

Briefing Paper on State Policy Challenges

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State education agencies play an important role in facilitating, or impeding, efforts to transform educator preparation for digital-age learners and 21st century schools and skills. The following are policy challenges and questions facing state policy makers.

Digital-age Learners and 21st Century Skills and Schools

- How can states best help schools transform teachers' roles, pedagogy, and learning environments, so that they, in turn, can assist preparation programs in their transformation?
- Do state educator certification standards systematically address 21st century skills?
- To what extent do preparation programs in states take into account the need to alter pedagogy and assessment in response to the needs and "habits of mind" of digital-age learners?
- How well do state policies encourage preparation programs and alternative certification policies and systems to respond to the need to staff schools differently in light of the persistent drain of new teachers leaving the field and the imminent dramatic increase in retirement of baby boom generation educators?

- How well do state certification and preparation program approval standards persuade leadership programs to give as much attention to preparing leaders for the kind of schools that are needed in the future as they do for the schools of today?
- What policies, programs, and resources can states develop to best support the integration into preparation programs of the use of instructional technologies that enhance student engagement?
- What, if anything, should states do to help inform preparation program leaders about instructional technology tools and practices that research has shown improve student engagement and achievement?

State Educator Certification Standards

- Should states limit the number of certification standards that can be developed in any given endorsement area to streamline the preparation program approval process?
- Are there ways in which states can give special emphasis, in the approval process, to specific certification standards because of their particular importance (e.g., that teacher candidates demonstrate skill teaching in ways that students find highly engaging, or in explaining to students the real-world applicability of the content they are learning)?
- Are states developing certification standards that are clearly research-based?

State Program Approval Standards and Processes

- Are states' program approval processes engaging reviewers in looking for student work samples evidencing their mastery of certification standards, or are they instead focused on assessing the extent to which teacher educators themselves examine their own students' work to drive continuous program improvement?
- In states that do not limit the number of certification standards that can be developed for a given endorsement area, are they nevertheless using approval processes that are streamlined and manageable for IHEs and reviewers alike?

- Do states' program approval processes assess the extent to which preparation programs are responding dynamically to emerging research, LEA needs, and graduates' assessments of their preparedness?
- Are states interested in developing policies that incentivize teacher educator involvement in professional development school partnerships and other similarly intensive, extended field experience initiatives, by encouraging or requiring that IHEs treat such intensive involvement as comparable to producing peer reviewed publications for purposes of tenure and promotion?
- How can we make it easier for leaders of preparation programs to learn about one another's best practices and to participate in active networks of scholars who seek out and share information on proven or promising practices?

State Longitudinal Data Systems

- LEAs are required to submit a wide range of data to state departments of education. How can we optimize the extent to which this data is useful not only for accountability and reporting, but also to enhance the LEAs' own decision making?
- Might it be feasible and worthwhile to convey data on LEAs' priorities regarding student achievement, critical shortages, staff development, and desires for research-based information on best practices not only to state departments of education but also to states' IHEs and professional development providers?
- Recently enacted regulations under ARRA programs, e.g., "State Longitudinal Data Systems" and "Race To The Top," will soon require state departments of education to assess preparation programs in terms of the achievement of their graduates' K-12 students. It will be important to have a more nuanced system of assessment aligned with 21st Century learning for such assessments to improve both school and teacher education reform. In this context, what variables should be incorporated into the states' operational definition of K-12 student learning for the purpose of holding LEAs, individual educators, and preparation programs accountable?

- What role, if any, should teacher educators have in state and national conversations that inform state policy in response to the new federal accountability requirements?