

# THE STATE OF TEACHER PREPARATION:

## Potential Changes on the Horizon through the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

### +++++ INTRODUCTION +++++

It is more important than ever that the 50 million public school students, who are taught by 3.2 million elementary and secondary school teachers each year, are taught by educators who have the preparation and training they need to be successful. With the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization language expected to be considered next month by both the House and Senate education committees, policy changes on the horizon could result in real progress toward this goal.

One of the reasons lawmakers are eager to update the law is their belief that college access and affordability problems are making college out of reach for too many students. The U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, led by Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) recently [released a new report](#) that argues that a college degree still packs a significant value and is an excellent overview of the key issues Congress is focused on: access, affordability, and completion.

This brief, however, focuses on a less prominent — but equally important — set of provisions included in the Higher Education Act: those related to teacher preparation through Title II of the law. This brief previews where the reauthorization is likely headed, focusing on teacher preparation issues, and includes an overview of a national coalition quietly working to ensure this federal rewrite does as much good as possible for students by taking steps to better prepare their teachers. It is broken into four sections:

- + The Teacher Preparation Landscape
- + Related Higher Education Act Reauthorization Issues
- + Coalition Activity/Innovative Teacher Prep Working Group
- + Appendix of Key Teacher Preparation Resources

### +++++ THE TEACHER PREPARATION LANDSCAPE +++++

To achieve the goal of a well-trained teacher workforce, it will be necessary to address three key challenges that have gone unaddressed for decades.

First, the teaching force has long been unstable, with almost half of teachers leaving the profession within the first few years. One of the most common reasons given by teachers who leave is that they were not adequately prepared for success in the classroom.

Second, there is a tremendous challenge in that teaching has such a low bar for entry. This is an ongoing source of concern for Teach Plus teacher leaders, who are all high-performing teachers in high-need schools — who see firsthand the damage that can occur in classrooms

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led by low-performing colleagues. The national pass rate for teachers is 96 percent, compared to 86 percent for doctors, 59 percent for lawyers, and 56 percent for Certified Public Accountants.<sup>1</sup>

Third, there is a mismatch between what prospective teachers study and what school districts actually need in terms of expertise. Roughly half a million prospective teachers enroll annually in teacher preparation programs offered by 2,137 providers. The vast majority — a full 85 percent — are in traditional Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) programs; with another six percent in Alternative IHE programs; and nine percent in other alternative programs. But no matter which type of provider these prospective teachers choose, most of them focus on elementary education, with fewer than 10 percent of candidates focusing on shortage subjects like science and math.<sup>2</sup> This is exacerbated by the fact that the number of students completing teacher preparation programs has been on the decline for the past decade. It has fallen by some 35 percent over the past five years.

One reason for the shortages in these areas is because mathematics and science teachers can earn significantly higher starting salaries in the private sector. The largest impact of this teacher shortage is felt in high-poverty and high-minority schools, which often have difficulty hiring and face high turnover on a regular basis partly because of inequitable school funding and inadequate resources.

In recent years, colleges of education have been repositioning themselves in several ways. First, they're changing their curricula to better prepare candidates — most of whom are white — to teach a diverse student population. As they focus on multicultural education, more colleges of education are developing partnerships with school districts that serve low-income and minority students, so that teacher candidates can experience teaching in those settings. Teacher preparation programs are shifting away from standardized exams for candidates, and toward performance-based assessments that evaluate multiple measures of teaching, including student teaching. Colleges of education are also placing a stronger emphasis on student teaching and developing closer partnerships with school districts, the report says. These changes are progress but do not go far enough in addressing what Teach Plus teacher leaders say they would most like to see in teacher preparation reform:

- 1 More clinical practice, with a minimum of one year in the classroom before becoming a teacher of record;
- 2 More accountability and transparency around outcomes of preparation programs, including data such as how many graduates from a given program are employed as teachers and how effective they are in the classroom; and
- 3 More support teaching vulnerable students through best practices like trauma-informed instruction and restorative approaches; and
- 4 A much higher bar for entry into the profession.

# RELATED HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION ISSUES

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Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA), Representatives Bobby Scott (D-VA) and, to a lesser degree, Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC) are currently working on bipartisan Higher Education Act reauthorization bill language.

The primary focus of the reauthorization will be on improving college affordability; holding schools accountable for student success; and expanding access to higher education. A report released last month by Rep. Scott lays out core principles for reauthorization. It states, "Rather than diminishing the value of a college degree, we should recognize that all students should have access to the substantial financial and social benefits that come with a quality higher education. The committee Democrats still believe that college is the right choice for most people, and want to emphasize racial and economic equity as part of the effort to expand access to college credentials." At a recent convening of education organizations in Washington, D.C. at the Center for American Progress, Rep. Scott's education committee staff also emphasized this current opportunity to improve teacher preparation and expressed great interest in doing so.

Programs authorized under Title II, focused on improving preparation of teachers, serve as a crucial point of connection between the higher education and K-12 education systems, and offer an opportunity to create a feedback loop between the needs of students and schools and the way teachers are prepared to meet those needs. Key issues under consideration are:

- + Promoting high-quality, evidence-based preparation of teachers and school leaders
- + Improving data collection and reporting requirements for educator preparation programs
- + Measuring the effectiveness of preparation programs/strengthening accountability

## PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY, EVIDENCE-BASED PREPARATION OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS.

The \$43 million Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant program, which is authorized under Title II of the Higher Education Act, provides funding to improve the recruitment, preparation, and induction of teachers and has promoted innovative models of educator preparation that are closely connected to the needs of high-need school districts and grounded in real-world teaching experience. To date, these models have largely been teacher residencies. Since HEA was last reauthorized in 2008, there has been growing interest in diversifying the educator workforce, creating more on-the-job teacher preparation models, and providing greater pre-service experience for school leaders.

## IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

In 2017, much to the dismay of the education reform community, Congress, at the behest of the Trump Administration, overturned the Obama Administration's rules promoting more streamlined data reporting and accountability for educator preparation programs focused on recent program graduates' outcomes. There appears to be continuing interest in improving the quality of information available about preparation programs' contributions to the needs of the

educator workforce and their overall performance on key measures. The measures currently being collected and reported on as part of state and institution report cards on educator preparation are likely to be changed in order to better identify differences in program outcomes that align to the needs of PreK-12 schools and students. The Innovative Teacher Preparation Working Group, described later in this brief, has spent significant time reviewing these measures and developing consensus on needed changes.

The combination of collecting and reporting more useful data, along with overall performance ratings can help prospective educators, hiring districts, and policymakers make more informed decisions, and ultimately drive program changes that will improve the quality of teaching.

## **MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREPARATION PROGRAMS/ STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Congress has an opportunity to focus on supporting the use of data for improvement to avoid repeating the mistakes of recent education reform history, which many believe erred in assuming that stronger accountability would automatically translate into better outcomes for students without pairing ambitious new requirements with sufficient resources or support for how to achieve new performance metrics. It will be important for Congress to allocate funds to assist states in providing technical assistance to programs in identified areas for improvement. Additionally, it will be important for the entities responsible for educator preparation program approval and accreditation to analyze and use data in their reviews of institutions, including in order to identify programs in need of improvement or action.

In addition to the primary bill language under development in these areas, two additional bills are likely to be added as amendments.

## **TEACHERS AS SCHOOL LEADERS ACT**

First is the Teachers and School Leaders Act. This Teach Plus-endorsed bill was introduced by Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO), along with Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Mark Warner (D-VA), and John Cornyn (R-TX) to overhaul the Teacher Quality Partnership Program (TQP). It would expand the focus of TQP to include training for school administrators in addition to educators, who are the sole focus of the program as authorized in the current law. The bill would make a wider range of teacher prep programs eligible for TQP funding, including those run by public or private nonprofit organizations outside of traditional institutions of higher education. This is a significant change to current law, which limits eligibility to traditional institutions of higher education and school districts and, most important, it bodes well for ongoing efforts to level the playing field and make innovative, non-traditional prep programs eligible for all federal funding streams. The Innovative Teacher Prep Working Group worked with Senator Bennet in developing this legislation.

## **STRIVE ACT**

Second is the STRIVE Act, to be introduced by Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and also endorsed by Teach Plus. The STRIVE Act would strengthen federal financial support and preparation for teachers, including funding programs that prepare, train, and recruit high-quality teachers,

principals, and other school leaders. It also provides incremental loan forgiveness and eventual loan cancellation for public school teachers who teach in Title I schools. The bill mandatorily funds and increases funding for existing programs that prepare and train educators to be effective, while expanding them to include early childhood educators. It overhauls the TEACH Grant program, including increasing the amount that students receive under the TEACH Grants and provides credit for time spent teaching. It encourages diversity in the teaching profession by providing financial assistance for teaching certification and licensing fees to low-income and other underrepresented communities. Finally, the bill would increase the teacher tax credit to better reflect how much of their own money teachers invest in educating our students. Once again, the Innovative Teacher Prep Working Group worked with Senator Booker in developing this legislation.

The Trump Administration has laid out its priorities for HEA as well. The White House endorsed lending caps for graduate and parent borrowers (similar to the House Republicans' PROSPER Act from 2017) and giving campus aid administrators the authority to require loan counseling for student borrowers. The Administration also wants to eliminate the distinction between regional accreditors, which oversee public and nonprofit colleges, and national accreditors, which oversee mostly for-profit and online colleges. The Department of Education has pursued this agenda primarily through the rulemaking process.

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## CONCLUSION

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Until teacher preparation is revamped to ensure all teachers are fully equipped for success in the classroom from Day 1, Teach Plus teacher leaders will continue to advocate for better teacher preparation policies at both the federal and state level. By leveraging the experience and voices of our best teachers, we will continue to pressure lawmakers and build public will, creating a more favorable context for reforms across our regions and the country.

# APPENDIX OF KEY TEACHER PREPARATION RESOURCES

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## KEY DATA AND POLICY RESOURCES:

[United States Department of Education Higher Education \(ED Title II\): Title II Reports and Data](#)  
[National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\): National Teacher and Principal Survey](#)  
[National Center on Teacher Quality \(NCTQ\): State Teacher Policy Database](#)  
[Learning Policy Institute \(LPI\): Interactive Tools](#)

## POLICIES, RESEARCH, AND DATA:

### A Data on preparation programs

[Numbers of programs and providers by state \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[List of providers by state \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[List of providers by program and state \(ED Title II\)](#)

### B Data on program enrollments and completers

[Enrollment in teacher preparation programs by state \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[Demographics of teacher candidates by state \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[Completers by state \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[Completers by program and state \(ED Title II\)](#)

### C Data on program quality

[NCTQ program ratings \(NCTQ\)](#)

### D Data and policies on becoming a teacher

[Specific state policies on teacher preparation and related standards \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[State policies \(NCTQ\)](#)  
[State test pass rates by program \(ED Title II\)](#)  
[State requirements for an initial teaching credential \(ED Title II\)](#)

### E Data on teacher labor market issues

[Teacher shortage analysis by state \(LPI\)](#)  
[Cost of teacher turnover calculator \(LPI\)](#)  
[Teacher data by state \(NCES\)](#)

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> [Pathways to Teaching](#), U.S. Department of Education, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [Ibid.](#)