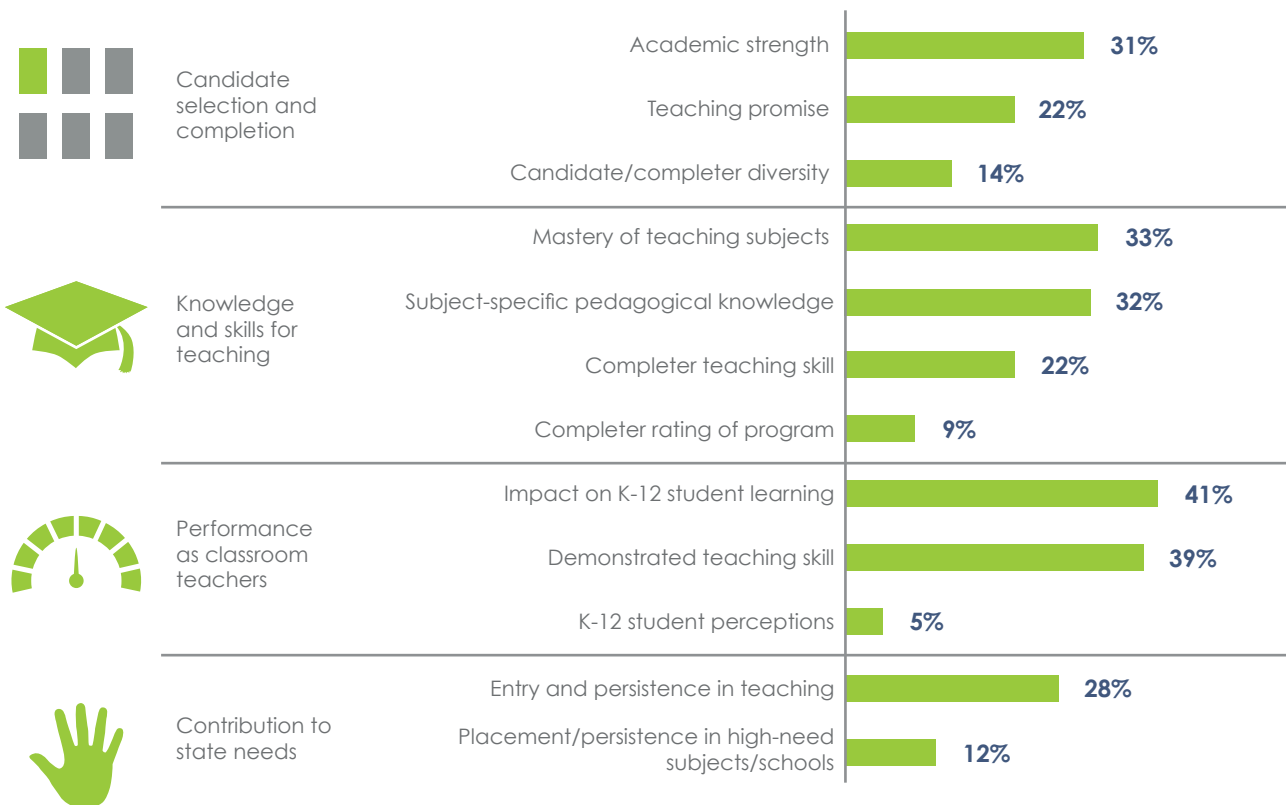
81 percent of teachers believe that states should hold teacher preparation programs accountable for their performance on various indicators.



Teachers believe that programs should be rated and held accountable, but on what measures or indicators do they think it's most salient to do so? Similar to what we learned about what teachers think about the overall quality of programs, teachers again responded that program graduates' impact on student learning (41 percent) and their demonstrated teaching skill (39 percent) are the most useful when it comes to potentially grading programs (see Figure 4).²³

Figure 4

Question: "If states used these indicators to 'grade' teacher preparation programs, which indicators do you believe would be useful for this purpose? (Please choose up to three.)"



Teachers not only want programs graded and held accountable for program performance, but they also believe that the data on programs should be released to the public. In fact, 80 percent of teachers Teach Plus surveyed either somewhat or strongly support the idea that data on every teacher preparation program be publicly released.²⁴

Teachers see a clear line of responsibility between how well programs prepare their students and their subsequent futures as teachers, recognizing the role of these programs not only in their students' training but the role that their graduates will play in their students' learning. As one teacher put it:

“A first year teacher faces evaluations that affect his/her hiring status. Teacher prep programs must be held accountable as to how well the school prepared a new teacher. It’s a very stressful year for the new teacher if he/she wasn’t taught essential practices at the university level. The new teacher’s training ends up on the mentor teacher and administrators to guide when the new teacher just paid for and took time to be prepared by a university or college...”²⁵

FINDING 3. Teachers want states to regularly release reports on teacher preparation programs that are transparent and accessible.

Teachers are uniquely positioned to provide feedback to state policymakers and leaders when it comes to the value of measures and reports on teacher preparation programs. As states collect and analyze data on the performance of their teacher preparation programs and plan, produce, or revise their reports, it is critical that they incorporate teacher voice and perspective in this process. Three key themes related to the reporting on the performance of teacher preparation programs emerged from teachers surveyed by Teach Plus: transparency, simple language, and frequent distribution.²⁶

Teachers believe reports should be transparent, accessible, and not oversimplified.

Teachers surveyed made it clear that any report produced by the states needs to be transparent in its design and in the expectations for teacher education programs. As one teacher stated:

“Make it as transparent as possible how these programs are serving teacher candidates, and by extension, students! Programs must be held accountable for their results.”

In addition to transparency of information, the teachers also believe that ease of access is a crucial element. If information is too difficult to get a hold of, it will never end up being used. As one teacher stated:

“Transparency is key! Make the information easy to understand and obtain. It’s so difficult to find data on this subject when it should be easily accessible considering it’s information consumers and the general public should be privy to.”



While transparency is key, this recommendation does not come without its warnings. Making metrics and reports transparent but oversimplifying results could have a detrimental effect on the purpose of the report. As another teacher said:

“Be very cautious before creating blanket labels. I strongly support transparency, but not oversimplification. I worry that if the data collection or communication tool isn’t nuanced enough, some strong programs may not get the recognition they deserve and weaker programs may have inflated results.”

Teachers believe language used in reports should be “public-friendly.”

The field of education has a tendency to be overrun by jargon and content-specific terminology. In addition to the sheer number of jargon terms, the perpetual shifting of jargon makes it difficult for even the most talented and experienced teachers to keep up with. The second most common suggestion made by the teachers addressed the issue of educational jargon and language. One teacher put it this way:

“Honestly, as someone with two master’s degrees in education, I have no idea what is meant by half of these ‘indicators’ and I can only imagine they will be easily misinterpreted. Clear definitions of what and how is being assessed and why is necessary.”

If state reports on the performance of teacher preparation programs are to be helpful in informing the decisions of incoming teachers, information must be comprehensible and accessible by all interested parties. As this teacher argues:

“Ensure information is easy to understand and accessible to anyone interested in seeing the information. Supply information to school districts so that districts can make informed decisions about their hiring of individuals who are part of an alternative certification program.”

One teacher even drew the comparison to the expectations placed on teachers in their own classroom:

“Just as teachers make their lesson objectives ‘student-friendly,’ make the reports reader-friendly, so the prospective teachers aren’t bogged down by technical jargon.”

Teachers believe that reports should be accessible with regards to language. The respondents suggest using layperson language that is “reader-friendly” to ensure anyone who is looking for the information can access it, understand it, and use it to make informed decisions.

Teachers believe information on the performance of teacher preparation programs should be regularly updated and released.

In addition to the statements made by the teachers above, teachers stated that not only do they want state reports on the performance of teacher preparation programs to be accessible, but they want them updated on a regular basis. One teacher made this point clearly, *“Make the reports public and update them regularly,”* while another teacher drew the comparison with how school achievement data is released, *“[These reports] should be released on a regular basis, like how school’s scorings are shared.”*



Teachers tended to agree that whatever is included in the reports must be up-to-date and available on a regular basis. As one teacher mentioned:

“To do them in a timely manner and periodically enough so regardless of what time someone chooses to become a teacher, they have the most updated data to guide their choice.”

In order to best inform decisions, it is important to have the most current information. The teachers agree that if information is not accurate and up-to-date, the reports will have failed our prospective teachers.

FINDING 4. Teachers believe aspiring educators should pay attention to the indicators of classroom performance of program graduates, but also to how well teacher preparation programs provide them with a strong knowledge base on which to grow as professionals.

Teach Plus asked current teachers to reflect back on their own paths to the classrooms and how and when they chose to start their preparation to become teachers. Among the sample of teachers, 25 percent made the decision to become an educator before starting their undergraduate college education, 32 percent made the decision while in college, 27 percent decided to become an educator after college while working in another field, and 13 percent decided to teach after graduating from college and were already working in the education field.²⁷ When asked about their own decisions to become teachers, four common factors emerged: program location, cost, reputation, and flexibility.²⁸

When discussing where and how to prepare for teaching, teachers frequently mentioned cost, but often in conjunction with other considerations, such as understanding of the profession or the field:

“I chose my teacher preparation program merely by the cost and accessibility of a local college program. I was the first in my family to graduate high school and attend college so I didn't have much guidance or knowledge of what to research and/or expect.”

While cost and location emerged as important factors in teachers' decision making, so too did reputation. Many teachers cited program characteristics such as graduation rate and class size, but word-of-mouth reputation was even more prevalent for teachers:

“I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I began my college career, and I looked for the university in my home city which had the best educator program. I looked for class sizes, cost of the program, and the overall graduation rate for students who began the program.”

“I always wanted to be a Special Education teacher. I knew that [Public, 4-Year] University had a strong program so this is the route I went. I also chose to go to [Public 4-Year] University due to the proximity to my family and close friends.”



Other teachers chose to utilize less than traditional certification programs to become certified to enter the teaching profession.

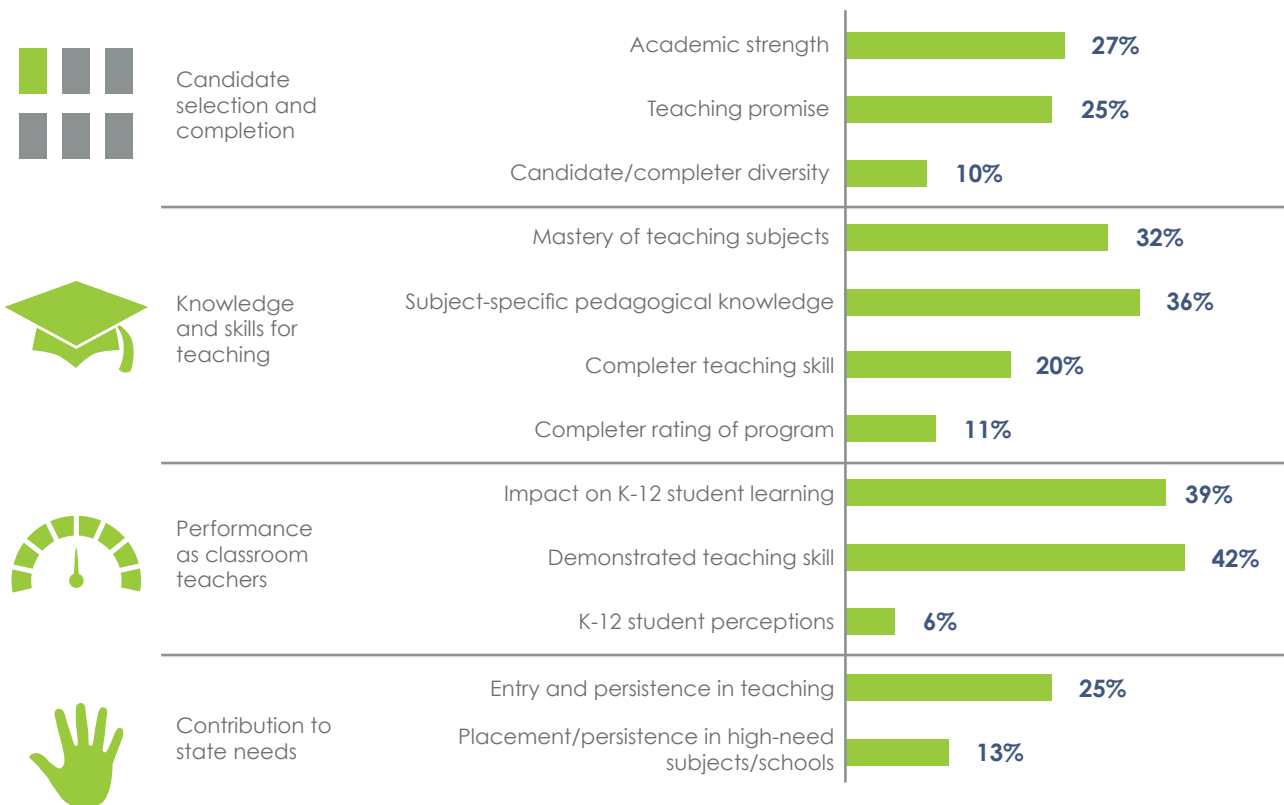
"I chose [Private, non-profit, online] University, which I was able to complete my degree online while working in another field. I chose it due to the convenience of being able to complete the work while still being employed."

These findings suggest that aspiring educators take into consideration a wide variety of factors when deciding to embark on the journey to become a teacher. Personal factors such as proximity to family and friends, as well as other factors such as flexibility and graduation rate all play an important role in deciding which program the prospective teacher chose to attend. The decision to attend a teacher preparation program is not a decision that should be taken lightly as it is a multi-year commitment that can come with substantial financial and personal costs. The evidence from teachers suggests that having similar, basic programmatic information across a number of programs and providers would help them make more informed decisions when considering the pathways in becoming a teacher.

When asked what indicators aspiring educators should pay attention to in these program reports, teachers again chose performance measures as classroom teachers as some of the most important data to consider (see Figure 5).²⁹

Figure 5

Question: "Which of these indicators would you recommend aspiring teachers pay most attention to in choosing a teacher preparation program? (Please choose up to three.)"



Demonstrated teaching skill (42 percent) and the impact on K-12 student learning (39 percent) were the top two measures chosen by teachers. Indicators of graduate knowledge and skills for teaching were also close in terms of importance, including subject-specific pedagogical knowledge (36 percent) and mastery of teaching subjects (32 percent). While these results suggest that teachers highly value how program graduates perform in the classroom as measures of program quality, they also suggest that teachers believe that how well a program can impart the knowledge and skills needed as education professionals will be important for new entrants to the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATES

As states continue to collect, analyze, and report data on their teacher preparation programs, and as they consider various measures and indicators of the performance of such programs — including measures and indicators of program improvement and accountability — Teach Plus urges state leaders to consider the perspectives of teachers:

1. Promote accountability for the performance of teacher preparation programs in relation to how well they prepare their graduates for success in the classroom.

Every student deserves a great teacher and states can play a large role in ensuring that teacher preparation programs in their state are ready to teach on day one. Teachers are clear in their desire that teacher preparation programs be held accountable for how their graduates do in the classroom. There are few school factors as impactful as having a great teacher in a classroom and states should use the policy levers available to them to ensure that new teachers receive the best preparation and support possible in their pre-service programs.

2. Provide technical assistance to preparation program providers as well as to schools and districts in understanding and using the data for improving training, recruitment, and induction practices—collecting and reporting data is not enough.

Teachers believe data should be collected, analyzed, and reported on a more regular basis so that it is relevant and useful for program improvement purposes and that this data should be made publicly available. Moreover, states should provide sufficient training and support to teacher preparation programs to understand and apply the results of this data to improve program quality as well as to schools and districts who hire graduates of programs to make smarter hiring decisions and new teacher induction plans.

3. Bring stakeholders together to make meaning of the reports — including preparation program providers, school and district leaders, policymakers, teaching candidates and current classroom teachers.

If states want to really breathe life into the reports that they release, they can convene sessions that bring together key actors in the educator preparation pipeline — higher education staff and administrators and school and district leaders, of course, but also state leaders, aspiring teachers, and current teachers. When states plan on releasing data to the public, they should consider inviting these groups to reflect on and discuss the specific programs and providers where teachers are trained as well as the school and district environments where teachers are hired. Having both aspiring and current teachers present during those discussions can provide local and state policymakers with



a crucial perspective and hear from teachers who have been through the programs being reported on.

4. Use clear, comprehensive indicators and multiple measures of classroom performance.

States should work with their key stakeholders, including teachers, to develop measures that evaluate the impact of teacher preparation program graduates on student learning and effective teaching. Teachers support measures that reinforce what strong classroom performance looks like across schools. Evaluations of classroom performance should be based on multiple measures, including but not limited to peer evaluations, mentor testimonials, student and parent feedback, and portfolios of student work in addition to student performance on assessments.

5. Use simplified language but not oversimplified metrics.

Where possible, states should strive to use similar and substantive metrics that are understandable but not oversimplified beyond usability. These metrics should be presented publicly in layperson language and be reader-friendly. Teachers do not support oversimplifying metrics in a way that does not provide enough information for those reading the report to be able to effectively interpret data that contributes to aggregated ratings.

6. Make long-term investments and take the long view in preparing teachers.

Recognizing that growth and development continues to occur throughout the careers of teachers, states should report some measures disaggregated by teacher experience and consider how teachers' careers and effectiveness might change over time. Research suggests that while the most rapid growth for teachers occurs within their first five years of teaching, teachers continue to develop and grow in their classroom effectiveness throughout their careers.³⁰ State reports can reflect this growth by reporting results in bands of teacher experience, such as teachers in the first three years of teaching, teachers in their fourth through tenth years, etc. This can be particularly valuable when it comes to measures concerning classroom performance. In addition to collecting and reporting data on teachers at various points in their careers, states should consider how investments in teacher preparation and program improvement can have long-term returns to the quality of education that the students in their schools receive.

CONCLUSION

When states collect, analyze, and report data on teacher preparation programs and their graduates, they create the potential for programs and their partners to more effectively identify areas for improvement and monitor progress — but only when the right measures and data are included in user-friendly reports. Teach Plus teacher leaders, who have been reviewing and working with these reports, have found considerable differences in how useful some states' reports are when compared with others. As this work continues across states, Teach Plus recommends state policymakers to not only take into account the teacher perspective when selecting and reporting program data, but to also create opportunities where teachers can join with program administrators and school and state leaders to improve the training of the next generation of teachers.



ENDNOTES

¹ U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education. (2016). *Preparing and Credentialing the Nation's Teachers: The Secretary's 10th Report on Teacher Quality*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

² Teach Plus. (2015). *Teach Plus Flash Poll: Teacher Preparation*. Boston, MA.

³ Goldhaber, D. (2016). In *Schools, Teacher Quality Matters Most* (2nd ed., Vol. 16). Cambridge, MA: Education Next.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2016). *Accountability in Teacher Preparation: Policies and Data in the 50 States & DC*. Washington, DC.

⁴ Teach Plus Texas. (2018). *Evidence of Excellence: Using Data to Elevate Teacher Preparation in Texas*. Austin, TX.

Teach Plus Indianapolis. (2016). *We're In This Together: How Schools, Districts, and Preparation Programs Must Collaborate to Prepare New Teachers*. Indianapolis, IN.

Teach Plus Massachusetts. (2015). *Ready for Day One: Teachers Weigh in on Teacher Preparation*. Boston, MA.

Teach Plus Washington, DC and Teach Plus Los Angeles. (2015). *Great Teachers are Made: Teacher Views on the Need for Teacher Preparation Reform*. Washington, DC and Los Angeles, CA.

⁵ Teacher Preparation Analytics. (2016). *A Guide to the Key Effectiveness Indicators*. Washington, DC

⁶ See endnote 5.

⁷ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2012). *Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession*. Washington, DC.

⁸ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2017). *Transforming Educator Preparation: Lessons Learned from Leading States*. Washington, DC.

⁹ See endnote 3.

¹⁰ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). *Measuring What Matters: Recommendations from States in the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP)*. Washington, DC.

¹¹ Focus groups were held in March and April, 2018 while the national survey administration occurred in March through May, 2018.

¹² See endnote 5.

¹³ See endnote 5.

¹⁴ Question: "When you examine this list of indicators, which three do you feel are the most informative for describing the quality of a teacher preparation program?" Responses (n = 755): "Academic strength" (29.1 percent), "Teaching promise" (26.4 percent), "Candidate/completer diversity" (11.3 percent), "Mastery of teaching subjects" (35.5 percent), "Subject-specific pedagogical knowledge" (39.9 percent), "Completer teaching skill" (17.9 percent), "Completer rating of program" (5.8 percent), "Impact on K-12 student learning" (43.6 percent), "Demonstrated teaching skill" (45.7 percent), "K-12 student perceptions" (5.2 percent), "Entry and persistence in teaching" (23.4 percent), "Placement/persistence in high-need subjects/schools" (13.8 percent).

Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁵ Question: "Why did you choose the indicators that you did? Why were they important to you?"
Open response question.

¹⁶ See endnote 15.

¹⁷ See endnote 15.

¹⁸ See endnote 15.

¹⁹ Question: "Are there other indicators that you believe states should collect data on and report?"
Open response question.

²⁰ See endnote 19.

²¹ Question: "There are some proposals about how these reports on teacher preparation programs should be used. To what degree do you support or oppose these ideas? Programs should be given a rating based on their performance on various indicators." Responses: (n = 747) "Strongly support" (43.5 percent), "Somewhat support" (41.5 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (9.4 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (1.6 percent), "Strongly oppose" (2.0 percent), "Unsure" (2.0 percent).

¹²² Question: "There are some proposals about how these reports on teacher preparation programs should be used. To what degree do you support or oppose these ideas? Programs should be held accountable by their state departments of education based on their performance on indicators." Responses: (n = 745) "Strongly support" (45.9 percent), "Somewhat support" (34.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (10.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (4.7 percent), "Strongly oppose" (3.0 percent), "Unsure" (0.9 percent).

²³ Question: "If states used these indicators to 'grade' teacher preparation programs, which indicators do you believe would be useful for this purpose? (Please choose up to three.)" Responses (n = 755): "Academic strength" (31.4 percent), "Teaching promise" (21.9 percent), "Candidate/completer diversity" (13.8 percent), "Mastery of teaching subjects" (33.1 percent), "Subject-specific pedagogical knowledge" (32.3 percent), "Completer teaching skill" (22.3 percent), "Completer rating of program" (9.4 percent), "Impact on K-12 student learning" (41.1 percent), "Demonstrated teaching skill" (39.5 percent), "K-12 student perceptions" (4.5 percent), "Entry and persistence in teaching" (27.5 percent), "Placement/persistence in high-need subjects/schools" (12.5 percent).

²⁴ Question: "There are some proposals about how these reports on teacher preparation programs should be used. To what degree do you support or oppose these ideas? Data on every teacher preparation program should be released to the public on a regular basis." Responses: (n = 744) "Strongly support" (50.9 percent), "Somewhat support" (28.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (12.1 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (2.8 percent), "Strongly oppose" (4.0 percent), "Unsure" (1.2 percent).

²⁵ Question: "What recommendations do you have for states as they release reports on teacher preparation programs?" Open response question.

²⁶The quotes from teachers throughout this finding are in response to the question, "What recommendations do you have for states as they release reports on teacher preparation programs?" Open response question.

²⁷ Question: "Which of the following best describes when you chose your teacher preparation program or route?" Responses: (n = 754) "I chose my teacher preparation program or route before starting my undergraduate education in college." (24.7 percent), "I chose my teacher preparation program or route while a college student." (31.8 percent), "I chose my teacher preparation program or route after graduating from college where I was working in another field." (27.5 percent), "I chose my teacher preparation program or route after graduating from college when I was already working in the education field." (13.0 percent), "Other" (3.1 percent).

²⁸The quotes from teachers throughout this finding are in response to two open response questions, "When you decided to become a teacher, how did you choose the preparation route and program that you did?" and, "When you were choosing how to become prepared to be a teacher, what program characteristics, qualities, information, data, or indicators were most influential and pertinent to your choice?"

²⁹ Question: "Which of these indicators would you recommend aspiring teachers pay most attention to in choosing a teacher preparation program? (Please choose up to three.)" Responses: (n = 755) "Academic strength" (27.2 percent), "Teaching promise" (24.6 percent), "Candidate/completer diversity" (10.1 percent), "Mastery of teaching subjects" (32.5 percent), "Subject-specific pedagogical knowledge" (36.3 percent), "Completer teaching skill" (20.0 percent), "Completer rating of program" (11.4 percent), "Impact on K-12 student learning" (39.3 percent), "Demonstrated teaching skill" (41.7 percent), "K-12 student perceptions" (5.6 percent), "Entry and persistence in teaching" (25.3 percent), "Placement/persistence in high-need subjects/schools" (13.1 percent).

³⁰ Papay, J.P. & Kraft M.A. (2015). *Productivity returns to experience in the teacher labor market: Methodological challenges and new evidence on long-term career improvement*. *Journal of Public Economics*.