### **Policy Brief**

# Time to Improve

How Federal Policy Can Promote Better Prepared Teachers and School Leaders



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### **About New America**

New America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute that invests in new thinkers and new ideas to address the next generation of challenges facing the United States.

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# The State of Educator Preparation

While educator preparation has always been important, it is now more important than ever. Currently, there are more first year teachers in the United States than teachers of any other experience level—and at many schools, *most* teachers have only been teaching for a few years.¹ Meanwhile, the skills and responsibilities expected of educators are expanding, as higher standards and new technologies are implemented to improve student learning.

While expectations for PreK-12 educators have changed substantially, many of the programs that prepare educators have remained stagnant. Much of the responsibility for this rests with the preparation programs themselves, but states and the federal government have each played a role as well. Below are some of the major issues with current systems for educator preparation and advancement that New America, the U.S. Department of Education, and an array of other organizations—including the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Education Trust, the National Council on Teacher Quality and the National Education Association—have documented <sup>2</sup>

## Issues with educator preparation program policies and practices

While some teacher and principal preparation programs are of a high caliber, quantitative and qualitative research<sup>3</sup> has exposed several issues with the content and quality of teacher and principal preparation programs, including:

- Not delivering the knowledge, skills, and/or experiences that future educators need to be successful. This is due in part to:
  - Program curricula not being aligned to state PreK-12 college- and career-ready standards.
  - Programs not soliciting input from PreK-12 schools and program graduates on their needs and expectations.

- Not focusing on graduates' employment outcomes or quality of in-service performance.
- Not responding to the staffing needs of PreK-12 districts.
- Administrator-preparation programs enrolling many teachers who have no intention of becoming administrators.

## Issues with state policies affecting educator preparation and quality

Unfortunately, many state policies promote, or at least tolerate, these problems. Many states:

- Create preparation program approval/ reauthorization processes that do not consider whether program graduates are well-prepared to succeed once they are employed in PreK-12 schools.
- Set a low bar for prospective teachers' content and/or pedagogical knowledge during initial licensure processes, and fail to consider in-service performance in granting permanent licensure and tenure
- Set teacher salary structures that provide increased compensation based on having an advanced degree, regardless of performance, despite research demonstrating that these degrees have minimal impact on effectiveness or student learning.<sup>4</sup>
  - These compensation structures lead many teachers to pursue administrative degrees despite no intention of using them, which in turn leads many preparation providers to offer administrative programs that are less focused on serving those who do aspire to be school leaders.
- Do not collect any useful data about preparation program performance. This means that most preparation programs have insufficient information to improve, and few extrinsic reasons to try to do so, while prospective students and hiring districts have difficulty discerning and comparing program quality.

A few states, such as Louisiana<sup>5</sup>, have taken steps to raise the bar for preparation program approval and candidate certification, while also providing data to programs about their graduates' performance in the field. Some states are also providing technical assistance to programs whose graduates are not performing well. However, a majority of states have shown little commitment to raising the quality of educator preparation through policy or practice. Some have even disregarded their own rules to

allow programs of inadequate quality to continue to prepare educators.6

### Issues with federal policies affecting educator preparation and quality

Meanwhile, federal policy has failed to encourage states or preparation programs to make necessary changes that will improve the quality of educators being prepared to teach in and lead our PreK-12 schools. In the most recent Higher Education Act reauthorization, Congress attempted to collect better data about the practices of successful teacher preparation entities\* in institutions of higher education, and to require states to report on the overall picture of teacher preparation in their state.



A majority of states have shown little commitment to raising the quality of educator preparation through policy or practice. Some have even disregarded their own rules to allow programs of inadequate quality to continue to prepare educators.

> Regrettably, the most important lesson we have learned from these data may be that we have not collected the right data. While current HEA Title II federal reporting requirements for preparation entities and states are extensive, with hundreds of indicators, they are not very useful to programs, prospective students, hiring districts, or local, state, and federal policymakers. For example, they include checking "yes/no" boxes about whether programs require certain criteria for admission (such as a minimum GPA), but ask for no specifics about those criteria. Also, only the overall preparation entities at institutions of higher education (IHEs)—which typically are comprised of several different individual programs (e.g., an elementary education program and a secondary math program) with differing curricula, faculty, partnerships, etc.—must collect and report data, resulting in a lack of data for individual preparation programs or for alternative programs based outside of IHEs. The institutionallevel data that are made available often provide too limited information to be helpful<sup>7</sup>, or limit data access to faculty and staff of the institution of higher education.8

Title II of the last reauthorization of HEA also required states to identify "at-risk" and "lowperforming" teacher preparation programs and hold them accountable for their performance, but most states have not done so.9 This is in part because most states select criteria for identifying low-performing programs that are weak and not aligned with measures of program graduate performance. For example, New York and Ohio's only "low-performing" program criterion is an overall pass rate of less than 80 percent on certification assessments,10 despite the fact that many programs require candidates to pass the assessment in order to complete the program and that passing scores are often set well below the average test taker's score.11 Also, as HEA is currently written, states must voluntarily rescind approval or funds from low-performing programs before any federal consequences are initiated—unsurprisingly, there are no examples of low-performing programs that have faced federal consequences.

Additionally, even though HEA Title IV requires that only "high quality" preparation programs are eligible to award TEACH grants, that provision has never been defined or enforced at the federal level. As a result, the Department of Education found that, in 2012, 800 of the colleges participating in the TEACH program had no program quality determination available. Meanwhile, two-thirds of programs identified by states as at-risk or lowperforming under Title II were offering TEACH Grants.<sup>12</sup> This runs counter to the program's mission: TEACH grants were intended to incentivize teaching candidates at high quality programs to teach in the nation's highest-need schools and subject areas. Improper targeting of TEACH Grants has potential implications for teacher candidates as well, if they find themselves insufficiently prepared to succeed as in-service teachers and end up having to repay these awards as loans. Without ensuring that TEACH candidates are receiving strong preparation, the federal government is failing to prioritize the PreK-12 students who most need strong teachers.

Finally, HEA Title II, Part A includes almost no focus on ensuring high quality principal preparation, despite school leaders playing an extremely important role in attracting, retaining, and developing strong teachers and other educators in a given school. Given no federal data collection requirements, a substantial number of states do not even have basic data on principal preparation programs—as of 2013, 19 states were unable to report how many people graduate from stateapproved principal preparation programs on an annual basis and seven states could not report how many principal licenses were granted.13

<sup>\*</sup> Defined as the overall institution of higher education or organization that houses individual educator preparation

## Summary of Recommendations

### 1. Learn About and Improve Educator Preparation Program Quality

Federal policy should balance the need to raise the quality of educator preparation quickly with the recognition that states need time to thoughtfully and deliberately implement strong improvement and accountability systems.

Over the next decade, states will take increasingly significant steps to improve their preparation programs in order to continue receiving federal funding:

### Collect and report on meaningful performance measures.

- States and preparation programs must collect and report data focused on program graduate outcomes, along with a small set of other measures to help illuminate which program and candidate attributes may be most related to success in the field.
- These measures will replace current data collection requirements, which have created unnecessary burden while failing to provide value to stakeholders.

### • Use program performance measures to rate the quality of programs:

 After several years, states must use findings from these data collections to design and implement a "Quality Assessment System" to assess educator preparation program performance.

### Assist programs in meeting quality expectations and hold those that do not accountable:

- States and the federal government will use their Quality Assessment Systems to encourage program quality through a combination of incentives and consequences, including recognition for high-performing programs and revoking state approval and federal aid from persistently low-performing ones.
- States will also drive improvement by redesigning preparation program approval processes and educator licensure requirements to better align with the work and goals of states' PreK-12 education systems.

### 2. Encouraging State Innovation throughout the Educator Pipeline

A new competitive federal Educator Pipeline Innovation Grant will help states attract, prepare, develop, and retain high quality educators by revisiting existing policies and adopting new approaches.

Successful states would receive the ability to use a portion of their ESEA Title II funds towards this work.



### **Detailed Recommendations**

### RECOMMENDATION 1: Learn About and Improve Educator Preparation Program Quality

iven the various issues outlined in the previous section, it is clear that federal and state policy regarding educator preparation—and educator quality in general—urgently needs to be reconfigured.

Despite this urgency, we must proceed thoughtfully. Because the data previously collected were only focused on "inputs" to educators' preparation, we have limited knowledge about which aspects of educator candidates and their preparation programs are most related to strong in-service performance, other than direct measures of educator impact on student achievement growth. Instead of the hundreds of unhelpful measures currently collected, we need to collect and report a smaller set of measures focused on program and graduate performance, as well as measures to help preparation providers and policymakers learn which program and candidate attributes are most related to success in the field. Collecting fewer, but better, data measures will reduce unnecessary burden on educator preparation providers and states while providing more useful information to all stakeholders.

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States will need to modify, and in some instances build, systems to adequately collect and interpret more meaningful data about educator preparation program. Only 17 states automatically share inservice teacher performance information with the programs that prepared them, and only a few states survey program graduates. But nearly every state has the key infrastructure in place to do so. Since the 2008 HEA reauthorization, states have made great progress in their ability to link data on inservice teachers to the students they teach—only six states have not developed this capacity.<sup>14</sup> Taking the next step to connect these data with preparation programs will provide invaluable information to the programs themselves, as well as to others invested in the preparation of educators. States should be given time to put such systems in place, and additional time to reflect on the new data these systems produce before determining how best to use the data to assess preparation program quality.

Thus, New America's recommendations for reforming HEA Title II balance the need to move forward quickly with an acknowledgement of these realities. States would retain a high level of autonomy and freedom in determining how to rate preparation program quality, so they can customize rating systems to best meet local needs. At the same time, states would benefit from federal guidance on which measures will best assess preparation program performance. And since most states have not set a high bar for preparation quality to date, these recommendations require some minimum quality standards for preparation programs in all states. A federal role will also ensure some data consistency and comparability across programs in different states. This would benefit hiring school districts, many of which receive applications from graduates of multiple states' preparation programs, as well as prospective educators.

New America's vision for a reconfigured federal-state partnership to improve educator preparation quality is based on the policies of leading states, public dialogue among negotiators at the Department of Education's 2012 rulemaking session on HEA Title II, and research from the field. It is set out in detail on pages 6-7.

## Proposed Timeline

2016-17

Beginning with the 2016-17 school year (in 2.5 years), the federal government should:

Require all teacher and principal preparation programs (both those based at IHEs and those not based report on selected performance measures, as well as a small subset of other measures for each program (see Appendix for a list of measures for each actor). These measures would replace the measures currently collected and reported.

- Unlike prior HEA Title II data collected and reported at the individual program level (e.g., data for the elementary education program will be reported separately from the secondary math program at the same institution/organization).
- For preparation institutions/ organizations that house more than one preparation program, individual program data shall be aggregated and reported for the larger institution/organization

In addition to reporting data on individual programs, entities, and aggregate statewide data, states are required to provide benchmarks for each measure to provide context on performance, below, at, and above the median (e.g., 20th percentile, 50th percentile, and 80th percentile).

States may use up to 2.5 percent of their ESEA "Improving Teacher Quality State Grant" funds to build or improve data systems and provide technical assistance to programs, instead of passing these funds on to institutions of higher education/ teacher preparation programs directly, as currently occurs.

As several data measures must be of recent program graduates and their supervisors, states are required to coordinate and administer surveys, and share data with programs to inform needs assessments/improvement plans.

examples of questions used by states that have already déveloped such surveys, and may provide additional questions developed by the Institute of Education Sciences.

States must share other program graduate data that they have access to with the appropriate preparation programs in order to facilitate reporting and learning, and minimize data collection burden.

States, entities, and individual programs must submit reports to the Secretary and also make them easily accessible to the public. 2019

By spring 2019 (5 years), states must submit reports to the Secretary summarizing:

- What states learned from the previous two years of educator preparation data in their state.
- How states are using these data to revisit preparation program approval/reauthorization, teacher licensure, and/or other state policies.
- How programs are using these data to improve. What supports the state is providing to programs to improve.

By the fall of 2019:

to Congress, and publish and make widely available a report summarizing and drawing initial conclusions from these state and program data, including any relationships between measures of teacher impact By winter 2019 (51/2 years), states must use previous three years of findings to develop/submit plans to the Secretary for approval on how they will:

Create "Quality Assessment System" for rating teacher/principal prep. program performance that:

- Uses and clearly defines criteria for at least three performance categories, with the bottom category being "low-performing."
- Bases ratings on some set of program performance measures from Appendix A, Part 1, with a significant part based on graduates' impact on PreK-12 študent learning outcomes.
- Report ratings as part of annual program, entity, and state data reports.

Provide technical assistance to lowperforming programs, with priority for those in locations where other programs do not currently exist.

In some instances, states may instead choose to provide technical/financial support to districts and cooperating organizations to develop new, innovative teacher pipeline and prep. programs, such as teacher residency programs.

Reward the highest performing preparation programs by:

- Sharing their effective practices with lower-performers.
- Finding ways to encourage more prospective teachers to enter those programs.

Modify preparation program approval/reauthorization processes to, at a minimum, require:

- Evidence of program alignment to state PreK-12 teaching and learning standards.
- Evidence of developing/refining the program in collaboration with teachers/administrators in the districts where a sizeable portion of graduates are employed.
- Evidence of adequate performance on Quality Assessment System measures.

Ensure licensure exams reflect the state's PreK-12 teaching and learning standards.

All of the actions outlined above would be a requirement for receiving funds from the Secretary.



## Encourage State Innovation Throughout the Educator Pipeline

A s previously discussed, state policies governing educator preparation are just one area where states fail to attract, prepare, develop, and retain the highest quality educators possible. But a revamped HEA Title II could help promote state policies that correct this. Therefore, New America recommends a competitive Educator Pipeline Innovation Grant to states, similar to that previously recommended by the Education Trust.<sup>15</sup>

This competition would help drive innovation and improvement by supporting states in making comprehensive changes to raise the quality of educators at points throughout the career pipeline. It would do so by requiring states to submit applications to the Secretary for how they would:

- Design and implement an innovative program approval and reauthorization process that is based in large part on program performance.
  For example, one aspect of a plan could include providing temporary approval to innovative or alternative preparation models, with ongoing approval hinging on outperforming the average program in the state's Quality Assessment System.
- Develop educator certification exams that are closely aligned with state's college-and careerready standards to ensure better alignment between educator preparation and expected PreK-12 practice.
- Develop and implement educator certification/ licensing policies that are based in part on performance, particularly for recertification of inservice educators.
- Revisit educator certification/licensing policies to more closely align with students' developmental spans.<sup>16</sup> For example, states that offer an elementary license spanning kindergarten to 8th grade could instead offer one license for pre-K through 3rd grade and a second license for 4th grade through 8th grade.
- Design and implement intensive induction programs and other unique on-boarding models,

- such as principal residencies, that provide new educators opportunities to build skills and abilities necessary for early year success under the guidance of high-performing mentor educators.
- Develop and implement innovative career and professional development pathways that provide educators opportunities to grow and advance professionally. In conjunction, revise salary structures to base compensation in part on professional performance and responsibilities, and eliminate salary incentives for obtaining additional degrees that are not shown to improve performance.

To pay for this grant, some have suggested redirecting funds away from Teacher Quality Partnership Grants, which competitively fund innovative teacher preparation partnerships and residencies in some of the nation's highest-need districts and regions. While formal research on these partnerships is forthcoming<sup>17</sup>, there is some initial evidence that these types of partnershipsespecially "immersive" programs—could ultimately improve the quality of preparation. 18 Until we have better insight into the impact of these partnerships, we recommend funding the Educator Pipeline Innovation Grant solely with an additional 2.5 percent set-aside from states' ESEA Title II funds. While this would only fund a small number of states to take on this work at first, those states would serve as leaders and exemplars to other states who would receive the grant in future years, similar to the Race to the Top competition.

Meanwhile, the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants could be improved by using evidence from its early implementation and by providing new competitive preference to partnerships that include consistently high-performing preparation programs, as assessed by states' Quality Assessment Systems. Additionally, Teacher Quality Partnership Grants should be renamed "Educator Quality Partnership Grants," and should include grants for development of leadership programs in any high-need local education agency (LEA) or consortia of LEAs, with preference continuing to go to high-need LEAs in rural areas.

Finally, there are several instances within HEA Title II of prioritizing the preparation of "highly qualified teachers," which is more of a minimum standard for teaching quality than an ideal standard. Thus, the statute language (and competitive grant criteria) should be modified to focus on highly qualified, effective teachers, where effectiveness is defined by teacher performance and impact on student learning during and immediately following their preparation.

## What a Revamped HEA Title II Should Not Include

ew America recommends against attaching high stakes for low-performing programs with regards to eligibility for Title IV federal student financial aid until states and programs have had the opportunity to use their new Quality Assessment Systems for several years.

From watching the implementation of more rigorous state in-service teacher evaluation systems, such accountability systems are typically more successful when stakeholders have time to get comfortable with the new system, and focus on using it to drive improvement before substantial consequences are tied to results. As such, we recommend using the first few years of implementing new preparation program data and accountability systems to learn which measures are most related to in-service teacher and principal success, and understand patterns of performance within the preparation field.

The one exception to this in our recommendations is program eligibility for TEACH grants, which Congress always intended to be an incentive for high-performing programs.

Also, an updated HEA Title II should not allow states to provide sub-grants with their HEA or ESEA Title II dollars directly to low-performing programs (although, as stated previously, states can and should use a portion of these funds to provide technical assistance). Particularly where multiple, competing programs exist or for low-performing non-public programs, it is inappropriate to provide federal taxpayer funds to individual programs for this purpose.

Finally, HEA Title II should continue to ensure the privacy of individual preparation program graduates within data reporting. Similar to current statute, programs with data on fewer than 10 students in a given year should not be required to report data for that year, but should still be required to report a 3-year average.

# Appendix: Data Measures to Collect and Report

Programs, entities\*, states, and the federal government will each play a role in collecting and reporting data in order to inform prospective teachers, hiring districts, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders. The following appendices outline the measures that each actor should collect and report under a reimagined HEA Title II.

\*Defined as the overall institution of higher education or organization that houses individual educator preparation programs.

### Appendix A: Preparation Program and Entity Measures

### Part 1: Performance Measures

(Reported and used in states' Quality Assessment Systems)

#### Teacher preparation performance measures:

Programs and entities will report to the state, in a uniform and comprehensible manner established by the Secretary, the following performance measures for the most recent three cohorts of recent graduates (defined here as those who either graduated or completed state requirements to be the teacher of record), as well as for all three cohorts combined, where applicable:

- Number and percent of recent graduates who are teaching in full-time positions:
  - 1 year out
  - 2 years out
  - 3 years out
  - For 3 consecutive years
- For recent graduates who are employed as fulltime teachers:
  - Average impact on statewide measure of student growth (defined as a change in student achievement between two or more points in time) in statewide tested subject areas.
  - In states that require all districts to have a multi-measure teacher evaluation system that includes a statewide measure of teacher impact on student growth as a significant part of the evaluation, number and percent falling in each evaluation category.
- Number and percent of recent graduates employed as full-time teachers who are identified as well-prepared on the following measures, based on state-administered surveys of their principals (or other supervisors), AND number and percent of recent graduates employed as full-time teachers who, based on state-administered recent graduate surveys, felt their preparation program trained them to be effective in:

- Producing student learning and raising student achievement for all students.
- Using data to assess and address student learning challenges and successes.
- Providing differentiated teaching strategies for students with varied learning needs.
- Keeping students engaged.
- Managing classroom behavior.
- Using technology to improve teaching and increase student learning.

### Principal preparation performance measures:

Programs and entities will report to the state the following measures for the most recent three cohorts of graduates (defined here as those who completed the program within the last year), as well as for all three cohorts combined, where applicable:

- Number and percent of recent graduates who are employed full time in a school leadership role (principal or assistant principal)
  - 1 year out
  - 2 years out
  - 3 years out
  - For 3 consecutive years
- For recent graduates who are employed in a fulltime school leadership role:
  - Number and percent of recent program graduates whose annual school-wide growth exceeded or matched the districtwide or statewide (whichever allows for a more relevant comparison) growth average for schools with similar grade spans.
  - In states that require districts to have a multi-measure principal evaluation system that includes impact on student growth as a significant part, number and percent falling in each evaluation category.
- Number and percent of recent graduates employed in a full-time school leadership role who are identified as well-prepared on the following measures, based on state-administered surveys of

the school leaders' supervisors, AND number and percent of recent graduates employed in a full-time school leadership role who, based on state-administered graduate surveys, felt prepared to be effective in:

- Producing student learning and raising student achievement for all students.
- Hiring successful teachers.
- Developing, supporting, and retaining successful teachers.
- Creating a culture of high expectations.
- Using a data-based approach to instructional leadership and increasing student learning.

## Part 2: Educator preparation enrollment, licensure, and other data

(Reported but not used in states' Quality Assessment Systems)

### For teacher and leader preparation programs / entities to report to the state:

- Number and percent of enrolled students taking state licensure assessment(s), first-time pass rate (percent) of enrolled students, and overall pass rate (percent) of enrolled students.
- Average scaled score on the licensure exam, and any other state required pre-service exam, of all enrolled students compared to the statemandated pass score on the exam.
- Number and percent of recent graduates who work in high-need (high-poverty, high-minority, or low-performing) schools.
- Number and percent of recent graduates who remain in high-need schools for at least three

#### years.

- Average number of hours of clinical experience.
- Overall rating in statewide Quality Assessment System (in applicable reporting years) for each of the past 3 years—and for entities, also the number and percent of programs rated in each Quality Assessment System category for each of the past 3 years.

### Additional measures for only teacher preparation programs / entities to report to the state:

- For the most recent class, average GPA (high school or undergraduate, as appropriate) of entering students and average GPA of entrants to the institution as a whole, as applicable.
- For the most recent class, average SAT, ACT or, if applicable, GRE score of enrolled students and average SAT, ACT or GRE score of entrants to the institution as a whole and compared with the national average.
- For the most recent class, number and percent of students enrolled by race/ethnicity compared with the institution as a whole.
- For those states that require all districts to have multi-measure evaluation systems, number and percent of all recent graduates participating in a clinical experience who had a supervising teacher rated in the top rating category on their most recent evaluation, and number and percent who had a supervising teacher rated in the top two categories.
- Number and percent of recent graduates who teach in state-identified high-need subject areas.
- Number and percent of recent teacher graduates who are working in a full-time position, but are considered "out-of-field" in one or more subjects, specialization areas, or grade levels.

### Appendix B: State Measures

## States must annually report to the Secretary, in a uniform and comprehensible manner established by the Secretary, data on all measures in Appendix A in the aggregate, and reported separately, for:

- All programs and entities in the state.
- Traditionally- versus alternatively-licensed graduates.
- Baccalaureate versus post-baccalaureate versus master's programs (where applicable).

### States must also report:

 For each Quality Assessment System measure, the median score, as well as scores for statedetermined "below" and "above" average percentiles (e.g., the 20th, 50th, and 80th percentiles).

- A detailed description of the state's rating system criteria, and how those criteria are combined in the Quality Assessment System to assess overall preparation program performance.
- The number and percent of programs in each statewide rating category for each of the past three years (in applicable reporting years).
- The number and percent of graduates receiving each license type offered by the state by program and for the state as a whole.

States must make these reports easily accessible to the public via their own platforms as well.

### Appendix C: Federal Measures

The Secretary's report to Congress and the public will be similar to current Title II, Part A, Section 205 (d) and (e), in that it will summarize and compare states' efforts to assess and improve educator preparation program quality.

But in addition to providing national mean and median scaled scores and pass rates, it will include

state data in the aggregate (where feasible), and reported separately, on program graduate job performance and impact on student learning, job placement and retention, and graduate and employer satisfaction, per the measures reported by states in Appendix B. Baseline data in the form of means and medians will also be provided for each measure, where feasible.

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