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DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP IN
TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM
BETWEEN COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES AND
SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A POLICY
ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Leah Gauthier

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POLICY ADVOCACY DISSERTATION:
DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM
BETWEEN COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A POLICY
ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Leah C. Gauthier

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

Of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

In the Foster G. Mc.Graw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

December, 2017

POLICY ADVOCACY DISSERTATION:
DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM
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DISSERTATION ORIGINATION STATEMENT

This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Many are unprepared for the rigors of the job, and others become overwhelmed with new initiatives. This problem is due in part to school districts in Illinois not currently being a part of the teacher preparation accreditation process for colleges and universities. This policy advocates for creating that partnership. The findings indicate that doing so will build expertise for the new teachers and help them stay in the classrooms. This, in turn, will help improve student achievement.

PREFACE

When a new teacher leaves a school district, the departure makes a significant impact. Not only does the teacher leave, but so does the school district's investment in that person. When school districts partner with colleges and universities, they are able to accredit the programs that their new teachers come from. By helping oversee those programs, districts can help ensure new teachers gain the tools they need to be successful in the classroom. As a result, teachers will stay in the profession longer and ultimately benefit the district.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

Introduction of the Problem

The school district that I work in has a very high teacher turnover rate. This piqued my interest in investigating what I could do at the school level to support new teachers. Over the last two years, I have spent time researching the induction and teacher mentoring program. I found that while there is a program in place to support teachers, it lacks adequate follow-through and does not always cover topics that allow for growth (Gauthier, 2015). At the school level, there is some work that can be done to improve the support system for new teachers. “Teachers repeatedly confirm that opportunities to work with their colleagues often determine where they are willing to work” (Darling-Hammond, 2014, para 12). Working together fosters growth in learning.

This got me thinking about what teachers do before they enter their first job. What does their preparation program look like at the college level? Does it prepare students for the ever-changing field of education? According to Darling-Hammond (2014),

Countries where teachers believe their profession is valued show higher levels of student achievement. Nations that value teaching invest more in high-quality professional learning—paying the full freight for initial preparation and ongoing professional development, so that teachers can continually become more capable. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) data show that they also pay teachers as well as other college-educated workers, while U.S. teachers earn only 60 percent of the average college graduate’s wage and receive little support for their learning. To recruit and retain top talent and enable teachers to help all children learn, we must make teaching an attractive profession that

advances in knowledge and skill, like medicine and engineering. (Para. 11)

Each college has its own program and set of guidelines. But who ensures that the programs are rigorous and that the right students are being recruited for the teaching profession? What about online programs or nontraditional programs? I know what we can control at the school level, but what about everything that takes place before teachers enter the school building? The National Council on Teacher Quality (2016) stated “NCTQ’s 2016 Landscape in Teacher Preparation has examined 875 traditional undergraduate programs that prepare elementary school teachers, finding widely variable levels of quality.” The findings of the report have shed light on what areas teachers need more support in. This information lends itself to efforts to improve the quality and design of teacher preparation programs. States can look at these findings to determine what is lacking and how to build and grow their current programs to recruit and retain teachers.

Supporting teachers is something that I am passionate about. The high teacher turnover rate in my school district is due to a lack of teacher support, which extends from their time in college through to their first job. I want to start at the college level to address this issue in its early stages. By creating a policy to review and enhance the teacher preparation program, the district can increase the likelihood that teachers are ready for their careers.

Critical Issues

I argue for the need for a policy that allows school districts to partner with colleges and universities to accredit those institutions’ teacher education programs. This is a missing piece. The National Council for Teacher Quality found that teachers are given their student teaching placement with little background done on the mentor teacher. With

the new policy I am advocating for, school districts can have input about the qualities they are looking for in teachers. This partnership will help to educate top-notch candidates for the profession.

The Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) developed a set of standards that focuses on the quality of teacher preparation programs. They partner with current schools and educators to discuss any concerns or needs in the field. However, the CAEP does not evaluate *every* college teacher preparation program. The policy I am advocating for would allow all colleges to have a partnership in place to make sure the best teachers are prepared and in the right places.

As I was reading chapter 4 in *Rac(e)ing to Class*, I was once again reminded of the large holes that exist in the teacher preparation program. Milner (2015) suggested that a teacher preparation program needs to have an explicit vision and mission on poverty and race. This got me thinking about the teacher preparation program I went through—it did not have any classes on social or cultural aspects of student development. I think all educators would say they learned about child development, but I was certainly unprepared about the whole child and their full needs coming into my teaching placement. Blad (2017) stated that “as social-emotional learning gains traction in schools, many teachers are coming into their jobs unprepared to develop students’ skills in areas like self-awareness and navigating relationships, advocates say.” Having a direct partnership with schools will help colleges and universities stay current on what today’s educators need to be effective and successful.

This partnership between the school district and colleges and universities will allow the latter to better prepare students for their first job. “In the recent past, many

teacher education programs have been criticized for being overly theoretical, having little connection to practice, offering fragmented and incoherent courses, and lacking in a clear, shared conception of teaching among faculty” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). School districts will help make the connection between theory and practice to support success.

Recommended Policy and Envisioned Effect

I want to press for a partnership between school districts and colleges/universities in which the former reviews and supports teacher preparation programs. NCTP (2016) stated that “only about seven percent of programs collect any meaningful information on each cooperating teachers’ skills, and only about one percent screen cooperating teachers for both their mentorship and effectiveness as a teacher.” These minimal rates involving screening mentor teachers and placing new teachers are alarming, since we are dealing with the very field experience novice teachers need to be set up for success in their first job.

We need a policy in place that allows for the direct link between what schools need and what universities teach. This partnership needs to be in place at all institutions. Together, these institutions can change the standard for what hiring schools need, and the students being taught will benefit directly. Producing higher-quality teachers will help students become more successful. The advocated partnership will help ensure teachers are adequately prepared for the demands of their profession. We do not just get summers off—we work diligently to educate children to be ready for college and career and become 21st-century learners.

SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF NEED

In this ever-changing environment of education, we need teachers who are supported and prepared. The field of education is a challenging calling that requires the right person to take on the daunting work. Our society has seen myriad changes through the power of the internet. Educators have had to change how they go about teaching. No longer do we sit and lecture students. Information that was once thought important to teach can now be found using a quick search tool on a computer. Teacher preparation programs need higher standards and focused classes that will support these changes. In the section that follows there is an analysis in multiple areas: educational, economic, social, political, moral, and ethical. Each area provides insight on the need for this policy.

In each analysis, the need is shown in order to advocate for educators who choose the teaching profession because they want to make a difference for our future. Linda Darling-Hammond and John Bransford (2005) suggested that we need to have a purposeful teacher education program. “Powerful teacher education programs show that it is possible for new teachers to learn much more about teaching and to attend to more aspects of the classroom than previously expected” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The need is there to educate the best educators for the positions.

Educational Analysis

Universities and colleges are in a position to fill their education classes. They have programs in place that produce teachers. Traditionally, teachers take their general college-level classes over the first two years of postsecondary education before taking their education classes in years three and four. During the last semester, students typically complete their student teaching placement. Some colleges and universities require a

yearlong student teaching experience, while others require only one semester. “In the traditional undergraduate program, student teaching was often placed at the end of the program, as a kind of culminating experience; many programs are now entwining carefully designed clinical experiences early and through a program” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 401).

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) researched educational programs that required teachers to understand both theory and practice. This gave teachers the opportunity to see and apply what they had just learned. What I am advocating is for every university to have an accredited teacher education program. This would represent a high-quality standard. “It appears that novices who have some experience with teaching when they encounter coursework are more prepared to make sense of the ideas, theories, and concepts that are addressed in their academic work” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 401). School districts could partner with the universities to support what is taught in college-level classes. This could help parallel what is needed in today’s classrooms.

Educators today are focused on new practices that may not have been reached relevance when their teaching programs were developed. The forefront of every educator’s focus is to look at the whole child and support each student as much as possible. Never before have we put so much emphasis on social-emotional learning. This is something that needs to be added into the teacher preparation program, and having a partnership at the school level could help inform this new learning. Currently the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) utilizes strategic goals to follow through on the vision of excellence in accreditation of teacher preparation programs.

CAEP utilizes a set of standards to ensure that each program in place is setting up teachers for success. Each college must apply for accreditation through CAEP. Illinois is one of only a few states that has not yet partnered with CAEP.

According to the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), each state has a critical role in the development of teacher candidates. Each state creates its own certification structure and certification tests that each teacher must take. After NCTQ (2017) reviewed college programs in each state, it found that Illinois did not have any top-ranked colleges or universities in the area of teacher preparation. The NCTQ uses a set of 19 standards to review each teacher preparation program. None of the 19 take into consideration a partnership with school districts.

Candidates need to be prepared and have the grades to show it. They can learn the theory and show they can apply it in real classrooms. School districts can work in partnership with universities to support this tandem learning.

Economic Analysis

Finding and recruiting top-notch teachers will save school districts money. All too often, teachers leave the profession early in their careers. This comes at great cost to a district, which has to spend more money to train new teachers year after year. Odden (2012) spoke about some of the underlying causes of this turnover:

Too many teacher training programs recruit teacher candidates from the bottom rather than the top half of the undergraduate talent pool; the situation is even worse in the country's large urban schools, many of which have been starved of top teacher and principal talent for decades. (Odden, 2012, p. 82).

When money is spent on teachers who are not invested or prepared for a career in education, it becomes money wasted, since those individuals oftentimes leave the profession.

If school districts could partner with colleges and universities, they could emphasize the need for well-prepared, high-quality teachers. This would give those districts a much better pool of teacher candidates to choose from, which would save them money in the long run. Odden (2012) stated that school districts can save money if they work with colleges and universities to recruit overall teacher talent from the top half of the pool rather than the bottom.

In order to get the best teachers in the position to teach students, school districts need a policy that allows a partnership with colleges and universities. “Many of the dollars in the educational system today are consumed in unconscious ways, particularly those spent on staff” (Odden, 2012, p. 92). If teachers were prepared for the needs of today’s school districts, those districts would have to spend less money. Teachers would feel more confident in their practice, which would allow them to stay in the profession. Oftentimes teachers leave the profession due to feeling overwhelmed or unprepared for their jobs. When this happens, the students and the schools lose out.

Students are already paying a large sum to attend college. We want to make sure that each college is giving them a fair chance at being successful in their careers. In order to make this happen there must be accountability for the classes that are offered and required. This ties into the change in the program. Once the partnership is established, the teachers and the school districts will benefit.

Social Analysis

When good teachers are leading a class, they reach students at a level beyond academics.

It is not enough for educators to focus their attention solely on school issues such as teaching subject matter or handling discipline in a school environment; they must also understand and respond to the material conditions of students' lives and their lived experiences outside of school. (Milner, 2015)

Colleges and universities need to have courses that support embedding social-emotional learning into their teacher preparation programs to set their future teachers up for success. A partnership with school districts would allow for real-world preparation that would prepare students for what they stand to face upon entering the profession. Currently, Michigan State University partners with local urban school districts to support teacher development in line with the highly changing needs of students and schools.

When new teachers are hired, they need to be ready to support the student beyond the subject matter. Right now, new teachers are unfortunately not prepared for this reality. According to Blad (2017), "That's because many teacher preparation programs don't provide enough training on how to identify the skills students need to be successful, and how to teach those skills, they say" (p. 10). A policy that requires a partnership would allow for teacher preparation programs to enhance what is currently in place.

Current classroom teachers can share their insights on what they feel their students need in order to be successful. In this joint partnership, they can advocate for the learning of the whole child. This will support students' success in the classroom.

Political Analysis

The current political climate has educators questioning the future direction of schooling. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has a strong passion for charter schools and private schools, as well as the use of a voucher system.

The Trump-DeVos budget does invest in one area, expanding private school vouchers and for-profit school ventures, even though the evidence is clear that these programs have not helped children and have, in fact, hurt them. The Louisiana voucher program has led to large reductions of kids' reading and math scores. A Fordham Institute study concluded students in Ohio's voucher program did worse than children in traditional public schools. Private voucher schools take money away from neighborhood public schools, lack the same accountability that public schools have, fail to protect kids from discrimination, and increase segregation. (Weingarten, 2017, para 11).

This is worrisome, as it could place the public education system at risk. We need to do our best to educate incoming teachers to support student learning no matter the setting. And indeed, funding may be short due to the large budget cuts on the horizon for public schools.

The President requests \$59 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Department of Education in fiscal year 2018, a \$9 billion or 13 percent reduction below the 2017 annualized Continuing Resolution (CR) level. The request includes \$1.4 billion to support new investments in public and private school choice. (U.S. Department of Education, 2018)

With the strong political influence, it is important to partner with colleges and universities on this policy to better prepare future educators. School districts can provide

insight and direction to the universities on what they can do to support teachers. Currently in Illinois, there is a review process through which the State Board of Education approves and accredits teacher preparation programs. Within the seven-month timeframe, the institution provides the state with the institutional report. Then, representatives from the state conduct an on-site visit and then make their recommendation. Multiple colleges currently have the accreditation from the state, but they do not have a partnership with school districts.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

A teacher can make a difference in a child's life, but they must be prepared to do so. To be an effective teacher, one must know not only the content to teach, but also how a child develops (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). It is our job to ensure that the right people are taking teaching positions. School districts can help accomplish that by partnering with universities to create higher-quality teachers.

When new teachers enter the field unprepared because of inadequate schooling, they often leave the profession. Take, for example, a person making a career change who decides to teach. This person may know the content without understanding how children develop and what is appropriate for school-age students. The teacher may struggle early because of this lack of knowledge; children, in turn, lose out and fail to gain true understanding. Oftentimes that teacher would leave the profession because of their difficulty. And still, students are the ones who suffer. It is our moral and ethical duty to help teachers be successful so they can help kids.

Without a policy in place to overhaul the current programs, we will continue to see high rates of teacher turnover. The policy I am advocating is something that needs to take place for the future of our students.

If we were able to partner school districts with universities, we could ensure that teachers had the ability to apply what they learn. This needs to be the case for nontraditional programs as well. Providing experience with theory and practice for all incoming teachers will set them up for success in their roles as classroom teachers. With all of the changes happening in education, this partnership will help see that teachers are set up to teach students, no matter the shifting expectations.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

Future educators need to be prepared and ready for the classroom on day one. To be prepared means that they know how to work with diverse learners, whether that means students from different socioeconomic classes or those at various levels of learning. It also means teachers having an awareness of the academic and social-emotional goals for students to achieve by the end of the school year. School districts partnering with colleges and universities will contribute to success in these endeavors. Knowing what schools need from new teachers will help keep college education programs updated. Teachers will be more confident entering the field after studying for four years.

Currently I am a curriculum director, a position that works with teachers and principals to support their work in educating students. I know that any new candidate who takes a position has room for growth, but there should be some baseline levels of understanding that need to be in place before a teacher is able to take a job. I have seen teachers come into the classroom unprepared. They might be unaware of the skill set needed to work with diverse learners, or they might be unable to adapt to changes in the curriculum. When students of lower socioeconomic status are in their classrooms, the teachers may have no background on how to work with them. Above all, the biggest obstacle that I see with unprepared teachers is their ability to collaborate and learn from others.

If a direct partnership with the university were established, school districts could provide insight on what is missing in the current program. The current accreditation process does not include input from school districts. It is solely completed by the college. Together we could ensure that the best teacher is ready for the job on day one!

Policy Goal

The goal of this policy advocacy is to put into place a teacher preparation program that adequately prepares college students for their jobs as teachers. This goal would require school districts to work in partnership with colleges and universities to accredit their teacher education programs. The proposed policy would give college students the tools they need to enter the field of education. Teachers will be less likely to leave the profession after their first years on the job because they will better understand what happens in schools on a day-to-day basis. School districts see the gap in what college students learn and what their students need, and can provide the insight needed to create a more successful program. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated, “If American public education is to meet the aspirations this nation has assigned to it, the preparation of excellent teachers is the central commitment without which other reforms are unlikely to succeed” (p. 479). The policy will support new teachers as they prepare for their first year in the field of education.

Policy Objective

There are two policy objectives. The first is to have colleges and universities work in partnership with school districts to develop and change current education preparation programs. The second objective, which is related to the first, is to have college students learn what is necessary to be successful as teachers in the school setting. Both objectives will help keep new teachers in the field of education, rather than leaving within their first few years.

To begin looking at new or updated programs, it is important to review those that are currently in place and look at the data relating to success or failure in preparing

teachers. This would include investigating how long teachers stay in the profession and their reasons for leaving. What classes are offered in teacher preparation programs, and did they help foster improved understanding on how to teach all children? It is important that the content of teacher preparation classes reflect what today's schools need. This includes teaching the whole child.

Students need support beyond just academics; teachers must strengthen the child as a social-emotional learner, as well. As the school district reviews the current teacher preparation program, it must look at the real-world opportunities offered. Practicum hours are typically fulfilled toward the end of the program, after the students have learned theory. The hours offered in the practicum schools need to be purposeful and student-centered with an appropriate mentor teacher. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated:

A study of nine teacher education programs conducted as part of the Institute of Research on Teaching's Teacher Education and Learning to Teach study found that more coherent programs, those with a strong vision of the type of teaching they were aiming to develop and consistent goals across courses, were more influential and effective in supporting student teacher learning and, for programs that emphasized constructivist learning theories, in helping new teachers understand the nature of teaching diverse populations. (p. 393)

Teachers need to be prepared for their first job when they leave their colleges or universities. Having a partnership with a school district will keep colleges and universities updated with the constant changes in the education field. This will help support teachers as they will be more confident and ready for the work they are

undertaking. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) shared that “Research suggests that several elements make a difference in the design of a teacher education program, including: the content, the learning process, and the learning context” (p. 394).

When school districts can review the current teacher preparation programs together with colleges and universities, they can share insight on what is missing. These parties can also discuss the reasons why teachers—in their schools, at least—are leaving the profession. Together, school districts and colleges can make changes to keep teachers in the profession and students learning more.

Needs of the Stakeholders

School District

Teacher retention is at an all-time low. In a study titled *The Irreplaceables* by The New Teacher Project (2012), the authors stated that “very low teacher retention rates can negatively affect student achievement” (p. 8). This is something that school districts are often working to improve. As teachers enter the profession they are often overwhelmed by all the work that is expected of them. They come in expecting something vastly different than the reality of their first job in the classroom. There is a steep learning curve for those new to the profession. Once teachers have had time to grow, their understanding of how to educate students strengthens. If we are constantly hiring new teachers, the students are the ones losing out, as they are forced to wait out the learning curve phases with each new teacher.

If this policy were put in place, colleges and universities would know exactly what was needed in order for teachers to be ready for their first day on the job. The school district would hire a teacher with all the tools and resources necessary to be ready

for this role. In turn, the odds of that teacher being successful in their first year would increase dramatically; their odds for leaving the profession would decrease accordingly. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated that “evidence suggests that *what* teachers learn matters at least as much as *how* they learn” (p. 395). The *what* in this case could be directly affected by school districts and contribute to the success of the future educators. It can better prepare them.

School districts spend money on professional development for teachers. When the teacher leaves the profession, all of that learning and investment goes with them. Odden (2012) stated, “Spending on ineffective teacher and principal talent squanders scarce educational resources. In this era of limited resources, districts and schools need to rethink how they recruit, hire, place, develop, evaluate, retain, dismiss, and pay educator talent.” (p. 82). Partnering with colleges and universities would have a direct impact on school districts.

Administrators

Principals spend countless hours evaluating teachers. New teachers in Illinois require double the time to evaluate and provide feedback for. A constant revolving door of new teachers means that principals are continually spending onerous amounts of time providing feedback. If this policy were in place, teacher retention would increase and principals could spend less time on evaluation and more time on growing their teachers’ learning.

Administrators can work together to provide leadership roles to the teachers. Drago-Severson (2009) stated, “Leaders cannot lead alone. The development of leaders and learners in school systems is critical in today’s educational world” (p. 109).

Providing this opportunity will help support teachers' growth and success. This will in turn have a direct impact on student learning.

Teachers

Teachers today need to have the resources necessary to walk into the classroom and teach the whole child. This includes understanding the curriculum and how to teach it to the varying levels of need in every class. If teachers are given the proper training in college, they will be set up for success and stay in the field. School districts know what they need from teachers and therefore need to be a strong partner in reviewing teacher education programs.

One area that is often not addressed in teacher preparation programs is how to teach students living in poverty. This has become a growing concern, and teachers from PreK to 12th grade need to be prepared to address it. Being in the schools, I know this to be a large factor. This is something that could be discussed when school districts partner with colleges and universities to enhance their programs. Milner (2015) stated that "teacher education programs can be better equipped to support teachers in the kinds of practices essential to their success in schools" (p.144). Such practices include understanding the whole child and how to help them achieve success in school.

Teachers would benefit from a program suited to what schools need. That type of education would partner theory with practice. Milner (2015) stated,

Teacher education programs need to be better equipped to provide teachers with a set of experiences that extend far beyond the traditional boundaries of subject matter and student development. Understanding the sociological, anthropological, and cultural aspects of student development as well as community aspects of

student learning are also essential. Taking one course on multicultural education, culture, poverty, or race does not equip teachers to meet the needs of children living in poverty. (p. 149)

Students in teacher prep programs could learn—and apply their learning—to foment stronger understanding before leaving college.

This policy would give teachers an opportunity to be successful in the classroom. Candidates would have the skills and knowledge necessary to grow and adapt at any school they were placed in. Without this partnership to accredit teacher preparation programs, however, teachers will continue to be unprepared for the rigors of the job, and as a result will continue to leave the profession.

Students

When teachers stay in the field and are prepared for their job, students benefit the most. The New Teacher Project (2009) stated that “a teacher’s effectiveness [is] the most important factor for schools in improving student achievement” (p. 1). When a teacher preparation program fosters effective teaching, students are more successful.

Students need teachers who understand both their academic and behavioral needs. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated that “all teachers must be prepared to take into account the different experiences and academic needs of a wide range of students as they plan and teach. When teachers use knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of their students when planning and implementing instruction, the academic achievement of students can increase” (p. 233). The students will always win when there is a successful teacher in their classroom.

Colleges and Universities

If there is a program that produces successful educators, more students will enroll.

There is a teacher shortage problem right now, as so many are leaving the profession. If colleges and universities can have programs that are backed by actual school districts, they can help further future teachers' odds for success. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated,

Successful programs are built around a strong, shared vision of good teaching practice; they use common standards of practice that guide and assess coursework and clinical work; and they demonstrate shared knowledge and common beliefs about teaching and learning around university and school-based faculty. (p. 392)

In effect, a successful program produces successful teachers.

It is important that students see their respective programs as places that will help them be successful in making a difference in schools. Odden (2012) stated,

Educator talent is an issue in America. Too many teacher-training programs recruit teacher candidates from the bottom rather than from the top half of the undergraduate talent pool; the situation is even worse in the country's large urban schools, many of which have been starved of top teacher and principal talent for decades. (p. 82)

Colleges with a strong program would need to have a strong entry process to recruit only the best candidates. Education programs should be compared to those of the medical and business fields.

The needs are real. Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, leaving schools with sub-par employees to educate the future. This policy I advocate for would help colleges and universities design their programs to set up students for success.

The goal of every teacher preparation program is to produce future educators ready for the ever-changing world of education. With a strong partnership with school districts, changes can be made to further that goal.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

The outcome of this policy that I am advocating for is a strong partnership between colleges, universities, and school districts to improve teacher preparation programs. As with any new policy, this presents both pros and cons. In this section I will share the arguments for and against this policy.

Argument

The pros of this policy include the following:

- Teacher candidates will be prepared for their teaching position.
- School districts will save money because teacher retention will increase.
- Students will receive better education due to having a prepared teacher.

I will examine each of these separately.

Teacher Candidates Will be Prepared for Their Teaching Position

With this new policy in place, teachers will be exposed to the learning necessary for success in their careers. “New teachers deserve to be well prepared for their first day of school,” said Jenny DeMonte (2016). Instead of waiting until student teaching to learn about *actual* students and what is needed for day-to-day success, teachers can learn these things throughout their courses in college. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated,

Teacher education programs that have coherent visions of teacher and learning, and that integrate related strategies across courses and field placements, have a greater impact on the initial conceptions and practices of prospective teachers than those that remain a collection of relatively disconnected courses. (p. 392)

In the outcome of this policy, each course a teacher candidate takes will have merit in real-world teaching. School districts will share insight on they need and what today's children need. Oftentimes the resources shared do not reflect what is really needed. They are largely based on theory, rather than actual practice. Schools can help provide the education necessary for new teachers. They can help build the self-awareness that teachers will need in order to effectively teach all kids, including those living in poverty. Milner (2015) stated, "It is critical for teachers to acquire positive knowledge and asset-based perspectives about their students" (p.162).

School Districts Will Save Money Because Teacher Retention Will Increase

When a new teacher is hired into a district, money is spent on professional development to support their learning. If a new teacher leaves the profession, their new learning leaves with them, and the school district is left to train another new hire. Currently most teacher preparation programs focus on theory rather than practice. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated, "In the recent past, many teacher education programs have been criticized for being overly theoretical, having little connection to practice, offering fragmented and incoherent courses, and lacking in a clear, shared conception of teaching among faculty" (p. 391). Input from school districts and real-life, practical learning opportunities will give teachers the skill set needed to be successful in the classroom.

Incorporating essential teaching practices into the teacher preparation program will lead to increased teacher retention. DeMonte (2016) stated, "In many professions trainees learn by working with skilled practitioners in residencies. It's time all teacher preparation followed suit" (p.66). Having an opportunity to work hand-in-hand with

those in the field will help prepare teachers. Odden stated that “teacher turnover rates cost significant resources, an estimated \$7,000 to 12,000 per teacher” (p.83). It is almost undeniable that if teachers stayed in the profession, the district would save money.

Students Will Receive a Better Education Due to Having a Prepared Teacher

When teachers have the proper training, they are able to develop learners in a meaningful way. Teachers matter. Sawchuk (2016) stated that “as a teacher’s effectiveness improves, so does student learning” (p. 7). Differences in teacher quality have an impact on student success. Currently one of the biggest effects that a teacher preparation program can have is through the student teaching experience. If this follows a clear set of guidelines and expectations given by the colleges and the school district, that impact can be enhanced. According to Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), “It is important that prospective teachers’ clinical experiences are constructed with careful consideration of what the experience should be like and why” (p. 410).

In order to properly prepare teachers, each part of the preparation program needs to be aligned with what students need. When teachers come to the classroom with a strong foundation, the kids are the ones who benefit.

Counter-argument

With every argument, there is a counter-argument. In this case, I will examine three:

- Changing to a new system takes time.
- Getting all colleges and universities on board with the change is an enormous obstacle.
- The cost of this program change is too high.

Changing to a New System Takes Time

In order to work in partnership with school districts, colleges and universities need to set up the time to do so. They may have to hire an additional staff member to manage the partnership with the school district and smooth out any issues.

Collaboration will need to be strategic, and it will be time-consuming. This overhaul needs to be done accurately in order to make its impact, and that will require time and effort. This could potentially mean taking time away from something else, which could be a cause for concern.

Schedules for all will be affected as this change takes place. Any new undertaking of this magnitude requires collaboration to be successful. This policy is no different.

Getting All Colleges and Universities on Board with the Change is an Enormous Obstacle

Currently in the United States, there is a set of standards in place that only certain colleges and universities take part in. This brings up the second counter-argument: How do we ensure that all colleges and universities are a part of policy? Those that have more monetary means may be able to partner with school districts, but those with more limited financial resources may not.

This is a real worry with the financial state of Illinois. It is important to provide money and time for this partnership so that all teachers can be prepared for their first job. That is a hurdle that must be overcome for the policy's success.

The Cost of the Program Change is Too High

Changing the program will require additional costs. College professors will need to work hand-in-hand with school districts. Managing this collaboration could require

hiring new staff, who could help evaluate the current programs and determine what needs to change. All staff will need to be trained in order for the rollout to be successful.

There will also be the cost of evaluating this new program. In order to ensure success, there needs to be a standard of measurement in place. Data will have to be collected as part of the evaluation. Iasevoli (2016) stated, “The department’s hope is that the data collected will provide more transparency on program effectiveness and help improve training” (p. 7). In order to collect the data, structures need to be in place to ensure that there are measures of success. This will take time, money, and effort to put together and follow through on.

Summary

For this policy advocacy, there are pros and cons. The former outweigh the latter, as there is a strong connection between teacher preparation and student achievement. When thinking about the education of the future, we need to have the best teachers in place for the job. A partnership between colleges, universities, and school districts could accomplish this.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This section outlines the implementation plan to put the advocated policy into action. This vision necessitates an overhaul of the current situation, so a yearly schedule and timeline are also included. For each year, there are three goals that must be met in order to establish a successful policy. Table 1 lists these yearly goals.

Table 1. Yearly goals for policy implantation plan.

Year 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colleges and universities establish a relationship with local school districts to develop a partnership where resources are shared.• Standards of success are developed in the partnership, based on models used by other states.• Pilot program is put in place.
Year 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program is redesigned pilot program to support standards of success.• Clinical experiences are focused on aligning to theory.• Clinical experiences are frequent beginning with year one, and continue throughout students' teaching programs.
Year 3:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The policy is fully implemented around teaching and professional standards.• The data tool is utilized to measure success.• Necessary changes are made in order to meet success criteria.

By the end of year three, there will be full implementation of the policy as well as a tool to measure the success of the teacher preparation program. The tool will need to be developed and funded in order to accomplish this.

Timeline

Year One

In year one of the implementation, a partnership is formed between local school districts and colleges and universities. This will allow school districts to share input on what new teachers need in order to be successful in their jobs. As a part of the policy, universities and colleges are required to reach out to local districts. To begin, district

representatives would be invited to an open house to explore what is currently being done in teacher preparation programs. Someone at the college level would need to oversee this process. There needs to be a point person to guide this partnership.

Discussion between the parties happens on a monthly basis to build capacity and understanding of both the current program and ideas for change. Within the monthly meetings, standards for success are shared. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) stated,

Clearly, an important warrant for recommendations about the teacher education curriculum is evidence about how students learn and how teaching can support this learning. Much of this research undergirds standards for student learning developed by subject area associations and standards for teacher performance developed by professional associations like the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. (p. 24)

Currently, states other than Illinois have developed teacher preparation standards for all students to achieve. The discussion and development of such standards occurs in year one.

Throughout the monthly meeting time and discussion, a pilot version of the preparation program is mapped out. This will allow program administrators to see what works and what does not and increase the chances for success in upcoming years. School districts partner in the discussion of what is needed in the pilot and how success would be measured.

Year Two

Throughout year two of the implementation, program redesign will support the standards of success developed in year one. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) gave the rationale as to why standards are needed to guide teacher preparation:

A number of studies have offered empirical evidence that teacher education programs that have coherent visions of teacher and learning, and that integrate related strategies across courses and field placements, have a greater impact on the initial conceptions and practices of prospective teachers than those that remain a collection of relatively disconnected courses. (p. 392)

The standards developed will support teaching and learning.

Throughout the planning there will be a focus on using clinical experiences that are aligned to the theory taught in class. This would mean that classroom observations happen throughout the preparation process, rather than being dumped on students during the student teaching period, as is typical. During this implementation time, discussion and planning supports suggestions on who the students should observe during the clinical time. Year two sets up the final discussion to understand of the new standards and achieve the success of the partnership.

Year Three

The final year will lead to full implementation and a general picture of what success looks like. Colleges in partnership with school districts will finalize what is needed for a successful teacher preparation program.

Students will transition to the updated teacher preparation program that is aligned to standards based on teaching and learning. Staff will be trained on what is needed to

support success. School districts will have the plan in place to give incoming teachers the clinical opportunities needed to tie their experiences to theory.

The data tool will measure the program's success by evaluating new teachers entering the profession. Currently there are other states that use these types of measurement tools accomplish this. These will be evaluated and adopted as necessary in order to monitor the new program. The teams running the program need to understand whether it is successful, as well as how it compares to what was in place.

With any new program, there is time for revision to ensure best practices are being implemented. Year three will allow for a review of what has been put in place and a determination of whether any changes need to be made.

This timeline can be adapted in order to meet the needs of the partnership and the program. The timeline sets up the other implementation requirements for success.

Professional Development Needed

In order to aid in the success of this new program, college staff and school district teachers will go through professional development. College-level educators who are teaching students in the teacher preparation program need to have an understanding of the standards to be met, which are tied to teaching and learning and make the biggest impact for success.

Teachers in the field who want to support the standards for success will also need professional development. We need the best teachers in these positions, because they support the new crop of teachers. In order to support the growth of the next wave of educators, current teachers will need to understand the theory in place and what it looks like in the classroom.

Administrators and college leaders can facilitate this professional development. They are the ones in direct partnership for this program to be in place. To build this professional development, the work of Drago-Severson's (2009) four pillars of practice come in to play. These four pillars—"establishing teams, providing adults with leadership roles, engaging in collegial inquiry, and mentoring"—can aid in support useful and differentiated approaches to adult development (p. 13). Together the teams from school districts and colleges can provide the necessary resources for all adults who have a direct impact on this policy.

Program Budgets

Currently there are other states that have formed partnerships with colleges, universities, and school districts. The state of Illinois can learn from these examples. As it stands now, the state budget is in disarray. This necessitates creative approaches to spending. The Council for Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) offers supports for states interested in a partnership. This is an area that Illinois would need to take advantage of.

A partnership with CAEP offers a number of member benefits, one of which is the support of their resources. When finances are a struggle, it is important to work with agencies that have shown success in other areas.

Supporting the collaboration of colleges, universities, and school districts requires money, as does providing effective professional development. Without this support, success will be minimal.

Progress Monitoring Activities

In order to assess this policy, there needs to be a data tool in place. This can be costly, as it will involve collecting information from first-year teachers in the field. A partnership with CAEP would reduce this cost, as the organization has a tool already developed.

Each year of the timeline allows for built-in progress monitoring. In order for the next year to be successful, the current year needs to be reviewed and reflected on. The data measurement tool is the most effective piece of this program's success in this regard.

Summary

In order to successfully implement the partnership between colleges, universities, and school districts, this implementation plan needs to be followed. Together these organizations can enact change to help further prepare students for their first year of teaching and the rest of their careers.

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

This section includes a plan for assessing the policy to ensure that it implemented with fidelity. Each stakeholder has a part in the policy's success. For this implementation plan, the stakeholders include the following: colleges/universities, school district, college professors, administrators, classroom teachers, college students. Note that what gets followed through on gets completed, which is why this section is so important.

Colleges/Universities

The partnership with the school district starts at the college level. During year one, colleges and universities must contact the local district to begin sharing what they have in place. Once contact is made, meetings will occur on a monthly basis with the goal of understanding current programs. In order to ensure that this task is met, the university must a staff member as the primary contact person with the school district.

The point person can set up the meetings, agendas, and outcomes to further the relationship. During the monthly meetings, the point person ensures that goals are being met.

The college or the university also has the task of working with its professors on revamping their courses. This would include sharing the information learned during the monthly meetings with the professors and guiding them on the necessary changes to the coursework. This process would evolve on a monthly basis as new learnings come to light.

Advertising the new partnership is also the responsibility of the colleges and universities. Their new collaboration and enhanced programs will be attractive for future students, who will remain unaware of the developments without advertising.

Colleges/Universities and the School District

Colleges and universities will collaborate with the school district to align the teacher preparation program with the standards they have created. They will ensure that the program sets future educators up for success. Together, all three entities will create a program that applies practice to theory.

Throughout the three-year implementation plan, colleges and the school district will reflect on the standards and pilot the product. This will help further the programs' success after the three-year timeline concludes.

School District

The school district will attend and contribute to the monthly meetings with local colleges and universities. All parties will work together to make sure the standards created align with current practices. All along the way the district will inform the college team of what is working and what is missing when new teachers come into the classroom. This partnership will meet on a monthly basis to re-evaluate the updates being made to the teacher preparation program.

College Professor

Professors will put the plan into action. They will attend the professional development that supports the updates to the teacher preparation program. They will be the ones sharing this new information with the college students. They will be active participants in this process throughout and after implementation.

The point person from both the college/university and the school district will create the professional development plan. In the plan, they will discuss who will lead the

development needed for the professors, which will occur during year two of the implementation.

Administrators

School administrators see firsthand the impact that teachers have on students. They can provide crucial feedback on which teachers would prove to be strong mentors. This mentorship will start early on in the educational career of the college student. The right teacher can grow and support that student as they learn more about their future profession. This partnership will continue during student teaching. It is the school principal's job to observe the teacher leader and support their growth and learning so they can extend the benefits of that learning to their observers.

The administrator will have monthly check-ins with the mentor teacher to follow up on any further supports that are needed.

Classroom Teachers

Classroom teachers will also be active participants in this process. They will host the teacher candidates in their classrooms. This policy's effectiveness is aided by strong mentor teachers being selected to partner with the new teachers; doing so ensures the latter see a good model of classroom success.

It is often said that one of the biggest impacts on new teacher candidates is where they are placed for their student teaching experience. Oftentimes they are not placed with the strongest teacher as their mentor. This is another area that needs to change in order for the implementation plan to be successful.

College Students

The final stakeholder is the actual college student. The student needs to attend the new, updated classes and classroom observations. They need to be an active participant in their college class to gain the insight needed for success in their first years as teachers. That success can be measured by tracking the new teachers and their pathways after graduation.

Table 2. Stakeholder assessment plan.

Group Responsible	Implementation Task	Product	Implementation Timeline
College/ University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking with local school districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with local school districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year one, on a monthly basis
College/ University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing professional development for professors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors have an understanding of what students need to be successful in the new program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year two of the implementation plan
College/ University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising the new program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in enrollment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year two and Year three of the implementation plan
College/ University and the School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing the current teacher preparation program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New teacher preparation program that is in alignment with current practices and updated standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed by year two of the implementation plan
School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend monthly meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of what new teachers need to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year one on a monthly basis

		successful in the classroom	
Professors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend professional development on the new teacher preparation program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the new teacher preparation program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year two
Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support mentor teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor teachers are supporting the new teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year three of the implementation plan
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting new teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New teachers that are ready for their first year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year three of the implementation plan
College Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending updated classes that mix theory and observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of what is needed during the first year of school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year three of the implementation plan

The stakeholders each hold a part in the assessment plan. The success of the policy, as well as the product it advocates, hinges on everyone doing their part.

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

The policy I am advocating for allows school districts to work in partnership with colleges and universities to accredit the latter's teacher preparation programs. Teachers make the biggest impact on student achievement; to maximize that impact they need to be set up for success at the beginning of their careers.

This is a useful and essential policy because school districts have firsthand knowledge of what teachers need to be successful in the classroom. On a daily basis, they guide new teachers and see their shortcomings. If school districts could be in constant conversation with colleges and universities, they could work in tandem to update the teacher preparation program to see that graduating teachers are ready for their careers.

The values of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and colleges and universities are at the center of this policy. If this policy is implemented, all stakeholders will benefit. Right now, without this partnership to accredit the teacher preparation program, teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. This exodus directly impacts students, teachers, parents, and school districts. This data is also given back to colleges and universities, and it lowers the success rate of their programs.

The vision of this policy is in direct alignment with the mission and vision of school districts across the state of Illinois. A typical mission and vision include preparing students to be lifelong learners in a 21st-century school district. With this policy in place, school districts can speak to changes and updates that need to be made to further their vision and goals. School districts can see the impact of teachers who arrive unprepared to teach all students. Together with the partnership of colleges and universities, districts can provide the missing links to the teachers' success.

Stated within this policy advocacy are the needs and concerns of all the stakeholders. Each stakeholder is a part of this process, not only as recipients of its benefits, but as necessary participants in its success.

When this policy is fully implemented, the students at the college level will leave and be ready for what awaits them in their classrooms. There will be no surprises and they will have the confidence to lead their students on a successful path of a lifelong learner in the 21st-century school.

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