

Willing Professionals + RESPECT = PTSS**RESPECT - Resources, Equity, Support, Pedagogy,
Expectations, Culture, Talent****PTSS - Prepared Teachers and Successful Students****Presented By:****Sherdren Burnside**

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Executive Summary:

Nationally increased demands on student performance has lead to increased demands on teacher accountability. It is widely accepted and supported in this brief that teacher quality is the greatest school based indicator for student achievement. In Louisiana laudable strides have been made to raise expectations for all students. Keen attention has been given to the persistent inequity that exist in high poverty and high minority school districts whereby the most vulnerable students are taught by the least experienced and least qualified teachers. However, nationally and at the state level, the equity problem has been narrowly framed by the assumption that school factors, disproportionately teachers, are the major source of educational inequality and that access to “good” teachers is the silver bullet solution to the equity problem.

Many agree that excellent teaching matters and that more great teachers are needed to prepare students for the demands of the 21st Century. The most vulnerable students should have access to the most skilled teacher, just as the severely ill patient requires the specialized attention of the most skilled physician.

This brief supports and encourages the growth and support of an excellent teacher labor force. However, the narrow equity views that underlie federal and state policy ignore the fact that teachers account for a portion of the overall variance in student achievement, and does not acknowledge that inequality is rooted in and sustained by much larger, longstanding, and systemic societal inequalities. Teachers and schools alone cannot achieve equity; rather achieving equity requires educators working with policymakers and others in larger social movements to challenge the intersecting systems of inequality in schools and society that produce and reproduce inequity.

There is a reason why it is hard to recruit, train, and retain excellent teachers for the most vulnerable populations of students. Augmenting the equity perspective also includes focusing directly on creating the conditions for high-quality teaching, such as supports for teachers and students, stable and supportive leadership, intensive interventions to close opportunity gaps for students in the early grades, and well-supported teacher preparation programs. Louisiana is taking laudable steps to address equitable

access to excellent teachers through the creation of an innovative teacher preparation and mentorship model. However, even the State's plan does not prioritize creating the conditions necessary for strong equity. These include preparing and expecting teachers to:

- Recognize and build on the knowledge traditions of marginalized groups;
- Understand and challenge inequities in the existing structures of schools and schooling;
- Work with others in larger efforts for social justice and social change

Largely, the plan gives great latitude to alternative program models without providing a consistent policy standard. A narrow equity frame combined with the lack of specified standards to guide the creation of more holistic and meaningful teacher preparation programs no matter the university or provider will exacerbate inequity. As the federal government relinquishes its role in mandating and regulating state and district policy it becomes increasingly important for states to ensure quality and equity in education.

Introduction

As the expectations of student achievement and composition of students being taught drastically shift, it is more challenging than ever to close the achievement gap for students and teachers. Among school related factors, teacher effectiveness has the greatest impact on student achievement. Research shows that a teacher's preparation program significantly impacts the learning gains of a teacher's students. Many local, state, and federal policies are designed to promote teacher quality through the teacher preparation. Still current teacher preparation models experience difficulties recruiting, educating, and retaining quality teachers. This is particularly true in high poverty and high minority areas where districts are likely to have a higher rate of inexperienced and out of field teachers.

In a 2014 survey conducted by LDOE, 1st year teachers indicated the following:

- 50% were not prepared for the realities of the classroom
- 41% were not prepared to teach children how to read
- 42% were not prepared to teach children with diverse needs

Teachers and district personnel overwhelming indicated that new teachers need more instruction and experience selecting and using curricular resources, assessments and student data to inform instruction. Sixty seven percent of principals and human resources directors stated that the preparation programs in their region do not prepare enough teachers in every content area to meet their staffing needs. Additionally, 61% of school and district leaders surveyed do not regularly collaborate with preparation programs to align preparation practices to ensure that aspiring teachers' preparation is focused on the most important knowledge and skills a new teacher will need in order to be successful. This leads to preparation experiences that are disconnected from realities and expectations that teachers face on day one in the classroom.

Purpose

This policy brief focuses on an assessment of Louisiana's current plan for ensuring equitable access to excellent teachers for all students. The brief highlights promising practices in Louisiana's plan. The plan promotes expansion of best practices in teacher preparation specifically responding to issues of equity, and makes policy recommendations to promote widespread adoption of consistent quality in all teacher preparation programs.

First, we briefly highlight the recent changes to federal policy that impact the state's teacher preparation policy. Next, we assess Louisiana's Equity Plan. Finally, we present policy recommendations to the state.

Federal Policy Changes Support Louisiana's Equity Plan

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will expand states' role in preparing teachers for the profession. To increase the teacher pipeline to meet the demands of the field, states are encouraged to expand alternative routes to teacher preparation such as "residency" programs and to create "academies" with allowable funding of up to two percent of the state's Title II funds. Under the new law, states can also use Title II formula funds to ensure equitable access to "effective" teaching for low-income and minority students, and must provide a description of how they have used funds toward that end.

ESSA also replaces "highly qualified" with "effective" and encourages states to devise new programs and policies to focus on teachers' potential or demonstrable effectiveness in the classroom. It also eliminates NCLB's requirement that states ensure all teachers are "highly qualified" or hold a bachelor's degree, state certification, and subject matter knowledge. However, states would still need to report data on teachers' professional qualifications including the number and percentage of teachers who are inexperienced, hold emergency or provisional credentials, and teach outside of their field. In addition, states would need to describe the measures they will use to ensure low-income and minority students are not served at disproportionate rates by "ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers"—with "ineffective" replacing "unqualified." Federal policy changes support Louisiana's equity plan by giving the state more autonomy and funding to create new teacher preparation models.

A Closer Look at Louisiana's Equity Plan

In response to the Secretary of Education's July 2014 letter to State Education Agencies, Louisiana developed the Equitable Access Plan to ensure access to excellent teachers for all students. This plan includes information on the specific steps that the Department of Education is currently taking to ensure that students from low income families and students who belong to racial minority groups are not taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified or out of field teachers. The plan also outlines the measures the agency is taking to evaluate and publicly report its progress.

Louisiana has taken bold steps to address equitable access to excellent teachers through the creation of an innovative teacher preparation and mentorship model. In spring 2014 the LDOE launched the Believe and Prepare Educator Grant Program, and has awarded \$4.89 million to three cohorts to date. Cohort 3, the largest of the cohorts, was recently announced with LDOE awarding \$2.85 million to 41 school systems and charter schools, bringing the total school systems working to prepare more than 800 teacher candidates to 62. Many of these school systems are partnering with preparation programs to build a statewide corps of more than 500 mentor teachers who will work with teachers preparing for certification, grow the number of aspiring teachers in full-year residencies up to 1,000 for the 2016-2017 school year, and increase the number of special education teachers preparing to teach in Louisiana.

Key learnings from pilots include:

- Year long apprenticeships preparing aspiring teachers for classroom realities are most effective
- Expert mentor teachers are crucial component of successful apprenticeships
- Aspiring teachers learn best when theory is combined with practice

Extensive research, surveys, and analysis of state data helped to inform a plan that focuses on three key strategies:

1. Expansion of Believe and Prepare pilot programs' most promising teacher preparation practices
2. Encourage stronger partnerships between LEAs and preparation programs
3. Support district recruitment and hiring practices

Expansion of Believe and Prepare - This expansion provided full year residencies and internships for teacher candidates alongside highly effective mentors. This experience allows teacher candidates the opportunity to experience teaching while being mentored by a high performing teacher before entering the teaching profession.

Education Policy Fellowship Program

Encourage partnerships between LEAs and Prep programs - LEAs are encouraged to engage in dialogue with teacher preparation programs on their short and long term hiring needs. Through this engagement, teacher prep programs are helping to meet the staffing needs in hard to staff schools and high demand subject areas such as STEM, special education and other career and technical courses.

Support District Recruitment and Hiring Practices - LDOE has contracted with South Central Comprehensive Center to build a workforce projection tool that enables LEAs to project short and long term workforce needs. In addition, the Department is promoting the use of its Talent Recruitment System, an online database that matches teachers to schools.

Recommendations

- **Work with traditional and alternative programs** to increase the pipeline of effective teachers needed to meet needs of the workforce. Teacher preparation programs must be comprehensive and attractive enough to recruit, educate and retain quality teachers in the profession that meet the needs of the profession.
- **Require a base standard of program quality** for all teacher preparation programs regardless of type. The state must develop core criteria/standards that all teacher preparation providers adhere to including but not limited to: year long residencies, training in special education, recruiting teachers from their own communities.
- **Expand equity perspective** to acknowledge the multiple in- and out-of-school factors that influence student achievement as well as the complex and intersecting historical, economic, social, institutional, and political systems that create inequalities in access to teacher quality in the first place to ensure that vulnerable populations are effectively served and not merely reported on.
- **Maximize usage of the Title II funds** to enhance and expand equity efforts throughout the state.

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