

Alliance for Excellent Education Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

April 2014

- I. Policy Objective: Strengthen teacher capacity to implement standards for college and a career.
 - A. Rationale for policy recommendation and proposed redline changes

Preparing teachers to implement college- and career-ready standards

Today's increasingly complex world requires young people to learn more, process more, and produce more, but the nation's education infrastructure is not currently designed to support these increasing demands. American schools tend to offer a two-tiered curriculum. Too many students—primarily those from low-income backgrounds and students of color—focus almost exclusively on basic skills and knowledge, while primarily white and relatively affluent students have opportunities for content mastery as well the ability to develop the crucial competencies of critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. These "deeper learning" competencies, combined with mastery of rigorous academic content, comprise the outcomes of a K–12 education system focused on college and career readiness. Therefore, it is critical that teacher candidates receive preparation, development, and support needed to create classroom environments that provide ongoing opportunities for all students to develop these deeper learning competencies and graduate ready for college and a career.

Unfortunately, these types of educational opportunities are not being made available to all students. Data from international assessments released in the late 1990s and early 2000s show that U.S. students performed well below their peers from other countries, particularly in mathematics. In addition, overall, the percentage of undergraduate students attending public two- or four-year institutions of higher education (IHEs) who reported their enrollment in remedial courses is approximately 23 percent. Thus, students who met state standards and graduated from high school found that they were not prepared for higher education.

It is critical that students receive instruction that will enable them to develop procedural fluency, conceptual understanding, and the ability to apply their knowledge to solve real-world problems. It is equally critical for teacher candidates completing a preparation program to be fully prepared to teach all students to higher standards and support student acquisition of twenty-first-century competencies upon entering the classroom, including strong content knowledge, critical thinking, complex problem solving, and effective communication.

The importance of opportunities for clinical experience in teacher preparation

According to the U.S. Department of Education's most recent Office for Civil Rights Data Collection, schools serving the most African American and Hispanic students are nearly twice as likely to employ teachers who are newest to the profession.³ Therefore, it is critical that teacher-preparation programs provide extensive opportunities for teacher candidates to acquire the skills necessary to enter these classrooms fully prepared, measured in part by full completion of a rigorous program that includes clinical experience.

This level of preparation not only benefits the students placed in an early-career teacher's classroom, it also positively impacts the schools as a whole. For example, one report shows that those who enter teaching without preparation in key areas, such as instructional methods, child development, and learning theory, leave at rates at least double those who have had such training. This report, as well as an analysis of another National Center for Education Statistics database, both show attrition rates for new teachers who lacked clinical experience at rates double those who had student teaching. Further, about two-thirds of novices who enter without teacher education (neither certified nor eligible for certification) leave teaching within their first year.

Accumulating evidence indicates that better-prepared teachers stay longer.⁷ Ensuring that teacher candidates participate in a clinical experience prior to becoming the teacher of record benefits both students and teachers. Further, it allows the individual school to build capacity and save scarce resources that are no longer "wasted trying to re-teach the basics each year to teachers who arrive with few tools and leave before they become skilled."⁸

Encouraging the use of an edTPA upon program completion

Over the last two decades, validity studies have shown that well-designed teacher performance measures can differentiate between effective and ineffective teachers and predict gains in their students' learning and achievement. Research further shows that rigorous, validated, standards-based performance measures can be a powerful tool for capturing high-leverage teaching behaviors linked to improved student performance.⁹

EdTPA became fully operational in September 2013, capturing multiple measures of teaching practice in twenty-seven subject areas and providing insight into a candidate's ability to effectively teach his or her specific content area to diverse learners. EdTPA shares a common architecture and lineage with other successful performance assessments, including the National Board, the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (for initial licensure), and Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (for professional licensure). More than 1,000 educators from twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia and more than 430 IHEs participated in the edTPA design, development, piloting, and field testing. ¹⁰

The edTPA process illuminates how well prospective teachers are able to engage learners, assess students' current knowledge and skill development, and provide feedback to students to enable them to develop increased independence and skill in directing their own learning. This can be a powerful tool to ensure "readiness to teach," as well as to inform preparation program improvement. For example, according to a study by the University of Maryland on whether edTPA's preparation materials discouraged or inhibited the preparation of teachers

to respond to the needs of diverse students, about 70 percent of text from edTPA materials provided either an opportunity or a prompt for candidates to reveal practices that reflect the elements of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Preparing teachers to develop and utilize multiple measures of student assessment

There is substantial consensus that U.S. assessments must evolve to meet the new expectations for student learning and the kind of higher-order skills that students need to succeed in an advanced global economy. In 2012, the National Research Council issued a report¹¹ analyzing the range of college- and career-ready skills and competencies needed by students in the twenty-first century. These "deeper learning" competencies, combined with mastery of rigorous academic content, comprise the outcomes of a K–12 education system focused on preparing all students for college and a career. Today's increasingly complex world requires young people to learn more, process more, and produce more, but the nation's assessment systems are not currently designed to support these increasing demands.

Studies of high-performing nations by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development show a relationship between direct measures of cognitive skills and long-term economic development. Too many students—primarily those from low-income backgrounds and students of color—lack opportunities to develop content mastery as well the ability to develop the crucial competencies of critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication, and collaboration.

As states move toward developing high-quality assessment systems, including summative, formative, and interim components that can operate together to strengthen students' abilities to think critically, solve problems, and to communicate effectively, teachers must be prepared to implement these assessments. Further, teachers must develop the skills necessary to place applied knowledge and competencies at the center of their curriculum plans and assessments, using essays, open-ended problems, and performance tasks to evaluate students' abilities to think critically and solve problems.

A Council of Chief State School Officers's report¹³ outlines key elements of high-quality assessment systems and recommends that teachers be integrally involved in the development of curriculum and the development and scoring of assessments. High-quality assessment systems are designed to increase the capacity of teachers to prepare students for the demands of college and a career by involving them in moderated scoring of the assessments. This enables them to deeply understand the standards and develop stronger curriculum and instruction. Teacher-preparation programs should provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to develop the skills needed to implement and fully utilize a comprehensive set of assessments to inform and improve practice.

Incorporating research-based best practices into teacher preparation

There are several key research-based best practices that should be reflected within teacher-preparation programs in an effort to increase the quality, rigor, and effectiveness of the program. These include:

- Encouraging program alignment with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards. One mean by which states can ensure this level of rigor is to require all teacher-preparation programs, alternative and traditional, to be aligned with the CAEP standards. ¹⁴ The purpose of these standards is to advance excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality, supports continuous improvement, and raises the bar in educator preparation.
- Developing culturally competent pedagogy. Opportunities for teachers to develop culturally relevant competencies and strategies for teaching diverse learners should be reflected within the program. The rapidly changing faces of America's classrooms create new urgency for states and districts to develop an increasingly diverse teaching force. Eight of the seventeen states that produce approximately 70 percent of the nation's dropouts have a large number of students of color and English language learners (ELLs) in their schools. Teachers must combine deep content knowledge and the skills to accelerate student learning with cultural competence and the ability to foster excellence in students of multiple cultures and ethnicities. Efforts to recruit more diverse candidates should be (1) paired with preparation that supports culturally relevant pedagogy and (2) working in diverse communities. Numerous studies demonstrate the positive impact that culturally responsive teaching can have on strengthening teacher-student relationships and improving student engagement and outcomes. To
- Working with diverse learners. Student achievement is "influenced by both teacher content background (such as a major or minor in math or math education) and teacher education or professional development course work, particularly in how to work with diverse student populations (including limited–English-proficient students and students with special needs)." Preparation programs should provide teacher candidates with opportunities to develop instructional strategies for meeting the needs of diverse learners, particularly ELLs and students with disabilities.
- Providing opportunities for collaborative preparation. Teacher candidates should have increased opportunities to participate in professional learning communities or other opportunities for collaboration. These opportunities should be aligned with college- and career-ready standards that teachers will be expected to implement and that will enable them to master new content, pedagogy, and learning tools and incorporate them in their practice. ¹⁹

B. Proposed Redline Changes to the Higher Education Act

The following recommended legislative changes are intended to strengthen language in current law by incorporating the previously discussed research on effective teacher preparation, ensuring that all students have access to well-prepared and effective teachers on the first day of school.

Section 200(14) Induction Program

The term "induction program" means a formalized program for new teachers during not less than the teachers' first two years of teaching that is designed to provide support for, and improve the professional performance and advance the retention in the teaching field of beginning teachers. Such program shall promote effective teaching skills and shall include the following components:

- (A) High-quality teacher mentoring.
- (B) Periodic, structured time for collaboration with teachers in the same department or field, including mentor teachers, as well as significant time for information sharing among teachers, principals, administrators, other appropriate instructional staff, and participating faculty in the partner institution.
- (C) The application of empirically-based practice and scientifically valid research on instructional practices that prepare students for college and a career.
- (D) Opportunities for new teachers to draw directly on the expertise of teacher mentors, faculty, and researchers to support the integration of empirically-based practice and scientifically valid research with practice.
- (E) The development of skills in instructional and behavioral interventions derived from empirically-based practice and, where applicable, scientifically valid research.
- (F) Faculty who
 - (i) model the integration of research and practice in the classroom; and
 - (ii) assist new teachers with the effective use and integration of technology in the classroom;
 - (iii) assist in the creation and use of teacher-developed assessments for the purpose of informing and targeting instructional practice; and
 - (iv) model innovative practices to support the acquisition of college- and career-ready skills, including critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication, and collaboration, such as through project-based learning and applied learning.
- (G) Interdisciplinary collaboration among exemplary teachers, faculty, researchers, and other staff who prepare new teachers with respect to the learning process and the assessment of learning.
- (H) Assistance with the understanding of data, particularly student assessment achievement data, including data from interim, formative, and summative assessments, and the applicability of such data in classroom instruction.
- (I) Regular and structured observation and evaluation of new teachers by multiple trained evaluators, using valid and reliable measures of teaching skills.

Section 200(23) Teaching Skills

The term "teaching skills" means skills that enable a teacher to

- (A) increase student learning, and achievement and the ability to apply knowledge;
- (B) effectively convey and explain academic subject matter, including using a variety of mediums;
- (C) effectively teach higher order analytical, evaluation, problem solving, and emmunication skills strong content knowledge, critical thinking, effective communication, and working collaboratively with peers, and developing academic mindsets;
- (D) employ strategies grounded in the disciplines of teaching and learning that

- (i) are based on empirically-based practice and scientifically valid research, where applicable, related to teaching and learning;
- (ii) are specific to academic subject matter; and
- (iii) focus on the identification of students' specific learning needs, particularly students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels, and the tailoring of academic instruction to such needs;
- (E) implement innovative practices, including project-based learning and applied learning, to support student acquisition of critical thinking, complex problem solving, and effective communication and collaboration skills;
- (F) use data to effectively personalize learning for students;
- (EG) conduct an ongoing assessment of student learning, which may include the use of interim assessments, formative assessments, performance-based assessments, project-based assessments, or portfolio assessments, that measures a broad range of competencies including higher-order thinking skills (including application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation);
- (FH) create a positive learning environment that conveys high expectations for all students, effectively manage a classroom, equitably implement school discipline policies, and support preventive and responsive behavior management practices, including the ability to implement positive behavioral interventions and support strategies;
- (GI) communicate and work with parents, and involve parents in their children's education; and....

Part A: Teacher Quality Partnership Grants

Section 202(e)(2)(A)(iv) Measures of Effectiveness for Teacher Residency Programs

- (iv) The establishment of clear criteria for the selection and assignment of mentor teachers based on measures of teacher effectiveness and the appropriate subject area knowledge and grade-level experience, including experience working with English language learners and students with disabilities. Evaluation of teacher effectiveness shall be based on, but not limited to, observations of the following:
 - (I) Planning and preparation, including demonstrated knowledge of content, pedagogy, and assessment, including the use of formative and diagnostic assessments to improve student learning.
 - (II) Appropriate instruction that engages students with different learning styles and is aligned with States's standards.
 - (III) Ongoing opportunities to collaborateion with colleagues, including opportunities to share best practices for the purpose of improving instructional practice.
 - (IV) Analysis of gains in student learning, based on multiple measures that are valid and reliable and that, when feasible, may include valid, reliable, and objective measures of the influence of teachers on the rate of student academic progress.

Section 202(f) Partnership Grants for the Development of Leadership Programs

- (B) Promoting strong leadership skills and, as applicable, techniques for school leaders to effectively
 - (i) create and maintain a shared vision of learning that promotes the success of all students by building a data-driven, professional learning community within the leader's school;
 - (ii) provide a positive and supportive school climate conducive to the professional development of teachers, with a focus on improving student academic achievement and the development of effective instructional leadership skills;
 - (iii) understand the teaching and assessment skills needed to support successful classroom instruction and to use data to evaluate teacher instruction and drive teacher and student learning;
 - (iv) manage resources and school time to increase opportunities for teacher collaboration and improve student academic achievement;
 - (v) develop, implement, and monitor effective and equitable school discipline policies to ensure the school environment is safe and contributes to the academic, social, and emotional needs of students;
 - (vi) engage and involve parents, community members, the local educational agency, businesses, and other community leaders, to respond to diverse interests and needs and leverage additional resources to improve student academic achievement; and (vii) understand how students learn and develop in order to facilitate students' mastery of academic content, critical thinking and problem solving, effective communication, collaboration, and self-direction and increase academic achievement for all students-, and (viii) develop high expectations and a college-going culture.

Section 205(b) State Report Card on the Quality of Teacher Preparation

- (F) A description of the State's criteria for assessing the performance of teacher-preparation programs within institutions of higher education in the State. Such criteria shall include
 - (i) assurances of effective district and school partnerships and high-quality clinical experiences;
 - (ii) indicators of the academic content knowledge and teaching skills of candidates students enrolled in such programs; and
 - (iii) evidence that the program is aligned with standards established by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.
- (G) For each teacher-preparation program in the State
 - (i) the criteria for admission into the program and for advancement through the program from admission to completion;
 - (ii) the number of students in the program, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender (except that such disaggregation shall not be required in a case in which the number of students in a category is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student);
 - (iii) the average number of hours of supervised clinical experience required for those in the program;
 - (iv) the number of full-time equivalent faculty, adjunct faculty, and students in supervised clinical experience;

- (v) the participation and pass rate for students taking a teacher performance assessment or other structured and validated observation instruments; and
- (vi) the impact of program completers on PK-12 learning based on multiple measures.

Section 206 Teacher Development

- (b) ASSURANCES. Each institution described in subsection (a) shall provide assurances to the Secretary that
 - (1) training provided to prospective teachers responds to the identified needs of the local educational agencies or States where the institution's graduates are likely to teach, based on past hiring and recruitment trends;
 - (2) training provided to prospective teachers is closely linked with the needs of schools and the instructional decisions new teachers face in the classroom;
 - (3) prospective special education teachers receive course work in core academic subjects and receive training in providing instruction in core academic subjects;
 - (4) general education teachers receive training in providing instruction to diverse populations, including children with disabilities, limited English language learnersproficient students, and children from low-income families; and
 - (5) prospective teachers receive training on how to effectively teach in urban and rural schools, as applicable, including training in culturally responsive pedagogy; and
 - (6) clinical educators are high-quality and accountable for the performance of the candidates they supervise.

Part B: Enhancing Teacher Education

Subpart 4, Section 255 Adjunct Teacher Corps. Prepare individuals with subject matter expertise in areas of math, science, or critical foreign languages to provide to secondary school students on an adjunct basis.

- (g) PRIORITIES. In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities that demonstrate in the application for such a grant a plan to
 - (1) serve the schools served by the local educational agency that have a large number or percentage of students performing below grade level in mathematics, science, or critical foreign language courses or significant achievement gaps among student subgroups as defined in section XX;
 - (2) serve local educational agencies that have a large number or percentage of students from low-income families; and
 - (3) recruit and train individuals to serve as adjunct content specialists in schools that have an insufficient number of teachers in mathematics, science, or critical foreign languages.

Section 806 Teach for America

- (d)(1) IN GENERAL. Grant funds provided under this section shall be used by the grantee to carry out each of the following activities:
 - (A) Recruiting and selecting teachers through a highly selective national process.

- (B) Providing preservice training to such teachers through a rigorous pre-service summer institute of significant length that includes hands-on clinical teaching experience and significant exposure to education coursework and theory.
- (C) Placing such teachers in schools and positions designated by high-need local educational agencies as high need placements serving underserved students.
- (D) Providing a mentor for each teacher during the first year of teaching and ongoing professional development activities for such teachers' first two years in the classroom, including regular classroom observations and feedback, and ongoing training and support.

(2) STUDY

- (A) IN GENERAL. From funds appropriated under subsection (f), the Secretary shall provide for a study that examines the achievement levels of the students taught by the teachers assisted under this section.
- (B) STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAINS COMPARED. The study shall compare, within the same schools, within schools in the district, and within schools in the state, the student achievement growth, controlling for prior achievement levels, for students gains made by students taught by teachers who are assisted under this section with the achievement gains made by students not assisted under this section.

Part H, Section 808 Improving College Enrollment by Secondary Schools

- (a) IN GENERAL. From the amounts appropriated under subsection (c), the Secretary shall award a grant to one nonprofit organization described in subsection (b) to enable the nonprofit organization
 - (1) to make publicly available the year-to-year postsecondary education enrollment rate trends of secondary school students, disaggregated by secondary school, in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974;
 - (2) to identify not less than 50 urban local educational agencies and five States with significant rural populations, each serving a significant population of low-income students, and to carry out a comprehensive assessment in the agencies and States of the factors known to contribute to improved postsecondary education enrollment rates, which factors shall include
 - (A) the local educational agency's and State's leadership strategies and capacities;
 - (B) the secondary school curriculum and class offerings, including student enrollment by subgroup, of the local educational agency and State;
 - (C) the professional development used by the local educational agency and the State to assist teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators in supporting the transition of secondary students to postsecondary education, including the ratio of guidance counselors to students within each school;
 - (D) enrollment in rigorous and advanced course work, including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, and early college programs; and (D) (E) secondary school student attendance, including chronic absenteeism data, and school discipline data, and other factors, in the aggregate and disaggregate, demonstrated to be associated with enrollment into postsecondary education.

Subpart 1, Section 231 Preparing Teachers for Digital-Age Learners

- (a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY. The Secretary is authorized to award grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, eligible consortia to pay the Federal share of the costs of projects to
 - (1) serve graduate teacher candidates who are prepared to use up-to-date modern information, communication, and digital learning tools to
 - (A) improve student learning, assessment, and learning management; and
 - (B) help students develop learning skills to succeed in higher education and to enter the workforce such as critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, and collaboration;
 - (C) deliver more engaging content and promote the use of innovative strategies that support anytime, anywhere student-centered learning; and
 - (D) increase the use of real time data to improve instruction and to support teachers as a community of learners;
 - (2) strengthen and develop partnerships among the stakeholders in teacher preparation to transform teacher education and ensure technology-rich teaching and learning environments that promote peer mentoring and collaboration throughout a teacher candidate's preservice education, including clinical experiences; and
 - (3) assess the effectiveness of departments, schools, and colleges of education at institutions of higher education in preparing teacher candidates for successful implementation of technology- rich teaching and learning environments.

II. Policy Objective: Expand definition of a "high-need school" to include more accurate measures of poverty for the high school level.

A. Rationale for policy recommendation and proposed redline changes

The current definition of a "high-need school" in Section 200(11) of the Higher Education Act includes several measures of poverty used to identify one. Unfortunately, these measures are likely to under-identify a significant number of high schools that serve a large number of students from low-income families. A June 2011 report indicates that the failure to accurately measure poverty at the high school level results in almost 1,300 high schools having a percentage of students from low-income families at or above 50 percent that are eligible for Title I-A. One factor contributing to this disproportionality is the reliance on the use of free or reduced-price lunch eligibility to determine whether a student is from a low-income family.

One mean by which to address this issue is the use of "feeder pattern data" to project rates of students from low-income families for high schools. Specifically, the feeder pattern is an accurate estimate of poverty at the high school level calculated by using the average poverty rate of the elementary schools that feed into the high schools. Under current law and ED's guidance, this method is permitted, though not required. The suggested redline language would address this issue by requiring the measure of poverty for a high school to be the higher of the feeder pattern data or one of the other measures of poverty included in subsections (I)–(V). In addition, the suggested language was included in the Strengthening America's Students Act passed out of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in 2013.

B. Proposed redline changes

Section 200(11) High-Need School. The term 'high-need school' means a school that, based on the most recent data available, meets one or both of the following:

- (i) The school is in the highest quartile of schools in a ranking of all schools served by a local educational agency, ranked in descending order by percentage of students from low-income families enrolled in such schools, as determined by the local educational agency based on one of the following measures of poverty:
 - (I) The percentage of students aged 5 through 17 in poverty counted in the most recent census data approved by the Secretary.
 - (II) The percentage of students eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.
 - (III) The percentage of students in families receiving assistance under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act.
 - (IV) The percentage of students eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program.
 - (V) A composite of two or more of the measures described in subclauses (I)–(IV).
 - (VI) For measuring the number of students in low-income families in secondary schools, the local educational agency shall use the calculation producing the greater of the results from among these two calculations:
 - (i) The calculation described in subclauses (I)–(V).
 - (ii) A feeder pattern, which is an accurate estimate of the number of students in low-income families in a secondary school that is calculated by applying the average percentage of students in low-income families of the elementary school attendance areas as calculated using one of the measures described in subclauses (I)–(V) that feed into the secondary school to the number of students enrolled in such school.

(ii) In the case of

- (I) an elementary school, the school serves students not less than 60 percent of whom are eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act; or
- (II) any other school that is not an elementary school, the other school serves students not less than 45 percent of whom are eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act; or
- (III) a high school, the school has a graduation rate less than 67 percent.

Endnotes

³ U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011–12.

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- L. Darling-Hammond, Performance Counts: Assessment Systems that Support High-Quality Learning (Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers; Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, 2010).

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¹⁹ U.S. Department of Education, For Each and Every Child.

¹ National Science Board, *America's Pressing Challenge: Building a Stronger Foundation* (Arlington, VA: Author, January 2006), http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsb0602 (accessed April 2, 2014).

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