The Relationship Between Teacher Preparation and Attrition in the Teaching Field

Gerardo Trujillo

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The Relationship Between Teacher Preparation and Attrition in the Teaching Field

Gerardo Trujillo

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

The Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership

National College of Education

National Louis University

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the researcher investigated the relationship between the preservice preparation and attrition in the field of teachers employed at Chicago Public Schools. The researcher administered a survey to teachers working in Chicago and its neighboring suburbs, and their responses revealed their perceptions about their preparation program and their real-world experiences in the classroom. The results indicated that new teachers need coursework in the areas of classroom management, social-emotional skill integration, and cultural competence. The expectation is that the findings will support the creation of a uniform policy for all universities to implement nationwide. Such a program could result in better prepared teachers with higher job satisfaction, thereby mitigating teacher loss.
Preface

The epidemic of teacher shortage and the revolving door of teaching staff have significant adverse impacts, including lower student achievement and the loss of funds invested in personnel by a school district. Through the collection of nationwide data by school districts and advocacy partners, the U.S. Department of Education will be able to create new policies and a universal teacher preparation program that will improve the level of preparedness of newly graduated teachers as they enter the classroom, leading to teachers staying in the field for an extended period and reversing the decline of student achievement. Coursework in the following areas should help prepare novice teachers better: classroom management, SEL integration, and cultural competence. The country’s changing demographics has increased student diversity in public education; therefore, university instructors must maintain up-to-date knowledge and look to the future while preparing new teachers to deal with the challenges found in U.S. classrooms. The additions of the coursework mentioned above will arm new teachers with the tools to tackle challenges with elegance and care to continue to build a robust learning environment for all students, increasing their desire to stay in the teaching field longer. For veteran teachers like myself, these findings can be integrated into year-long professional development plans to ensure that all teachers can persevere and continue to close the achievement gap. This type of learning is ongoing and will not end with the courses taken during preservice. As the landscape of public education changes, so should we.
This work was possible due to the loving and everlasting support of my beautiful wife and my beautiful son, who makes me want to be a better person every day. I love you both so much.
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Section One: Introduction

“Too many future teachers graduate from prep programs unprepared for success in the classroom. We have to give teachers the support they need to ensure that children get the high-quality education they deserve. Our goal is to develop a system that recognizes and rewards good programs, and encourages all of them to improve."

(U.S. Department of Education, 2011, para. 1)

I have worked in multiple capacities for Chicago Public Schools (CPS District 299) for 21 years now. I began as a high school English teacher, before becoming an instruction coach and a school-level administrator. I have served Mountain View Elementary (MVE; a pseudonym) as principal for eight years now. MVE is a neighborhood school located on the southwest side of Chicago, near Midway Airport. The vision of the school is “[Mountain View] School will help maximize the unique potential of each child we serve. MVE promotes a safe, orderly, caring, and supportive environment. We strive to have parents, teachers, and community members actively involved in our students' learning” (Mountain View Elementary, 2019). MVE school strives to provide the community with the services it needs to expand students’ postgraduation options. The school has moved to personalized learning in its highest grade, implements small group instruction in every class, and offers monthly parent courses based on topics related to the continuation of their children’s education at home. The school leaders, however, have struggled to meet the needs of students who are several grades below from their peers due to a variety of reasons, including diverse learning needs, language barriers, and home distractions. MVE’s school community has undergone demographic shifts in the past 12 years. The community surrounding the school used to be predominantly White, with a large Polish-American population. Over the years, the community has changed to 96% Latino and low
socioeconomic status (SES). MVE has always had a large English language learner population, and this has not changed, but native language of the students has shifted. MVE is currently a level 2+ school (third from the top score given in CPS on a 5-point rating scale). It has taken years to achieve the highest rating of 1+, and it has become more difficult to maintain it year after year, as the school’s rating has fluctuated from 1+ to 1 to 2+ between years. MVE serves as an example of a school that would benefit from the findings of this study.

**Purpose**

Over my 21 years of experience in public education, I have realized that the majority of new teachers entering the field are not equipped to meet the needs in public schools. In my personal experience as a new teacher, I felt unprepared as a high school English teacher when faced with teenagers reading at a first- and second-grade level, as well as dealing with the behaviors that are associated with being so far behind. As a school principal, I have had conversations with my peers at monthly administrative meetings, and they have also noticed that new teachers need training and mentoring in order to bring them up to par to meet the demands of the job. According to the school’s most recent 5Essentials report, which is based on teacher perceptions, one of lowest scored components was collective responsibility (5Essentials, 2019). MVE scored a 50 out of 100 points on this metric. Some of the subcategories in this section are: help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classroom, take responsibility for improving the school, feel responsible to help each other to do their best, feel responsible that all students learn, feel responsible for helping students develop self-control, and feel responsible when students in this school fail. These are topics that should be addressed in all teacher preparation program. Most of MVE’s newer teachers do not come with the classroom management tools needed to create a calm classroom environment so that learning can take place
nor can they support the social-emotional needs of the students. In this current school year, MVE revised its 3-year school improvement plan; one of the main concerns that arose was the need for support with misbehavior. This area will be addressed through more professional development and the creation of a disciplinary committee.

MVE is not unique in facing these issues. In its network of schools, there are 30 other schools that have similar populations and SES. In conducting both formal and informal observations of teachers, principals have voiced the concern that teacher preparation programs at the university level have not developed the knowledge and skills that teachers need to be successful. Teacher preparation programs are important because better prepared teachers are more likely to have a positive impact on student achievement and have longer teaching careers (Hanushek, 2011). Schools and students thrive on stability; when there is a revolving door of teachers, the school administrators must start over each year in establishing the school’s expectations as well as building rapport as a unit. Teachers usually get better with experience, but if their basic training is lacking, the likelihood of a teacher leaving the field within 5 years is 50%; almost 10% of new teachers leave the field before the end of their first year (Riggs, 2013). Improving the quality of teacher preparation programs may be one way to reduce this attrition and allow teachers the time to get better with experience.

Rationale

Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012) stated that the preparation of future teachers is one of the most contentious topics in educational policy. 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” (p. 5). This disparity means that some teachers will be better prepared than others to
support the students in their classrooms. As the first person in my family to graduate with a bachelor’s degree, I realized that teachers were to be partially credited with whatever success I had achieved until that point. Upon graduation, I received multiple calls for interviews for high school English teacher positions. I decided to take my first two jobs in locations I had grown up in, although both did not have the best reputation. I chose to do so because I knew that these schools had students who aspired to greater things, and teachers play a crucial role in achieving such goals. After 21 years in public education, I still work for the city of Chicago and serve public education institutions with a majority of students of color and lower SES.

In order to make it past my 5-year threshold, I sought external supports and learning. Year after year, 30 to 40 teachers left that large high school. By the time I left that particular school, I was one of the more veteran teachers at the age of 31 years old. Teachers receiving less pedagogical and classroom management training are more likely to leave the teaching field (Ingersoll et al., 2012). By evaluating how local universities are structuring their teacher preparation programs, I hoped to find an avenue to support better teacher development and growth (Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE], 2018), which may help reduce teacher attrition.

By aligning collegiate-level teacher preparation programs to the needs in urban education, new teachers will gain the needed skills to succeed and persist in the educational field, which will lead to stability in a district that aims at improving student achievement. The educational field is in constant flux, and educational reforms are continually presented by politicians, media pundits, and everyday Americans. Such reforms should begin, however, with those who make education possible: the teachers. Beginning with teacher preparation programs,
it will be possible to detect some of the stressors that new teachers face and create a more rewarding experience, which will lead to improved student achievement.

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) found that the state of Illinois had no top-rated institution for teacher preparation programs (NCTQ, 2016). Although many teacher preparation programs do not align with the methodology used by NCTQ, it is an important perspective to consider. With Chicago Public Schools being the nation’s third largest public school district, it is shocking that universities have not partnered with local school districts to align the needs of novice teachers to the coursework designed by the teacher preparation program directors.

Goals

I have asked my new teachers what it was they wish they had been taught, and some of the common responses are: how to help older struggling readers without insulting them, how to create a strong school to home connection, how to better understand how to speak to students respectfully, and non-punitive classroom management. Through this study, I aimed to inquire the same of a larger sample of teachers from other urban schools/districts. These findings will be shared with the U.S. Department of Education to inform the development of a uniform policy to guide all national universities offering teacher preparation programs and match their offerings to what their customers should be getting. My hope is that this will lead to widespread program changes at the national level that will trickle down to colleges refocusing their efforts on their original goal: to prepare teachers that will produce better student achievement, regardless of ethnicity or SES.

There are other reasons why teachers leave the field, but I have chosen to focus on teacher preparation programs because I personally identified significant gaps in my training after
entering the teaching field. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2014) cited that preservice education and experience in new teachers varies greatly from state to state and institution to institution. As a school administrator, I am faced with training teachers to meet the needs of students in reality, not simply in theory. Many of MVE’s new teachers tend to experience challenges during their first several years on the job. I have contributed many hours of mentoring and funding to take care of the adult social-emotional needs of my staff. I believe that if education college courses were grounded in theory, but blended with the reality that meets new teachers in urban settings, new teachers would have a better chance of staying in the field and continuing to influence student achievement. In my experience, school quality is highly dependent on teacher quality. Teachers may be leaving the field due to feeling overwhelmed, stressed, undervalued, unsupported, and inadequate; if teachers were better prepared in their preparation courses, more would stay in the field for longer periods of time.

**Research Question**

It has been said that teaching is the only profession that creates other professions. Having said that, it is imperative that schools work closely with universities to ensure alignment between what the current needs are in schools and the coursework that universities have selected for their teacher preparation program. Teacher preparation programs that are lacking in the areas of classroom management, social-emotional skill integration, and cultural competencies will require adjustments. The central question of this study was to what extent current traditional teacher preparation programs are aiding new teacher remain in the teaching field for a longer period of time, and whether this can be achieved by the inclusion of coursework in the areas of classroom management, social-emotional learning integration, and cultural competencies. Other questions included what university teacher preparation programs can do to make it possible for new
teachers to stay in the field for longer periods with a sense of self-efficacy, and what courses are lacking that could facilitate the first years of being in the classroom. There are obviously other potential reasons for leaving the teaching field such as, lack of respect for the profession, excessive paperwork, salaries, environment of the schools, as well as personal reasons (Strauss, 2017a), but beginning with teacher preparation programs is a step that is within educators’ control. This study can lead to further studies that focus on changing societal views about the teaching profession and engaging all stakeholders in the creating of school vision and improvement plans, all by adjusting the university teacher preparation programs to fit the reality new teachers face in classrooms.

In conclusion, there is an imperative need to align university teacher preparation programs to what urban school districts require. New teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate (Riggs, 2013). Without high-quality teachers providing high-level instruction and providing stability by staying in the field longer, the achievement gap with lower SES schools can widen, leading to additional societal concerns in the future. This is becoming more and more important, as the composition of U.S. public schools is quickly changing to predominantly students of color and lower SES. Figure 1 below illustrates data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) revealing these shifts in U.S. demographics. The majority of public school teachers continues to be of White decent (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012); therefore, it is important that teacher preparation programs add courses to support the needs of the various populations.
Figure 1. Percentage of public elementary and secondary school students enrolled in schools with at least 75 percent minority enrollment, by student.

NOTE: Minority students include students who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more races. Prior to 2010, separate data on students who are Asian, Pacific Islander, and of Two or more races were not collected. Data reflect racial/ethnic data reported by schools. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

Section Two: Review of Literature

With an alarming percentage (nearly 50%) of teachers leaving the teaching field within the first 5 years of service (Reeves, 2018), it is imperative to identify the root cause(s) of this epidemic. Speaking from experience, I did not feel properly prepared when I initially entered the teaching field; it was not until my fifth year that I felt comfortable in the classroom. In my current role as a building principal, I have noticed that novice teachers often lack basic knowledge around setting up structures in their classrooms for optimal student engagement.

In an interview with National Public Radio (2015), Ingersoll indicated that a revolving door of teachers is costing the United States $2.2 billion dollars per year. Ingersoll (2001) cited earlier that “the data show that, in particular, low salaries, inadequate support from the school administration, student discipline problems, and limited faculty input into school decision-making all contribute to higher rates of turnover” (p. 501). This researcher has done studies on this epidemic for many years; some of his major findings are the need for better recruitment of candidates to enter teacher preparation programs, the revamping of existing teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of school districts, and how to best support new or developing candidates once they enter the classroom (Ingersoll, 2005; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll et al., 2012). These findings support the current study’s focus on teacher preparation programs. Although there are many reasons why new teachers leave the field, the focus for this study was teacher preparation programs, because this is the first step in creating trained candidates that can improve student achievement.

Based on the results of this study, the three areas where teachers felt they needed more support and would have liked more courses in prior to entering their classroom were: classroom management, social-emotional learning integration, and cultural competencies. Below, I will
review research findings from books, scholarly journals, published dissertations, magazine articles, and radio interviews with experts in the field, all illustrating the negative impact of the teacher shortage on public education. Teacher preparation institutions need to adjust their coursework and scope based on the needs of novice teachers, many of whom do not make it past their first 5 years in the classroom.

Section I: Classroom Management

Classroom management is a set of skills and strategies that a teacher uses to prevent the loss of instructional time by disruptive student behaviors. It is a segment in the Illinois PERA (CPS REACH rubric) teacher evaluation system under Domain 2, which is broken down into subcomponents: respect and rapport, culture for learning, classroom procedures, and student behavior (Chicago Public Schools Knowledge Center, 2020). Student achievement has been heavily attached to teacher evaluations, but due to recent legislation, raising student scores have become a priority for all teachers that do not want lower evaluation scores. Scholars have found that less effective teachers have three times the amount of classroom disruptions as their more effective counterparts (Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). An important aspect of teacher evaluation is classroom management. One quarter of the evaluation rubric is centered on the classroom environment, which includes managing student behavior (Chicago Public Schools Knowledge Center, 2020). “Effective classroom management skills are essential for teachers. Unfortunately, many teachers do not receive adequate classroom management training prior to beginning their teaching careers and feel unprepared for the demands of managing student behaviors in their classrooms” (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere, & MacSuga-Gage, 2014, p. 106). The foundation of an environment that is conducive to learning rests in the skillful manner in which a teacher sets expectations and weaves those expectations into every lesson. Students know what is expected of
them and are aware of the consequences, both good and bad. With this knowledge, students can focus on the lessons presented by the teacher and withhold impulses to become chatty, move about the room, or engage in a fight. Although previous researchers have found examples of effective classroom management tools such as relationship building, setting clear expectations, positive and negative consequences, and allowing for input from the students (Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green, & Hanna, 2010), only a few states require CM courses in their teacher preparation programs (Freeman et al., 2014). The states with a strong focus on CM include California, Oregon, Texas, and New Mexico (NCTQ, 2014).

Freeman et al. (2014) argued that “many teachers do not receive adequate classroom management training prior to beginning their teaching careers and feel unprepared for the demands of managing student behaviors in their classrooms” (p. 106). This is true for both my personal experience as a new teacher as well as my experience as a school leader who has hired new teachers. Many are not prepared to meet the challenges posed by misbehavior, academic indifference, or miseducation that is masked as behavior issues. At the school level, MVE trains its staff on research-based classroom management tips and programs. All teachers, regardless of the university or the state in which they received their certification, should complete coursework in this area.

With so many teachers leaving the field within the first 5 years of service, classroom management is always listed as one of the variable that causes burnout, according to Freeman et al. (2014), who synthesized the conclusions from various other studies. To reduce the attrition of educators, their concerns must be addressed. Most teacher preparation programs do not offer courses in classroom management—and if they do, they are an elective or as part of another course, not given the time and attention needed by the preservice teachers (Landau, 2001).
Classroom management is considered something to learn on the job that takes years to perfect; however, due to the trend of teachers leaving by their fifth year, this important component of teaching cannot be up to chance.

**Section II: Social-Emotional Competence**

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” (p. 10). When teachers seem angry, flustered, or unhappy in their role, their classrooms often become chaotic, underscoring the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL). In this case, the teacher has not dealt with their own SEL in a positive manner. Education is a stressful field; “moreover, stress in the classroom is contagious—simply put, stressed-out teachers tend to have stressed-out students” (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, p. 137). If the teacher cannot manage their own emotions, however, they cannot expect their students to do so.

In order for SEL curriculum or the skills woven into daily lessons to be effective, the teacher must establish a calm and nurturing learning environment. Classroom management is an umbrella in which underneath lies other important themes that teachers are asking for further support. Figure 2 below is taken from Schonert-Reichl’s (2017) article, “Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers.”
This chart shows the interconnection between a teacher’s own SEL status, the teacher’s ability to set up a calm and well-organized classroom, and the combined effects on students’ social-emotional and academic success.

Self-care for both the teacher and the student should be taught in teacher preparation programs as a subcategory of SEL. Teachers should be able to create a learning environment that is calm, warm, and safe for students to be able to take educational risks without embarrassment or ridicule. At the same time, SEL skills need to be specifically taught by the teachers to the students.

“Extensive research evidence now confirms that SEL skills can be taught and measured, that they promote positive development and reduce problem behaviors, and that they improve students’ academic performance, citizenship, and health-related behaviors” (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, p. 138). When teachers have a grip on their own emotional wellbeing, they can focus on that of their students. Some believe that children come to schools as empty vessels ready to be filled with knowledge, but in reality, many children come to school with all sorts of worries and
baggage from their lives outside of the school, and they are easily influenced in either positive or negative directions.

Students must often deal with negative events and concerns in their home and social lives. The students that cannot clear their heads of these concerns will find it difficult to focus on academics. This reveals the importance of teachers knowing how to teach SEL skills by integrating them into daily lessons. Universities need to include courses that support integrated SEL into their teacher preparation programs to set their future teachers up for success (Gauthier, 2017). Novice teachers need to know what they will encounter upon entering their first classroom. Teachers have to support the students in more than just the subject matter (Gauthier, 2017). SEL is not isolated to any particular group of students. If anything, students of various ethnic, racial, gender, or economic statuses may have a tougher time dealing with their wellbeing. SEL curriculum needs to be intertwined with culturally competence as well.

Section III: Cultural Competence

Latinx individuals represent 7% of the total teacher force in the United States, and Black teachers make up 6.5% (Strauss, 2017b), while Latinx and Black students make up 41% of the total student population (NCES, 2020). Cultural competency can be defined as:

…having a self-awareness of one’s own cultural identity and the views about differences, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. This understanding informs and expands teaching practices in the culturally competent educator’s classroom. They recognize how student outcomes can be
improved by incorporating racial and ethnic minority contributions in curriculum and diversifying pedagogical practices. (National Education Association, 2018)

Using this framework, it is clear that various groups of people can experience similar events and have a totally different perspective or assigned meaning to the event based on their beliefs. What is not mentioned in the definition is how that particular group is seen by the rest of society and the impact that these perceptions could have on the members of that particular group. Donahue-Keegan, Villegas-Relmers, and Cressey (2019) stated that:

Mounting research evidence points to why it is vitally important for teachers, in all types of schools and at all levels, to develop culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, beginning with preservice training. (p. 154)

For most jobs and careers, preservice training helps the future employee in doing their job at a high level; this should be the same case for teachers. Although teaching may not be a hazardous career such as underwater oil drilling, teachers are dealing with precious commodities in students. The need for strong SEL skills integration into every classroom overlaps with cultural competence to allow for teachers to create learning environments where all children feel comfortable and proud of who they are and can take responsible educational risks that can lead to deeper learning. Many teachers are unable to make the cultural connections with students, build positive relationships, effectively engage students in their learning process, and efficiently navigate students through their personal learning journeys (Marion-Howard, 2016).

The training of preservice teachers must begin early in the teacher preparation program in order for them to begin to develop mental and emotional resilience that will be needed when they enter their classroom (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Once a new teacher enters the classroom, they are faced with the struggles of various student backgrounds and the specific needs that
comes with these cultural and economic differences. The novice teacher will not only need resilience, but a strong understanding of other cultures, in order to cultivate a sense of belonging and an environment that is conducive to learning.

The face of public education classrooms is ever changing. The high number of children of color entering the classroom has forced all educators to question their presumptions about other cultures and ethnicities. Taylor (2010) mentioned that other researchers have found that the difference between home and school beliefs is a contributor to poor educational outcomes. In my experience, some of the differences include language, the directness or indirectness of commands given, and custom of eye contact. If U.S. schools are to continue to attempt to bridge that learning divide that exists between the races, the teaching force needs to be better prepared to support students of various backgrounds and needs. Even if a teacher considers herself to be a person of color, many variants in home cultures and traditions can impede how a student receives the intended remarks. It is often difficult for people, especially teachers, to admit that they hold prejudices against certain groups. Through self-reflection, teachers can begin to get rid of these biases, support all students, and forge relationships that will lead to greater academic gains (Taylor, 2010). Unfortunately, many teacher preparation programs fail to teach future teachers to expand their culturally responsive pedagogy beyond academics and include classroom management and social-emotional skills (Taylor, 2010).

Many educators tend to shy away from race-based conversations. Lambeth and Smith (2016) argued that despite the uncomfortableness of the topic, preservice teachers should engage in some type of coursework around teaching children of different cultural backgrounds to diminish the boundaries that exist between teacher and student. It is important to recognize the differences in cultures that are different from one’s own. Through the cultural competence
coursework, teachers will not only learn about other cultures and how to celebrate the beliefs they bring to the table, but also enter a journey into their own cultural beliefs.

Teachers need to acknowledge that culture shapes the way in which they view the world around them and interpret situations (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). At the beginning of this section, I explained how culture affects views of similar situations or events; thus, there is a need for new teachers to have cultural competence in order to anticipate how various students may interpret the same lesson differently. The teachers’ point of view is also tinted by their experiences, as well as their socio-economic, ethnic, and gender affiliations. The synthesis of SEL with cultural competence provides a more powerful understanding of oneself, one’s surroundings, and one’s role in creating better understanding.

With 83% of all teachers being of White European backgrounds (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012) and many urban schools comprised of majority Latinx and Black students, some scholars have suggested that there should be a greater effort to recruit minorities to the teaching field. Such researchers have claimed that teachers of color tend to hold higher standards for students of color (Yeo, 1997) and create lessons that hold sociopolitical context for their students are often hard to staff in urban schools. Although most of the research done on recruitment of teachers is based on White teachers, it is known that most people that enter the teaching field is because they want to make a difference in others’ lives (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Being uncomfortable with cultural competent curriculum and students was a concern with new teachers, according to the findings of Yildirim (2015). Although some improvements have been made to preparation programs that now include courses such as “Introduction to Urban Education,” “Introduction to Race, Ethnicity and Education,” and “Language, Culture and Learning in Urban Education,” many candidates still struggle with the considerable effort it takes
to recognize “our biases and prejudices...learning about cultural differences, developing cross-cultural skills, and learning from our mistakes along the way” (Martin & Vaughn, 2007).

A call for local school districts to partner with teacher preparation programs is needed in order to develop a robust teacher pipeline that will be able to meet the needs of local school districts (ISBE, 2018) and begin to alleviate the hemorrhaging of teachers in the United States. Teacher preparation programs should include more coursework in the areas of classroom management (CM), social-emotional learning (SEL), and cultural competence (CC) to provide those needed skills to novice teachers and prevent the burnout that occurs quickly in their careers. Just as in the event of an airplane emergency, one must place their air mask around one’s own face before attempting to help others, teachers in their preparation programs must learn to strengthen their own SEL resilience, their cultural competence, and their emotional management in order to optimize classroom management and support students from different cultures.
Section Three: Methodology

Research Design Overview

I surveyed 25 teachers from various university teacher preparation programs to determine the extent to which current traditional teacher preparation programs are aiding new teachers in remaining in the field for a longer period of time. I posited that this can be achieved by the inclusion of coursework in the areas of classroom management, social-emotional learning integration, and cultural competencies (see Appendix C for the survey questions). I was interested in why some respondents from some schools felt they were better prepared than others, and whether novice teachers were utilizing the learning they received from their respective teacher preparation programs or simply reverting to what feels most comfortable to them at the time. Throughout this investigation, I identified several topics that are lacking from teacher preparation programs, such as classroom management, SEL integration, and cultural competence.

I began by sending an anonymous survey to teachers currently taking master’s-level principal preparation coursework at a local university. I sought to determine their level of efficacy as a new teacher, their fears as they reflect on their first years, as well as their opinions about what courses they felt made a difference and which could be improved. The survey contained 28 questions. Most items used a Likert scale from absolutely not to extremely well (see Appendix C). The survey also contained several multiple choice questions and ended with open-ended response questions to obtain additional details from respondents. I wanted to focus on teachers working in an urban setting, as this type of school with the most teacher turnover (Jabbar et al., 2017). However, of the 25 participants, five currently teach in an urban school, and 20 work in suburban schools in the collar counties of the city. The data were coded and analyzed
for trends, which informed my conclusion that the teachers’ success—or lack thereof—can be attributed to the implementation of the knowledge gained during their teacher preparation programs.

I chose to conduct a survey because I was able to collect data from a large group at one time. Although roughly only 25% responded to the survey, the survey allowed for candid and anonymous feedback. After the data were collected and sorted, I looked for trends in the participants’ responses. Three large ideas emerged from the results that can provide feedback to the participating universities in order to make any adjustments to their program so their graduates are more successful in the workforce.

The respondents were asked to reflect on their first years on the job and how prepared they felt. The survey asked the respondents whether they had considered leaving the field, and why. I chose to have them reflect on this time of their careers because the greatest level of attrition occurs during teachers’ first years (Lewis et al., 1999). By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, I obtained a fuller picture of what novice teachers faced during their first 4 years and how teacher preparation curriculum should be changed to help future graduates.

**Participants**

I sent the survey to 100 teachers currently taking master’s-level courses at a local university and working in Chicago-land schools. Only one quarter of the surveys were completed and returned. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the respondents’ demographics.
Table 1

Demographics of Participants in Program Review of Teacher Prep Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female—95.8%</td>
<td>White—79.2%</td>
<td>Average of groups is 8-9</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Elem—62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male—4.2%</td>
<td>Latinx—8.3%</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>avg 31</td>
<td>HS—37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black—4.2%</td>
<td>Other—8.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I gained access to the teachers’ student email addresses to administer the research consent form and the survey. The respondents were all employed as classroom teachers and enrolled in a program to become school administrators. The 25 respondents came from 18 different TPPs from Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Florida, and a mixture of private and public institutions.

Data Gathering Techniques

The survey contained questions about the teachers’ sense of efficacy in the classroom, coursework they felt was useful once they entered the classroom, the coursework that they perceived as unnecessary, and finally courses that they perceived would have made their experience as a novice teacher much more fulfilling. The survey was issued to teachers ranging from their fourth to 12th year of teaching. The consent and survey was distributed through email using university databases of current teachers taking master’s-level courses. I coded the survey responses to identify emergent themes and trends. The open-ended questions towards the end of the survey provided the respondents a space to be able to share information that otherwise was not captured in the Likert scale questions. In response to these questions, respondents mentioned courses they deemed valuable, as well as the courses that they wished they had taken in order to make a stronger impact upon entering the classroom.
Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure the ethical nature of the data collection, I included an informed consent document at the beginning of the survey. The participants were required to indicate that they agreed with the terms and conditions before they proceeded with the survey. I gathered a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data to obtain a complete picture of the participants’ experience in their classrooms and how it related back to their teacher preparation programs. I ensured the participants’ confidentiality and privacy by downloading the survey data directly onto a password-protected jump drive. The names and schools where the participants were employed were never included in the dataset. I never asked the participants for the names of their schools, but did ask if the school district they are employed in is regarded as urban or suburban, as they were defined by urban being a school within the city limits of Chicago and suburban as schools in the surrounding suburbs of Chicago. As a note about suburban schools, many schools located outside the city limits in collar areas can have similar demographics as urban schools within CPS, as opposed to suburban schools further away from the city, which tend to have predominantly White students. The data were sorted based on demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, years of service, the grades taught, and the university program attended.

The subjects were not forced into participating in the survey. Their email addresses were put into a raffle to win a $50 Amazon gift card as a simple thank-you for their time for participating in the study. All subjects were adults with teaching certificates with an average of 8 to 9 years of experience. Individual risk was minimal, as their answers were lumped into categories where \( N \) was greater than five. In the event that confidentiality and anonymity were to be compromised, the risks involved only embarrassment that they have admitted to their teacher preparation program not being helpful to them once they entered the field. If their responses are
the opposite, where their preparation program was indeed very helpful, I do not believe that there was risk, as their feedback was generally positive. Individual benefits, aside from potentially winning the $50 gift card, were non-existent. The results of this study will benefit those who attend university teacher preparation programs in the years to come.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

I used the Dedoose program, as well as manual coding, to code the data and identify trends. Using Dedoose, I could view the responses based on the qualitative data, or the demographic information that the participants provide at the beginning of the survey, in order to disaggregate the data by years of teaching to see if they faced with the greatest level of attrition during their first year teaching. I also reviewed the responses based on ethnicity and gender, as well as urban versus suburban settings to identify any additional meaning behind these data.

I collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data. Using quantitative data, I answered the questions of “what kind?” and “how many?” Using the qualitative data, I could address “why?” and “how?” questions. I broke down the quantitative data based on gender, ethnicity, urban versus suburban, and years of service in the teaching field. I then analyzed the qualitative data to obtain insight into the participants’ value systems and stories in regards to their experiences as novice teachers and their feelings of preparedness and potential longevity in the teaching field. I evaluated whether their preparation program built their repertoire of teaching strategies, whether they received enough instruction on how to control classroom behaviors and setting high expectations, whether the program helped them in engaging students of other ethnicities, and whether they completed courses on how to incorporate SEL strategies. At the same time, I identified the most common reasons for dissatisfaction with their choice of career or attrition.
Ultimately, I looked for the participants’ responses as to their level of satisfaction in their teacher preparation program and how they supported their opinions with data from their first 4 years of teaching evaluation scores along. These numbers alone did not provide me with a full scope of their experiences, which is why being able to tag extended response answers to the raw data allowed me to support my claims. The findings, both positive and negative, will be made available to universities so they can make any adjustment to their program as they see fit. These changes will benefit future graduates of their respective teacher preparation programs.

The collection, sorting, and coding of the data to identify trends was at the center of this study. I began with determining the extent to which different university teacher preparation programs helped the participating teachers remain in the field beyond 5 years.

**Conclusion**

The results indicated that although at least half of the respondents (n=25) had thought about leaving the teaching profession, they persisted through the use of on-the-job professional development and graduate coursework. The participants successfully filled in the gaps from their teacher preparation program to meet the demands of reality. The respondents cited a need for stronger classroom management courses, SEL integration, and cultural competency classes to be better prepared to support all students.

These results will inform the creators of teacher preparation programs in making adjustments to their preparation programs. Some programs fared better than others, but by taking a deep dive at the data and discovering the story behind the numbers, I concluded that a large part of novice teachers that persevered during their first years on the job can be attributed to their teacher training programs.
Section Four: Results

Assessing the 4 Cs (As-Is)

With public schools hemorrhaging teachers at such an alarming rate, as a school administrator, I felt this study was imperative to carry out and try to find some possible solutions to the teacher attrition problem. This study argues that improving teacher preparation may be part of the solution to the rates of teacher attrition. I hypothesize that the three recommendations found in this study can be part of a larger solution to fixing the teacher shortage. These recommendations include a focus on classroom management, socio-emotional skill integration, and cultural competence. Allow me to begin by describing the current state of the average public school teacher that framed the responses in this study in terms of context, culture, conditions, and competencies as laid out by Wagner and Kegan (2006):

- Context in many public schools involves having to have knowledge of cultural dynamics and traditions of various ethnicities, often other than that of the teacher’s. Context was important to the respondents in that the success of classroom management was considered relative to the situation before training was provided (See Figure 3). Educators know that many disruptive behaviors that cannot be controlled and can make teaching difficult.

- Culture, currently in public schools, is that all children can succeed while using a middle class American mentality, not at all thinking of having a curriculum that is inclusive of the faces and cultures found in the community. It was also important to the respondents, in that the culture of the school, of the community, and of the students were strong influences on not only whether disciplinary measures were needed, but also how effective
those measures would be. The respondents observed that cultural competence was an absolute necessity (See Figure 3).

- Conditions in public schools are set as expectations that students should be obedient and submissive to the person in charge, the teacher. If a student does not fit the mold, then they are seen as a behavioral or possibly an academically challenged student, which is also related to context and culture. The existing conditions in a classroom affect the efficacy of classroom management training. The respondents indicated, however, that they had learned to set up more thorough and better structured classroom management plans after their training, as evidenced by their responses to the survey questions. In the open ended responses, respondents mentioned that several had felt like leaving the teaching field but were saved by the conditions that were present at a different school that was worked on by the whole staff.

- Competencies are the skills the teachers have in order to be able to strategically plan lessons and collaborate with others on staff to achieve results. These were not an issue, in that all respondents had both extensive teacher training and in-class experience “under their belts;” (See Figure 4) however, not all of them had taken university courses specifically oriented toward classroom management strategies (See Figure 4). This created a gap in knowledge that was addressed by teacher training.

The above summary of the 4 Cs evolved out of the results from the survey, which I describe in more detail next. The results of the survey (n=25) indicated that teachers want more preservice training in the areas of classroom management (CM), social-emotional skill integration (SEL), and cultural competence (CC). By mandating that teacher prep programs (TPP) offer courses in these areas, it may be possible to reduce the amount of new teacher attrition, which is currently
at 50% by the end of their first 5 years in the classroom (Reeves, 2018).) The implications of this study is based in the context of school-based needs and trends found within the district in which a school functions. In this case study the results are applied to Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Given the large percentage of new teacher attrition, and considering that CPS is comprised of 89.1% minority students, it is necessary for leaders to continue the strategic improvement process of TPP in order to close the achievement gap with the support of properly trained teachers that stay in the field. The findings in this study are a portion of potential cures for the teacher attrition problem our country is facing.

I will review each of my three recommendations (improved training in classroom management, socio-emotional skills integration, and cultural competence) through each of the four Cs that Wagner and Kegan (2006) presented in order to gain a fuller picture of the need to update TPP to reduce new teachers leaving the field before reaching their sixth year of service.

In addition to the four Cs perspective, data from the survey provided answers to the research questions were the respondents’ answers as to which courses had the biggest impact on their teaching versus those courses that were not useful. The most impactful courses for them included: method courses, student-teaching, lesson planning using understanding by design, diverse learner supports, and assessments. Some mentioned, however, they would have liked more practice with assessment. The method coursework does not indicate what each course contains, which is a limitation of this finding. This is the foundation of the competencies new teachers bring to their classrooms.

According to the survey respondents, the least useful courses were: educational philosophy, educational psychology, and school and society. The educators noted that the courses they wished to have taken during their preservice education included integration of SEL
skills, classroom management, and cultural competence. These trends support the findings of previous researchers that these skills are imperative to the development of successful teachers, who are less likely to leave the field (Jabbar, Holme, Germain, & Dinning, 2017).

Figure 3 illustrates that 29% of the surveyed teachers wanted to leave the field because they felt unprepared to enter the classroom, while 19% perceived a lack of classroom management preparation as a large stressor. Overall, 50% of the participants indicated that they have thought about and considered leaving the teaching field. The culture of schools, which expects all teachers to be savvy in the area of cultural competence, based on the ethnicities found in the community, and how to deal with classroom disruptions are two large stressors that lead respondents to feel unprepared for the job (See Figure 3). A lack of self-efficacy can cause most people to feel they are not in the correct profession. Therefore, if teacher preparation program improve teacher candidates’ skills in classroom management and cultural competency, this may help reduce teachers leaving the field, based on the findings in this study.

Figure 3. Data from the 25 respondents when asked why they want to leave the teaching field.
If teacher preparation programs incorporated more SEL strategies or whole courses for new teachers, then misunderstandings around intent versus impact of directives would occur less often; this, in turn, would reduce classroom behavior infractions. This would have a tremendous impact on the conditions in public schools, that would allow for safe practice and support from administrators considering that TPP have not bridged that gap. Stronge et al. (2011) found that teachers who reported frequent behavioral disruptions in their classrooms were often less effective than other teachers. By cultivating a calm classroom where students can put aside their external concerns, even if for a few hours, teachers can make a greater impact on student learning, thereby creating a greater sense of belonging and efficacy on both sides. As such, coursework in SEL skills, cultural competence, and classroom management is imperative during preservice training so that once teachers enter their classrooms; they are equipped to support all students, which would be a positive shift in the new teachers’ competencies from what exists now.

These data add to the understanding of how the four Cs function in these self-assessments: classroom management (CM), social-emotional skill integration (SEL), and cultural competence (CC). The participants reported that they felt they needed additional training in these areas. In the following section, I review how these concepts have been used in teacher evaluations in the recent past.

**Classroom Management**

“Unfortunately, many teachers do not receive adequate classroom management training [competencies] prior to beginning their teaching careers and feel unprepared for the demands of managing student behaviors in their classrooms [culture]” (Freeman et al., 2014, p. 106). This is a significant concern, considering that learning becomes a more difficult task without strong
classroom management skills (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). The survey that I administered directly asked about the teachers’ preparedness to implement evidence-based classroom management strategies during their first years of teaching; on a Likert scale from 1 (absolutely not) to 5 (extremely well), 54.2% of the responses were 3 or under. One respondent said that they had considered leaving the teaching field because “Parents did not support [me] and [student] behavior was not manageable by us and the administrators” (see Figure 4).

![Image of survey results]

**Figure 4. Satisfaction with classroom management preparedness coming out of teacher preparation programs.**

The term classroom management has evolved into a set of systems and structures that a teacher creates to prevent loss of instructional time and provides clear guidelines for all students to achieve success, instead of its previous disciplinary connotation. Under older assumptions, classroom management is reactive, not proactive. Teachers assume that students know how to comport themselves in the classroom, and often resort to negative consequences when those expectations are not met (Sprick, 2019). CM involves having high expectations for all students and creating a sense of belonging in each student so that they feel comfortable taking educational risks without the fear of ridicule.
CM challenges may be related to the particular nature of the district where this study results are applied, due to size and demographics. Considering the context of MVE and the district, CPS is the nation’s fourth largest school district, with 372,214 students and 18,841 teachers across 633 schools. Of the 372,214 students, almost 90% are non-White, while the teaching staff of 18,841 is comprised of 52.2% White teachers (Illinois School Report Card, 2019). It is crucial to consider these data when looking at possible causes that teachers do not feel prepared to face the challenges of the classrooms after leaving their teacher preparation program from the local universities.

At Mountain View Elementary, 712 students are enrolled, with 97.2% being non-White; the teaching staff is 50% White, mirroring the district as a whole. During the past 10 to 15 years, MVE has experienced community shifts from predominantly White (80%) to predominantly Latinx (96%). Ninety percent of the staff has been at the school through the change. The largest increases in population have been the English language learners (ELLs), at almost 40% of the total population, and the diverse learners (DLs), at almost 20%; in many cases, ELLs are also DLs. New teachers are expected to have the competencies to manage misbehaviors, know the context of students’ culture which very well could be different from that of the teacher, be ready to withstand the rigorous culture of the schools where it is expected that you have these skills before walking into the classroom and be able to maintain your priorities in the face of adversity (conditions). It is not a shock that so many new teachers leave or contemplate leaving the field when they are not supported with the proper preservice coursework.

Given these demographic challenges and with 50% of new teachers leaving the field before the end of their first 5 years (Reeves, 2018), the states need to do a better job at aligning their coursework to the needs of the novice teachers, especially in the area of cultural
competence and classroom management. Ingersoll (2001) has conducted many studies on the need for teacher preparation programs to be revamped to meet the needs of school districts, and yet the national teacher shortage continues. According to the Illinois School Report Card (2019), CPS teacher attendance reflected that 61% teachers had with fewer than 10 days absent, compared to 73.5% in the rest of the state. At the same time, suburban teacher retention was 85.7%, as compared to the urban district at 78.3%. Finally, CPS teacher evaluation had 91.4% of teachers rated proficient or higher compared to 97.2% of the suburban counterparts (Illinois School Report Card, 2019). In this study, 87.5% of respondents identified as suburban employees. The average tenure of the focal group for my study was 8.5 years of teaching. All respondents were currently enrolled in a graduate program to receive a school administration degree. It is possible that their employment in suburban schools may explain why these participants persevered beyond the 5-year threshold.

One quarter of the Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) teacher evaluation is focused on classroom management. Thus, it is important that pre-service teachers get more coursework and practice in dealing with evidence-based CM strategies before entering their first year of teaching to help these conditions. Based on the expectation that all teachers have a firm grip on CM, TPPs need to reevaluate their scope and sequence to include courses that will pay off from day one. On a local level, MVE had a large percent of office discipline referrals, and disrespect was listed as one of the main incidents reported. Given that over 90% of the student body is non-White, 40% have language gaps, and 20% have learning and emotional frailties (Illinois School Report Card, 2019), teacher preparation programs need to adjust to meet the needs of the current classroom. One participant indicated, “[Educational Psychology] was a lot of theory, but not enough practical application or correlation to specific teaching
situations: [in Methods.] I didn’t learn anything useful, I didn’t learn anything useful; a few methods classes needed to be updated.” Another powerful statement was, “Honestly, most of the classes that I took were useless. Most information is repetitive and boring to me. I didn't have to do most of the readings because I already had the "common sense" knowledge to figure out assignments.” What these statements indicate is that time was lost on courses that could have been replaced with the courses novice teachers need in order to experience success when they enter the classroom. It appears that conditions are ripe for TPPs to make adjustments based on the real-world need of new in-service teachers being asked to prevent misbehavior that leads to loss of instructional time and increase student achievement. These trends support existing research conclusions that these skills are imperative to successful teachers (Jabbar et al., 2017).

The skillset or competencies that schools and districts expect all teachers to have should include evidence-based classroom management strategies. Under Domain 2 for CPS’s framework for teacher evaluation, teachers are expected to have strong skills in the areas of creating an environment of respect and rapport, establish a culture for learning, manage classroom procedures, and manage student behavior.

Classroom management training is essential; however, the data collected in the present study showed that despite the value of classroom management training, almost no participants had received it. One out of the 25 participants in this study mentioned that the most useful course that they took in their teacher preparation program was a middle school classroom management course because she ended up teaching in middle school. Of the 25 respondents, only one person had completed coursework in this area.
Without a calm classroom, learning becomes very difficult (Freeman et al., 2014). In order to have a calm classroom, teachers must have a repertoire of tools to minimize distractions, reduce time off task, and deal with misbehavior calmly and quickly without drawing more attention to the situation. Some schools and districts have vetted classroom management programs and brought in trainers to assist in building the teachers’ toolkits. Often, however, these efforts are too little, too late. If new teachers do not experience success right away, many tend to begin considering other careers. In an interview on NPR (2015), Ingersoll indicated that this revolving door of teachers is costing the United States $2.2 billion dollars per year. School districts, especially those in urban areas, should collaborate with their local and state universities to adjust the teacher preparation scope and sequence to meet the needs of the classroom.

The current culture of MVE, as well as CPS in general, has been evolving to place equity and a strong sense of belonging for every child and adult at the forefront. With this in mind, it has been an expectation for all teachers to become better at managing classroom behaviors and set up an environment where all students can participate and feel part of the learning community. It has been tied into the teacher evaluation system (as classroom management is evaluated as one of the metrics for teacher effectiveness) as well as the 5Essentials survey that all schools in the
district must administer to students, parents and teachers. If MVE teachers and the respondents to this study are a representation of the district at large, then on-the-job training must fill the gaps in the area of CM.

To evaluate the need for CM training, MVE collects data from office referrals, what the outcome of that behavior referral was, the amount of recidivism, as well as teacher’s opinions about their level of support from administration and collective responsibility on the 5Essentials survey given every year. Although MVE has had professional development around the topic of classroom management via the use of CHAMPs (Sprick, 2019), MVE has experienced an increase of teacher referrals for discipline. MVE leaders noticed an improvement in this trend reflected in the 5Essentials survey data, as well as the yearly needs assessment given to teachers after the implementation of more specific classroom management professional learning. In the latest 5E survey results, MVE improved the classroom disruption category, which included argumentative behavior towards the teacher, interrupting class with side conversations and disrespectful comments among the students during class (5Essentials, 2019). The Very Strong indicator below means a great score. The closer the number to 100, the better. The amount of classroom management concerns has greatly decreased after many hours of professional development for in-service teachers.

![Image of 5E survey results](image.png)

*Figure 6. Segment of the 5E survey showing increase in teacher response after many PD in the area of classroom management.*
Social-Emotional Skill Integration

While CM has been one area that new teachers lack experience (competencies) with and cause difficulties in the classroom during the first few years of service, it is likely that classroom misbehavior has root causes that can be attributed to the lack of SEL integration into the daily curriculum by teachers (Durlak & Mahoney, 2019). Social-emotional learning has become a buzzword and topic of focus for many schools and districts in the past decade. School districts have had to fill the gaps in their teacher skillset because many educators have had little to no coursework in this area. The results of the current study showed that 87.6% of respondents claimed they did not feel well prepared to manage student behaviors upon leaving their teacher preparation program, meaning rating a 3 or less on a 1-5 Likert scale, with 5 being very well prepared. At the same time, only three respondents (12.5%) reported that they felt prepared to implement social-emotional supports in the classroom (see Figure 7 below).

![Figure 7. Comfort level of new teachers implementing SEL into their classrooms.](image)

This is the context teachers are dealing with, and there is an expectation by CPS and their school level administrators to implement SEL skills into their daily lesson without being trained on how to do so. SEL integration helps both the students as well as the teachers. Teachers set the
tone for the classroom, and students commonly take on the personality of the teacher (culture). If this is so, teachers need to have a solid grip of their own SEL skills before they can begin to guide students to a calmer and safer state of being (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Without the appropriate conditions, which include teachers having a solid control over their own SEL needs, the SEL of the students in that classroom will be impacted. If teachers have proper training and a school adopts an SEL program that can be implemented daily, it can reduce misbehavior by 22% and improve students’ self-esteem by 23% (Durlak & Mahoney, 2019). Although teachers try to create a safe space for everyone, students go home at the end of the day, leaving the teachers’ area of control. Many students deal with issues including domestic violence, gang and drug dealing communities, or lack of adult supervision. For this reason, every teacher should receive training in the SEL arena prior to entering their classrooms.

However, the results of this study indicate that SEL coursework is not prevalent in teacher preparation programs. Only one respondent from this study mentioned they had received a course that aided their work in the area of SEL, indicating, “Child psychology gave me an understanding of how to work with children and be understanding of their needs.” At the same time, 30% specifically named they wish they had some courses in the SEL area because this is difficult for them to address with their students.

MVE leaders have been working with the SEL integration into all classrooms because the expectation is coming from the district. It has been a work in progress, involving the development of community partnerships and the implementation of three different curriculums before arriving at creating a hybrid of multiple companies that is grounded in the specific needs of the school. As of school year 2020-2021, MVE received recognition as an exemplary supportive environment school, which is valid until 2022. This accomplishment was a result of
cooperation and vulnerability from veteran teachers acknowledging that they needed to learn something new to help the changing demographics of MVE. The four Cs come into play when crafting teacher training programs and strategies—the something new that is needed.

**Cultural Competence**

As statistics show, many students of color are coming to the classrooms already marginalized and dealing with so many socio-emotional concerns (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski, 2018). For this reason, teacher preparation programs should at least include one class associated with preparing teacher candidates to implement a strong SEL and CC components into all classrooms. This is the current context in many classrooms across numerous school districts. With teachers’ words being more impactful on students than that of other adults in their lives (Denton, 2008), it is imperative that teachers are conscious of how they say things just as much as what they say. Before any teacher can begin to tackle understanding other cultures, teachers must understand their own cultural background, especially White teachers. In order to understand one’s perceptions of other cultures as odd or different, it is first necessary to consider what one perceives as normal (Sigillitto Hollema, 2019). One can uncover this “normal” by observing one’s cultural values, comparing these values to those of other cultures, and considering how these lenses paint each party’s view of a situation. Teachers must be able to dig deep into their own cultures and values to confront the biases that impact their thinking and actions that can be detrimental to both students and society (Taylor, 2010). Hill-Jackson (2007) stated that while public school classrooms are becoming more diverse, teacher preparation programs are becoming “Whiter;” therefore, there must be a safe space for preservice teachers to facilitate a critical consciousness to be able to create curriculum that is relevant to all cultures and prevents marginalizing others.
In this study, 54.2% of the respondents said that they were comfortable having students of cultures other than their own in the classroom (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. The percent of new teachers’ sense of competency when dealing with students of different ethnic backgrounds.

This is a step in the correct direction, but these numbers also indicate that 45.9% of teacher graduates feel ill prepared to teach children of different races (competencies). At the same time, zero respondents said that they were completely unprepared to help support students of different races other than their own. This shows great promise that the people entering the teacher preparation programs can be successful with the correct coursework and supports to perform their duties at a high level. The current results also showed that the longer teachers remained in the field, the more comfortable they felt with teaching students of a race other than their own.

This is a strong case in regards to teachers that stay in the field longer, continue to learn and grow and can have larger impacts on student learning. Figure 10 shows a culmination of average teaching time of over 8 years.
In response to the open-ended questions, these same respondents said that during the early years of teaching, they were not prepared for the differences in behaviors. One stated, “While it was not apparent when I was in school, courses on equity and cultural competency would have been very beneficial as a white female teacher working in schools serving students of color.”

In the survey given to teachers, 13 out of 25 reported that they wish they had taken a course in SEL and classroom management. One respondent indicated, “I started in a suburban school with a lot of parents who were incarcerated, single family homes, foster care, etc.” Another indicated that they dealt with “a lot of emotional issues that lead to misbehavior.” Yet another reported, “While it was not as apparent when I was in school, courses on equity and cultural competency would have been very beneficial as a white female teacher working in schools serving students of color.” If teacher preparation programs dedicated more coursework in the areas of SEL, classroom management and cultural competence, respondents would have had different sentiments during their first few years of teaching.

The respondents to the survey said they took courses during their teacher preparation program that were not aligned with creating lessons to help close the achievement gap (conditions). That is, courses that taught them how to incorporate student interest and culture to
make those lessons engaging, relevant, and rigorous. Teachers who are culturally competent can create lessons that look at a student’s background as a strength to build upon, rather than a deficit (Milner, 2010). Some of the responses to the question regarding coursework they took that had little to no impact on their readiness to teach included educational psychology, which one participant described as “a lot of theory but not enough practical application or correlation to specific teaching situations.” The same participant cited that in the methods class, “I didn’t learn anything useful…a few methods classes needed to be updated.” Finally, the most powerful statement made was, “Honestly, most of the classes that I took were useless. Most information is repetitive and boring to me. I didn't have to do most of the readings because I already had the "common sense" knowledge to figure out assignments.” These statements indicated lost time that could have been replaced with courses novice teachers need in order to experience success when they enter the classroom.

As MVE community has changed, most staff members have adapted and evolved their teaching to meet the needs of the new community; however, some struggled during this change. At MVE, some teachers have expressed to the administrative team that “these” students don’t seem to care about their education in the way the previous students used to. “Why don’t these kids do their homework? Why don’t the parents punish the kids when they get bad grades? What are they so busy doing that they can’t read a chapter from their novel?” are questions that can be heard at MVE. As the principal of the school, I play the role of facilitator by bridging the gap between the teachers and the parents of the community. In modern society, it is more important than ever for teachers to incorporate culturally responsive curricula as well as learn to deal with students’ variety of background knowledge and the strengths that they bring to the classroom (Irish & Scrubb, 2012). With the majority of the teaching staff being White, it is possible that
placing their values onto students of color could be a root cause for the amount of office referrals for discipline. As mentioned before, when MVE had almost 1,300 students in 2016, the vast majority of office referrals were for disrespect. When looking for root causes, I consider the possibility of miscommunication between staff and students, as well as intent versus impact of the words coming out of the teachers’ mouths. It is possible that the manner in which the redirection takes place be the cause of students becoming combative and disrespectful. For example, for many teachers, asking a student if they’d like to take a seat is a polite manner of stating you want the person to sit down. If the student does not come from that culture, but rather a more direct approach has been used at home, the child could misinterpret the teacher’s command as a question offering options. If the student responds, “No, I don’t want to sit now; I’d rather stand,” is that disrespect? The teacher’s lack of knowledge that some cultures are more direct than others has created a situation that can lead to a misunderstanding and a power struggle.

While classroom management has improved at MVE, sometimes there are infractions that should have been handled by the teachers, but teachers state that they do not understand why the students do not simply comply with their orders. In these instances, it is possible that there are some cultural differences blocking the understanding as to why a student does not comply. These could result in misunderstandings or misinterpretations of intention. In the past 5 years, as teachers leave MVE, the administrative team has consciously interviewed and looked for teachers of color to reflect the community. Ordway (2017) stated that Black students, for example, do better in academics and get suspended less frequently when taught by a Black teacher. Often, not having cultural awareness or competence can lead to misunderstandings that can leave people with hurt emotions and severed relationships. One example that illustrates this
point is a student sent to the office for being disrespectful after the teacher caught the student cheating on a quiz. The referral was not for cheating, but rather for not looking at the teacher when she reprimanded the student. While in the office, the student told the assistant principal that she did not look at the teacher because her mother always told her to look down out of respect. Had the teacher known this common trait in traditional Latino families, the teacher would not have gotten upset and instead focused on cheating during the quiz. If this teacher has taken some courses in cultural competence or proficiency, this small incident would not have escalated to this point. The culturally capable teacher could have handled this situation in the classroom and prevented the added stress on themselves, as well as the emotional turmoil on the students.

**Interpretations**

The survey data indicated that half of the teachers have thought about and considered leaving the teaching field. The same data showed that there was a correlation between age and attrition, in that younger respondents were more likely to consider leaving the field and older respondents had persevered through their feelings of inefficacy and remained in the classroom (see Figure 10).

![Figure 10. The less experience a teacher had, the more they felt like leaving the field.](image)

Teachers
Despite the relatively small sample size of 25 participants, the findings of this study align with previous results showing new teachers leaving the field at a rate of 50% (Riggs, 2013). I can see the connection between the lack of classroom management courses, feelings of despair as a newer teacher, and the daunting tasks of supporting students of cultures other than one’s own, as shown in this study in which newer teachers expressed a desire for more preparation in these areas while also indicating that they considered leaving the profession. Strong and consistent time management and organizational skills are essential to effective classroom management (Carr, 2013). Teacher preparation programs must take into consideration the changes found in modern classrooms, which include a growing number of different ethnicities and cultures.

Occasionally, teachers may inadvertently insult a student’s culture, gender, or religious beliefs. MVE has documented many situations in which a student is dealing with gender issues and teachers refuse to address them by their preferred pronouns or reveal personal details to the student’s parent. There have also been cultural issues, such as when a teacher insulted a Muslim student in the school by asking them to remove their hijab. The student now lacks a sense of belonging to the group of learners (Pedler, 2018), and the teacher feels guilt because their lack of knowledge or understanding led to a fractured relationship in class. This is not an environment that is conducive to learning. Patton (2008) sought to obtain relevant meaning from numbers/data, in other words, the story that the numbers are trying to tell. Based on the responses to the current survey, roughly 50% of the teachers felt that teaching was not the field they truly wanted to be in at some point in their careers. Their reasons included lack of support in the classroom, imbalanced work and private life, and compensation concerns. Out of the 12 responses, seven dealt with the topic of behaviors in the classroom that they felt they were not prepared to deal with and the lack of support from parents and administration. These teachers
would have benefited from more coursework in the area of classroom management and possibly cultural competencies especially if they are teaching in schools where the students may be of different backgrounds from the teacher, which is likely in large urban areas. Carr (2013) referenced Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) in stating,

> Classroom management [along with SEL integration and cultural competence] in full effect produces the following: an increase of time to teach, an increase in student achievement, a safe environment to learn, additional time for student engagement, assessment of students who may need remedial assistance, bell to bell instruction, reduced opportunity for inappropriate behavior, positive classroom guidelines and expectations, and finally a positive classroom environment where students are respectful of themselves and others. (p. 5)

Better relationships between teachers and students will improve both student achievement and teacher efficacy.

**Judgements**

My primary research question was to what extent current traditional teacher preparation programs are aiding new teachers in remain in the teaching field for a longer period of time. I also aimed to explore whether this goal can be achieved by the inclusion of coursework in the areas of classroom management, social-emotional learning integration, and cultural competencies. Based on the survey results, 70% perceived that overall their teacher preparation program adequately prepared them for the reality of classroom teaching, yet 50% of the same respondents disclosed that they have considered leaving the teaching field (see Figure 11).
Figure 11. 50% of the survey respondents have considered leaving the teaching profession.

It is possible that at the beginning of the survey, the teachers were not being truly forthcoming, but as the survey continued, they became more truthful. It is also possible that how the questions were asked might have produced these results. Perhaps leaving the field may be more about being unaware about what teaching means today, rather than being unprepared. These are closely related, but perhaps not exactly the same. As mentioned in the literature review, teachers leave the field for other reasons besides lack of a proper teacher preparation program, such as professional development, lack of respect for the teaching career, lower compensation than other fields that require similar post-secondary education, personal/family reasons, and relocation (Hentges, 2012).

A closer look was given in regards to classroom management and culturally competent in dealing with students and parents. The questions at the beginning of the survey asked teachers whether said they felt prepared to deal with classroom management concerns and they reported positively; 70.8% rated themselves at a 3 or above on a 1-5 Likert scale, with 5 being extremely well prepared. At the same time, several provided responses to the open-ended questions describing their lack of preparedness, such as, “I was not prepared to teach upon entering the classroom. I had students who had such strong behaviors and felt isolated and on an island;”
“I was not supported and my ideas were not supported this last year. My personality was criticized and not the ability and process. Parents did not support and behavior was not manageable by us and the administrators; and “no consequences for student behaviors that could potentially be life threatening to other students and staff.”

Two trends that emerged after this question was lack of support from parents and the inability to deal with student behavior/classroom management. I cannot conclude that these teachers felt prepared to enter the classroom due to comments such as this, as well as the data indicating that half of them have considered leaving the field. Other factors contribute to teachers’ decision to leave the field, but if the lack of important skills such as classroom management, SEL integration, and cultural competence plays a role, these gaps can be addressed at the preparation level.

Due to not having a policy in place currently, MVE had concerns in dealing with these same topics of CM, SEL, and CC. It took years of professional development for in-service teachers to gather the skills needed to support the students’ needs. According to the last 5Essentials report for MVE, after hours of training the staff on classroom management, SEL implementation and cultural awareness, the percentage of teachers reporting disrespectful behavior from students has gradually decreased (5Essentials, 2019). In October of 2020, MVE was awarded an exemplary supportive school designation as a result of the years of work in the areas of CM, SEL, and CC.
If the teachers at MVE school had come into the classroom already having learned these skills, the time spent on in-service meetings could have been focused on other topics that the teachers requested.

**Retrospective Reflections**

As this study comes to a conclusion, I cannot help but wonder if the respondents’ responses would be different if they were closer to the year 1-5 window in which novice teachers leave the field. As mentioned before, the average teaching career for the respondents in this study is approximately 8-9 years. Is it possible that with time, wounds heal and our memories of our experiences begin to fade? Is it possible that the trends that emerged in this study, at least two of them, came about because the field of education has been focusing in on social-emotional skills as well as racial equity? If this study were to be reproduced with truly novice teachers, would the results be the same? I cannot help but wonder if respondents mentioned SEL and/or racial equity as needs because of the publicity these two topics have received in recent years. Although both are important in every classroom, would the same themes emerge in the year 2000? I keep thinking how teachers accuse administrators of forgetting what it is like to be in
the classroom and the age of the respondents in this study. Have they too forgotten the real struggles they faced in years 1-5? Perhaps?

**Recommendations**

The results of the current survey can be considered a small sample representative of CPS demographics, 95.8% of respondents identified as female and 79.2% self-identified as white, although I only received 25 responses to the research survey from a mixture of urban and suburban teachers. The demographics in CPS reflect my sample population in that they are majority females of white backgrounds. With that said, the number of minority students in the United States continues to rise; as such, the nuances of cultural differences can lead to the need for more targeted preservice training in the areas of classroom management and SEL integration. I am making a claim that CM is a large umbrella with SEL and CC fitting underneath it as subcategories. With the addition of these courses into pre-service teacher preparation, new teachers will be better equipped to meet the needs of current classrooms.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) should lay out a set of guidelines that will be applied equally in all universities offering a TPP dealing with the expectations of competencies each teacher candidate will graduate from their institution will hold before entering a classroom. This will also include having a standardized teacher certification test that will be implemented across the state. Universities will partner with school districts to create open dialogue and data collection so that teacher preparation programs are aligned to both the revamped teacher certification test and the expectations set forth by ISBE and supported by organizations such as InTASC (InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers 1.0, 2020). By addressing a rigorous certification exam, aligning the coursework taken by teacher candidates will lead to better prepared new teachers. These new
teachers will have a better sense of efficacy and satisfaction which will in turn, cause them to stay in the teaching field longer and having a positive change in student achievement, closing the achievement gap, and reducing the costs to districts by eliminating the need to constantly recruit, train, and support teachers that leave quickly. Secondary measures can include courses on change and adaptation by teachers and perhaps courses that build teachers SEL.

This illustrates the need for the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) and the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) to improve teacher training and evaluation, in order to reduce teacher attrition. It also highlights the need for school districts around the state of Illinois need to work together with universities to create a uniform teacher preparation program that meets the needs of teachers in the field to provide a uniform and comprehensive curriculum that will result in all teachers, regardless of the area (urban or suburban) they live in, to graduate with the same training and knowledge to make a difference in students’ academic achievement, while staying in the field for a much longer period of time. If this course of action leads to more teachers staying in the field for longer periods of time and increase various metrics dealing with student success connected to CM, SEL, and CC, then this study can be replicated and ramped up in other states, ultimately leading to a policy change by the Illinois State Department of Education (ISBE).
Section Five: The Ideal (To Be)

I identified that the methods needed to solve the epidemic of teacher loss include revamping TPPs to include coursework in the areas of CM, SEL, and CC. Through Wagner and Kegan’s (2006) “As-Is/To-Be” protocol, I examined the ideal situation for each of the four Cs if the new policy to improve teacher preparation programs is implemented (see Appendix B). The Education Commission has identified the concern that a teacher shortage will create a wider achievement gap and cause many schools and students to fall behind if a real solution is not found. The Education Commission of the States reported in May 2016 that these areas especially hit urban, rural, high poverty, and low-achieving schools. They combined this with safety, salary, and class size considerations. Ironically, in my discussions with different school district employees in Illinois, I found that school districts in relatively high economic areas are now being impacted by the teacher shortage. Further proof comes from data from Advance Illinois (2019) who reported “The top 25 teacher preparation institutions in the state have seen a decline of over 45 percent in the past decade, from over 8,000 graduates in 2008 to just over 4,000 graduates in 2016” (p. 3). If teacher preparation programs are improved, all teachers will enter the classroom ready to take on the challenges of urban schools. The students’ misbehavior will be met quickly with redirection and conversation about the expectations in the classroom. There will be better understanding between the teacher and students due to a higher level of cultural competency on the teacher’s part, causing a sense of belonging and feelings of support among the students. In such an environment, true learning can take place.

Classroom Management
The definition of classroom management has shifted from one of discipline and negative consequences to one that consists of teachers setting up structures in their classrooms to prevent misbehaviors and ensure that all students are aware and part of the expectations for success.

- **Context:** In the ideal, every TPP is now implementing CM, SEL, and CC to the point that there is a large reduction in classroom misbehaviors, students and teachers have a stronger sense of belonging in the school environment of learners, people of all races, genders, and religions are respected and celebrated, and staff uses their knowledge of these differences to engage everyone in rigorous lessons. New teachers will now come into classrooms with a better understanding of how to set up classroom expectations from day one, knowing how to continually practice daily rituals and routines until all students know what is expected of them in order to be successful.

- **Competencies:** This new skill will help eliminate classroom management concerns. When students are having a bad day or going through a rough patch in their lives, these newly trained teachers will have the skills needed to identify and support students and refer them to specialists for more intensive social-emotional supports such as counselors or social workers should that be needed. When discipline office referrals decrease, that allows a teacher to use instructional time for rigorous instruction instead of reprimanding misbehaving students.

- **Conditions:** The conditions found within every school and district are where every teacher has a foundational knowledge of setting up systems and expectations for student success but is continually supported by professional development at the local level. With specific expectations, CM becomes an invisible umbrella that encompasses SEL and CC. Again, CM is not simply a set of disciplinary rules, but a structure for success that is
evident to every student. This relieves the students from having to play the guessing
game as to what is expected of them.

- **Culture:** Classroom culture has improved when structures (**conditions**) are put in place
  by skillful teachers who can predict the behaviors and times of the day and year when
  misbehavior occurs. Students know what each teacher expects of them, and what rewards
  and consequences are possible for given actions. Instructional time is maximized.

Teachers feel confident in their skills (**competencies**) to set up a calm class and as a
result, will not contemplate leaving the field—at least, not due to classroom management
stressors.

All new teachers have strong competencies in the areas of classroom management. They
have received at least one course focused on CM as well as practice during the student-teaching
practicum. These competencies include how to redirect students using non-verbal cues such as
eye contact, proximity, and having clear expectations that all students are made aware of
beginning the first day of school. TPPs are getting feedback from practitioners and advocacy
groups to help university leadership make the changes needed to the scope and sequence of
coursework. These classroom management strategies are taught by qualified instructors, not
simply discussions embedded within other courses.

One possible recommendation for the creation of a CM course for TPP, would be to
watch videos of classrooms and have the preservice teachers provide feedback to the teachers on
the screen as to what they did well, and have evidence to support it, as well as what teacher
moves could be implemented in the future to correct or prevent misbehavior and loss of
instructional time. There are existing programs for CM, but keeping the learning to a more
general teacher created methodology would provide a wider foundation of knowledge that school
districts can build upon if desired.

Social/Emotional Learning

Only three of the respondents (13%) said that they thought they had been “well prepared”
or “extremely well prepared” to deal with social/emotional learning issues. The majority felt that
they had not been adequately prepared to integrate SEL into their curricula. The implications of
this finding for the four Cs are as follows:

- **Context:** Respondents suggested that SEL was simply not a concept that those who
taught them felt was a necessity, or that they were expected, as they grew into the
teaching profession, that they would acquire the skills to integrate it into their curricula.
The social context is that such skills are absolutely necessary for a teacher to function
properly.

- **Culture:** The school environment, the societal nature of the community, and the students’
  background and understanding are all elements of culture. The respondents reported that
  they had not been well prepared to perceive and adapt to the SEL needs of their students,
  and that training subsequent to their starting the teaching profession had been very
  helpful in enabling them to build cultural competence and implement SEL curricula.

- **Condition:** The lack of formal education that respondents reported having received
during their university careers regarding SEL was compensated for by training and
mentoring provided by the school and district. The assigning of mentors could greatly
facilitate this process. This is something I have been working on in my own work to help
the teacher gain the skills they lacked coming our of pre-service TPP. That 87% of
respondents reported an implicit need for such training and mentoring underscores its value.

- **Competencies**: As explained above, respondents reported a low level of competency in crafting SEL curricula when they entered the teaching profession. With three exceptions, they had not been formally trained to do so. The program initiated by the district mitigated this lack.

**Cultural Competence**

Slightly over half (54%) of the respondents said they were comfortable teaching students of cultures other than their own; this means that slightly less than half said they were not. Likewise, 13 out of 25 respondents said they wish they had been taken cultural competence/SEL training classes, either during or after university. This suggests that at least half of the respondent felt that their cultural competence could have been better. This implies, in terms of the four Cs:

- **Context**: The necessity for cultural competence and SEL integration varies according to the degree to which teachers are teaching students from cultures other than their own. This factor depends on the makeup of individual students as well as that of the community. It is extremely rare than a teacher has only students of his/her culture in his/her classroom(s).

- **Culture**: The degree to which a teacher will benefit from cultural competence training depends on how different the culture of the students she teaches varies from her own. Respondents suggested that these differences, even if they recognized them, made teaching more difficult: expectations, behavior, learning methods, etc. varied significantly from one student to the next. Therefore, constant adjustments had to be made, and cultural competence training helped them do so.
• **Conditions**: Respondents mentioned that the degree to which they were assisted in acquiring and maintaining cultural competence and crafting SEL curricula had a great deal to do with their ultimate success in doing so. Mentoring and training programs helped them to adjust to the burdens of teaching to different cultures. A few respondents mentioned that a lack of such assistance could lead to teacher burnout and attrition.

**Context**

Based on teacher feedback and the body of research available, universities are doing a better job aligning their coursework to meet the needs of the urban classrooms. High quality teachers are entering the field ready to help close the achievement gap and urban schools have more access to minority teachers, especially Black male teachers, because many of them do not consider teaching as a viable career option in high school due to negative perceptions of the field, schools are viewed as oppressive institutions, and African Americans are viewed as non-conformists (Graham & Erwin, 2011).

In the future, more teachers from all backgrounds will teach children across the country in classrooms that are welcoming and conducive to learning and a classroom where taking educational risks is seen as a strength and not something to ridicule. School administrators have also gone through training to better support new teachers by budgeting for instructional coaches to support new teachers in the areas of instruction, assessments, classroom management and building relationships, while new teachers will be entering school districts with a stronger base knowledge of these topics from a stronger, uniform teacher preparation program.

**Culture**

The school culture must be one where everyone feels welcome and safe. Schools should have high expectations for their staff and the staff should hold those high expectations for the
students and families. The school should communicate the values they share with the community and provide examples of what that looks like within the school. Input from parents, students, and community members need to be taken into consideration when creating systems within the school district. If any recommendations do not make sense or simply cannot be incorporated, then the leadership team needs to address it as to why it cannot be taken as advice.

Communication is key, and can prevent misunderstandings that can lead to larger issues.

Many people think that schools are a place where teachers disseminate information to students and students learn it. After much research done in this field, it is understood that motivation, coming from a positive school’s culture, is a large driving force behind a successful school. Matos, Lens, and Vansteenkiste (2009) shared previous findings that:

…developing ways to encourage students to learn throughout their lives has to do not only with students’ learning skills but with their will and motivation to do so. In this sense, motivation in the school system is central because a successful educational system requires motivated students. But motivated students require motivated teachers (Maehr, 2001, as cited in Matos et al., 2009, p. 2)

To motivate teachers and students, teachers require the necessary knowledge about students’ home culture, as well as how to create classroom expectations for success in a non-negative manner. This supports the students’ SEL needs as well as creating a calm classroom conducive for learning.

Conditions

Teachers all have mentors that are engaged in professional development (PD) to aid with strategies to engage all students and value their backgrounds. The district has created new positions that are run centrally that support this initiative and it is tied to the Danielson
Framework that is used for teacher evaluation. Heavy emphasis is placed on the first and second domain in the Danielson Framework which includes getting to know the students, building relationships, creating an environment without name-calling, bullying, and more focused on learning and supporting each other. Since recent graduates from the revamped teacher preparation programs are now entering the workforce, the on-going PD offered by the school and/or district will not seem foreign. Teachers are coming in with a solid understanding on how to set up classroom expectations and how to redirect misbehavior. Teachers have a better understanding on how to deal with cultural difference with respect and how to communicate delicate situations with the families. Daily lessons have been planned to intertwine social-emotional learning (SEL) standards as needed to further instill in the students’ skills for them to be able to overcome obstacles and persevere in their education and life.

School-level administrators are also trained to be sensitive to all cultures, as well as to gain knowledge on how to coach their new teachers in a non-evaluative manner. Many administrators are always functioning with a critical lens that can lead to fear on behalf of the teachers, especially if they are not yet tenured. Trust needs to be established between all school employees in an effort to provide the highest level of services to the community (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). School administrators also lead by example, treating everyone with respect, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or age. When administrators discipline staff, they will also use the same calm and polite manner to address the wrongdoing that is expected of teachers when they redirect students.

Feedback from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and school districts around the state is taken to adjust the teacher preparation programs on a biannual basis. The ISBE will review the data and
adjust policy as needed. Alumni stay connected to their university teacher preparation program staff to receive support and provide ways to continually improve the coursework scope and sequence, based on what they have seen in their classrooms from year to year. This will ensure that the courses offered in teacher preparation programs are aligned to the needs of urban classrooms around the state.

**Competencies**

New teachers will now come into their classrooms with a better understanding of how to set up classroom expectations from day one and how to continually practice daily rituals and routines until all students know what is expected of them in order to be successful. This new skill will help eliminate classroom management concerns. When students are having a bad day or going through a rough patch in their lives, these newly trained teachers will have the skills needed to provide some primary supports to identify and support the students in the classrooms and refer to specialists for more intensive social-emotional supports such as counselors or social workers. SEL concerns will be met with respect and delicateness as all new teachers have better cultural competencies to understand that some cultures view things differently that may cause something American culture sees as insignificant whereas the student and their family may see it differently. The culturally competent teacher can have those delicate discussions with the parents/families in a nurturing manner that instills confidence from the community that the schools is in fact, doing the best they can for the students. Of course, new teachers will always need support from someone who has “been there, done that.”

New teacher mentors are available to coach and meet with new teachers’ afterschool to help work through concerns in regards to discipline as well as making sure all children have equitable access to high quality curriculum that respects multiple perspectives. Administrators
can see the difference when observing classrooms in that the environment is more welcoming of all and the class discussions use the students’ backgrounds as a source of foundational knowledge.

CPS provides funding for the mentors to get training both at the beginning as well as ongoing. Job embedded professional development is prioritized by the district. The office of Social Emotional Supports works closely with the Office of Equity to create strategies that can be implemented across all schools to ensure that all students are engaged and have access to a high quality education that is culturally responsive. More and more teachers come into the classrooms ready to face the challenges that come from students that are already behind their peers (academically), have social-emotional issues, or come from a different cultural background than their own.

New teachers have a better sense of belonging and self-efficacy. They transfer this emotion to their students and they create a community of learners that support and learn with and from each other. Teachers are culturally competent to understand the differences in the students’ backgrounds and weave it into the curriculum along with strong social-emotional skills so that the students can focus on learning skills needed to move onto the next step of their lives.

Conclusion

In order for the state of IL to reach a better place in education, teachers, administrators, and policymakers must all work together. School districts, especially those in urban areas, should work with the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP), and state and local universities that have teacher preparation programs. The school districts can provide data on the current status of education, and universities can make adjustments as needed to produce teachers that have the skills and
dispositions required to reduce the achievement gap. These teachers will remain in the teaching field longer, thereby reducing the costs to school districts. The ISBE must have a more uniform expectation of what new teachers should be taught and experience before entering the field. This will have a large impact on student achievement and will result in lower operational costs than replacing teachers every year. The ISBE should put forth a policy that addresses the teacher shortage and attracts and retains highly qualified individuals who will have the skills to navigate classrooms with children of a variety of gender, ethnic, and economic backgrounds with sensitivity. This would come in the form of revamping the state certification exams to mirror the changes in teacher preparation program scope and sequence to include courses in classroom management, cultural competencies, and social-emotional learning standards in the academic program. To compete with and mirror other high-achieving countries such as Norway, Singapore and more recently, Canada, the U.S. needs a uniform teacher preparation curriculum and a new certification exam aligned to it to ensure that all new teachers have equal and better learning/skills that will transfer to an immediate positive impact on student achievement upon entering the classroom from day one, which can be based upon the state of Illinois’ study of incorporating these findings. Management and the need for stronger SEL integration comes from the lack of experience or knowledge of different cultures found in urban classrooms. If all teachers are better prepared to understand and discuss the expectations of the classroom in a non-threatening manner, misbehavior will diminish and students will feel better about themselves while at school. Ongoing PD is very important for new teachers to feel supported, but it begins at the undergraduate level. If the new policies are put in place, new teachers will have a stronger knowledge base upon which to build in the classrooms, and the local administrators can add to their knowledge to meet the specific needs of that school.
Section Six: Strategies and Actions

Introduction

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine how well teacher preparation programs are training teachers and find reasons why novice teachers leave the field at such an alarming rate (Riggs, 2013). Using the As-Is and the ideal To-Be model for comparison, I determined that there is a gap between these goals and reality. I began this investigation by communicating the changing needs of school districts and do a basic compare and contrast between what new teachers are taught in their respective teacher preparation programs versus what teachers in the field are stating they need more of. These conversations can be had in the form of surveys issued by advocacy groups (edTPA, NCTP, and CAEP) that will funnel this data to all universities that house teacher prep programs. By making any needed adjustments to the curriculum, new graduates will be better prepared to face the demands of the classroom and remain longer in the field resulting in raised student achievement as well as a reduction in district spending to continually replace staff year after year. The culture found in schools as well as universities has changed to one where making adjustments is not seen as a hurdle, but rather as an opportunity to improve the status of public education.

This can be accomplished through a state-level policy from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) that ensures that all universities that house a teacher preparation program must follow the recommendations for adjusted scope and sequence as guided by the advocacy groups (edTPA, NCTP, and CAEP) to meet the changing needs of schools in order to qualify for the newly aligned accreditation. The new teachers will enter these classrooms with a new set of competencies that will aid in controlling classroom behaviors to be more conducive to learning.
New teachers will be better at integrating social-emotional learning into daily lessons to support students in need that can also rise as a behavioral concern. Finally, new teachers will be able to gracefully maneuver interactions with children of any cultural background without inadvertently offending anyone.

The conditions needed for this happen will revolve around the ISBE making the realization that now is the time to create a new policy that will guide all universities across the states to have a foundational curriculum so all new graduates have the same base knowledge upon entering the classrooms. In order to ensure that universities comply with the new policy, the new accreditation application will be aligned to the new policy as a result of the advocacy groups edTPA, CAEP, and NCTP. These organizations will be in charge of collecting data from teachers in the field and transmit the needs to the universities.

In determining the actions needed to get to the ideal state, it is clear that cooperation is needed by all stakeholders in order to stop the hemorrhaging of teachers and help them further develop into veteran educators that can help students meet their academic goals. In 2018, the deans of five local universities that have long standing teacher preparation programs have joined together to help address what the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has identified as a need for every child to have access to an effective teacher (Deans for Impact, 2018). The five institutions are:

- National College of Education, National Louis University
- Goodwin College of Education, Northeastern Illinois University
- Northern Illinois University College of Education
- Relay Graduate School of Education-Chicago
- Roosevelt University College of Education
Together, these five institutions create almost 20% of the state of Illinois’ teaching force (Deans for Impact, 2018). This organization, calling themselves Illinois Ed Prep Impact Network, aims to work hand-in-hand with each of the other universities, as well as K-12 school districts, to create a better pathway for future teachers to be able to teach in racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse schools.

In the next section, I discuss the undertaking of revamping teacher preparation programs based on research from those mentioned in this study, as well as feedback from those in the field. The goal of having a better suited scope and sequence in all teacher preparation programs will yield a larger percentage of teachers staying in the field longer and having a positive impact on student achievement.

![Four-pronged approach to strengthening teacher retention.](image)

*Figure 13. Four-pronged approach to strengthening teacher retention.*

**Strategies and Action**

**Strategy 1: Advocacy groups coming together.** In order to set off the chain reaction of desired events, educational expert groups such as edTPA, CAEP, and NCTP must report the current reality in public education in Illinois. Getting these groups to work together for a common goal is key. There is a need to establish a culture of shared responsibility in order to
improve the current situation in public education as it pertains to the teacher shortage. As proposed in the “To-Be” section of this program evaluation, these advocacy groups will take a non-biased look into what is occurring in public schools across the state and what is leading to so many teachers leaving the field before their fifth year of service. I am positive that they will uncover many reasons why more than 50% of newer teachers leave the classroom, but they will begin with an examination of teacher preparation programs.

In order for these groups to gain feedback from personnel in the field, they will work with each the department of education (ISBE) to gain access to all teachers either by email or postal mail. They will develop a survey that will focus in on aspects of their sense of efficacy as a new teacher and to what extent they can attribute it to their teacher preparation program quality. They will submit the survey asking for everyone’s input regarding their experiences in the classroom and what skills they need in order to perform their jobs better and help them feel a stronger sense of efficacy. Once the information is collected, these organizations can look for trends occurring across the country and create a document that will outline the issues faced by new teachers and it can be alleviated by making some adjustments in the scope and sequence of teacher preparation programs to include topics such as classroom management, integration of social-emotional skills into daily lessons, and cultural competencies as the growing number of students of color is growing across the country, while the majority of teachers hovers around 80% White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) be shared with universities so that they needed adjustments can be made.

**Strategy 2: University adjustments are made align scope and sequence to real need.**

Now that data has been collected and vetted by organizations that are on the forefront of educational change, this information can be shared with all universities that contain teacher prep
programs as part of their options. Dialogue can open with Deans of teacher colleges to ensure that the new teachers graduating are receiving the same support that is needed by teachers across the state. As reported in this study, nearly half of the respondents said that they were not competent to deal with the behaviors in the classrooms upon graduating from their programs, at the same time, when asked what course(s) do they wish they were offered during their undergraduate program, again classroom management was one of the three that was mentioned the most. Some mentioned that they took a course or that the topic of classroom management was brought up as part of a larger course, but nothing that was the focus as this was one of the three most requested courses in this program study. These courses will increase the competencies of new teachers that will facilitate instruction as the priority providing a less disruptive environment for students.

Support for deans can come from Illinois Ed Prep Impact Network or the National Academy of Education, as they—along with the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—commissioned a study into evaluation of teacher preparation programs and subsequently eight papers that study the following topics:

1. Links Among Teacher Preparation, Retention, and Teacher Effectiveness
2. Landscape of the Students Attending Teacher Education Programs
3. Landscape of Teacher Education Programs and Evaluation Systems
4. Best Practices for Evaluating Teacher Preparation Programs
5. Evaluation of Clinical Component of Teacher Education Programs
6. Teacher Performance Assessments
7. Best Practices for the Use of Survey

Using this pre-existing body of research, deans can begin to have the tough conversations with their departments as well as reach out to other institutions as thought partners on the road to making needed adjustments to create a better prep program. In order for universities to make these changes with fidelity, ISBE will make a policy change in that the accreditation process will be identical across the state ensuring that no matter where a teacher graduates from, they have a solid foundation of knowledge to help them stay in the field for longer time. A similar change will occur with teacher certification examinations. They too will be aligned to reflect the change in curriculum and the changing needs of public school students.

**Strategy 3: Progress monitoring and adjustments.** Now that advocacy groups have been working in conjunction with universities and their teacher preparation programs, ISBE has made it policy that in order for said university to continue to offer an accredited teacher program they must align the curriculum to the new demands of public schools, there is a need to create a metric that will gauge the ever changing landscape of public education. On a biannual basis, the advocacy groups will continue to gather feedback from practitioners in the field and how to best support them from step one. Again, this data will be shared with ISBE and the universities to make any adjustments as needed. The National Academy of Education has already has created an interactive tool to help evaluate the teacher prep programs (TPP) for a variety of purposes. The also provide recommendations for an improved method of evaluating TPP (National Academy of Education, 2013). This is a huge undertaking, but children are the future, and they are worth the effort.
**Strategy 4: Embracing shared leadership within the schools.** Now that the newer teaching force is equipped with more knowledge on the topics that were requested in this program evaluation, it is up to the public schools/districts to continue to nurture the novice teachers in order to create an environment of shared leadership and vision. It has been said that no one person can make lasting change without the support of others and this holds true in public schools as well. “Taking the talk” is one thing, but “walking the walk” is quite another. School leaders need to take care when creating new teacher inductions processes and subsequent mentoring programs (Callahan, 2016) so that the new teachers continue to hone their skills that will lead them to a stronger sense of efficacy and remain in the field for longer periods of time, providing stability to public schools and communities, cutting staffing costs, and shifting those funds to resources and trainings that will benefit the students directly. Figure 14 below illustrates how the gap from “As-Is” to the ideal “To-Be” can be bridged by following the steps/strategies outlined in this section.

*Figure 14. Bridging the current status with the ideal.*
Conclusion

The steps and strategies laid out in this section serve as a guide to arrive at the ideal state that will return the focus of public schools to student-learning. Teachers have cited the need for additional coursework in the areas of classroom management, SEL integration, and cultural competence. As society progresses, public school teachers assume more roles, including daycare for working parents and surrogate caretakers to those lacking a nurturing home. By equipping new teachers with the tools to help facilitate conversations and interactions when it comes to classroom expectations in regards to behavior, dealing with social-emotional concerns that students bring to school, and addressing cultural differences in a manner that is respectful of all involved, it is possible to cultivate an environment in which students can focus only on being students.
Section Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

Introduction

Leaders in the field of education are currently faced with a potential shortage of teachers. With so many teachers leaving the field within the first 5 years of service (Riggs, 2013), the lack of consistency in the classroom not only costs school districts millions of dollars (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2020a), but it affects student achievement. Since states have local control over the educational system and not be controlled by the federal government, individual states can regulate what is needed for university teacher preparation program accreditation. The problem is that modern Americans are mobile; in the 21st century, it is not uncommon for families to move in search of a better standard of living. If the educational system varies within the state, both teachers and students that relocate are at a disadvantage. If accreditation and the scope and sequence of teacher preparation programs were mandated to be uniform across the state by ISBE, it would be possible to ensure that new teachers possess the same base knowledge that can travel with them and serve the children of all communities. This would reduce the number of teachers having a culture shock within different parts of the state and hopefully minimize the amount of discouraged individuals leaving the teaching field.

Part of the larger problem is that children of color tend to be the ones effected the most by this shortage of quality teachers. With 62% of new teachers stating that they graduated from their teacher preparation program without feeling prepared to enter the classroom (ISBE, 2018), this is a growing problem that needs to be addressed quickly. I raise the issue of minority students throughout this study because the national landscape is seeing more and more children of color being educated in the public schools; as a result, the educational system needs to be
ahead of the curve, not trying to play catch-up. In Chicago Public Schools, for example, the percent of children of color is 86.7 ("Stats and Facts", 2020).

**Policy Statement**

There is a need for a state-wide, uniform policy that regulates all university teacher preparation programs to prepare and graduate candidates who possess the skills needed to address the deficits found in educational institutions. Such a policy would mandate that all university teacher preparation programs must be accredited by CAEP and have similar scope and sequences in their programs. Teachers need to be more knowledgeable about social-emotional learning, equity, cultural competencies, and stronger classroom management skills, all of which are concerns found in inner city schools. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation’s (CAEP) standard 5.5 reads:

> The provider assures that appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, school and community partners, and others defined by the provider, are involved in program evaluation, improvement, and identification of models of excellence (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2020).

It is clearly laid out in CAEP’s Standard 5 that program evaluations will be given to alumni, practitioners and community partners to help in the continuous improvement of the teacher prep program; yet, this is not a widely used practice.

Through this study, I am advocating for a policy that forces educational institutions that house teacher preoperational programs to take the feedback from all appropriate stakeholders (taken from advisory groups like CAEP and NCTP) so teacher prep programs are evolving with the changing needs of the students across the state of Illinois. Feedback from those educators wanting to leave the field should be taken into heavy consideration to try to alleviate this
revolving door of teachers. Policies mandating teacher prep programs to have a similar curricular scope and sequence will produce graduates that are both ready to meet the needs of current classrooms and have the same foundational knowledge, regardless of the community in which they received their education, will work in or currently reside. When teachers stay longer in the field, this will lead to stability in schools and communities. With longer tenure, teachers become better at their practice, causing increased student achievement while lending itself to creating a stronger sense of professionalism. Together, these results may create an environment that will prevent teachers from wanting to leave the profession (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

**Analysis of Needs: Educational Analysis**

If U.S. seeks to regain world-wide competitiveness, its educators should receive strict and uniform course work and complete rigorous certification exams to ensure that only the most qualified enter the classrooms. As of 2014, 96% of applicants passed the teacher certification test (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Under the current model, state departments of education set the requirements and have a panel of educators review the proposals from each institution to be prepared for accreditation. Many states encourage—but do not require—any university to submit their plans to this nongovernmental organization for accreditation (Coggshall, Bivona, & Reschly, 2020). All states require candidates to pass a minimum standards tests of basic skills, hold a degree in a specific subject area, and complete coursework in particular domains (Coggshall et al., 2020). The state of Illinois follows this pattern; this state served as the reference point during the investigation into the effectiveness of current traditional university teacher preparation programs (ISBE, 2020).
The state of Illinois is facing a teacher shortage, much like the rest of the United States (Andrews, 2020). The challenge is attracting, developing, and retaining highly qualified individuals. There are many other variables as to why many teachers leave the field, including lack of support from the school, challenging work conditions, dissatisfaction with compensation, and personal reasons (Hentges, 2012), but I focused only on the inadequate teacher preparation portion of this epidemic.

Educator preparation is considered by many experts in the field as the most important school-based factor in helping increase student achievement, even over student socio-economic and demographic status (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002); therefore, it is critical to continually improve the preparation of future teachers. Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) found that experienced teachers can overcome learning deficits and foster higher achievement levels. This means that teacher preparation program must do a better job at preparing novice teachers to ensure they are not met with difficulties that cause them to leave the field during those critical first years. In this study, nearly half of the respondents mentioned that they have thought about leaving the teaching field. When asked what the reasons were, their answered included behavioral issues, lack of support from parents and administrators, and not being ready for the constant stress of teaching. Although schools cannot control the achievement gaps that exist when children first enter school, they can influence factors such as the quality of instruction. Teacher preparation programs can include a more in-depth course on classroom management strategies that fit a multitude of teaching styles as well as how to self-care to prevent burnout by the stress (Bousquet, 2012). The purpose of any school is to provide students with the tools needed for them to be successful in the next phases of life.
Economic Analysis

There are many underlying costs when a school district must replace their teaching staff frequently. There are significant costs associated with recruiting, training, and supporting new teachers. When veteran teachers leave the field, there is a larger concern with the organization (Strauss, 2017a). Teacher turnover has a larger impact on mathematics and language arts, especially for students of color. In the numerous studies on teacher turnover, many researchers have found that there is a high cost to school districts that have revolving doors with their teaching staff (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Shakrani, 2008; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). High teacher turnover also affects student achievement, as the students do not get to experience the reflection and self-learning that teachers go through every year they teach and hone their skills in the classroom (Kraft, Marinell, & Shen-Wei Yee, 2016). The rising costs of college degrees have placed the teaching career out of reach for many low-income and minority students in many areas of Illinois (Andrews, 2020). The labor department estimates that the cost of a teacher leaving the district costs at least 30% of their annual salary. The average salary for a teacher in Chicago is $61,831, which is the highest in the nation (Korte, 2016; see Figure 15 below). At 30% of the average teacher’s salary, the costs to the district to replace a teacher is $18,549. The respondents to this survey only included school districts in large cities and did not include smaller, more affluent suburban districts.
Many school districts have gone to merit pay and enhanced salaries, but this has not alleviated the teacher loss. In *The Testing Charade: Pretending to Make Schools Better*, researcher and educator Daniel Koretz (2017) cited that these efforts have cost districts millions of dollars in bonus packages, only to result in cheating by teachers and administrators to raise test scores to earn the extra pay. The high-stakes testing environment has led many administrators to retain or dismiss teachers based on standardized test scores, rather than good teaching, because curriculum has been replaced by test-taking strategies (Koretz, 2017). This stressful environment has pushed many teachers out of the field causing districts to accrue large costs to replace teaching staff.

**Social Analysis**

Being a new teacher can be challenging, especially when one lacks the training necessary to succeed in the classroom (Coggshall et al., 2012). The early years of teaching may be associated with feelings of isolation, feelings of panic when students do not comply with directives, limited ability to help students with socio-emotional concerns, inability to help low-
performing students without insulting them, and reduced communication with limited English speakers, all of which can cause great mental stress on new teachers. New teachers need coping skills and a support group to help them navigate these first years. Schools and districts must develop an induction and mentoring program for all teachers in the first three years of teaching to reduce the amount of stress the occupation puts on teachers and thus retaining those highly qualifies individuals who will make an academic achievement difference with the students.

Schools are a social organization more than most. As such, Frank, Lo, Torphy, and Kim (2018) discussed how social networks in schools can be beneficial to new and veteran teachers by providing avenues to share ideas and moral support. Schools cannot force the staff to be friends; however, fostering social networking between novice and other teachers can lend a helping hand in preventing the feeling of isolation new teachers have that contribute to the abandonment of the teaching field.

Teacher attrition does not just have a social impact on the mental state of the adult, but it sends ripples through the community the school serves. If teachers serving low-income, students of color are the ones leaving the field at a higher percentage; this can the students to wonder if there is something wrong with them that causes teachers to not want to work with them and people like them. The students in these areas will not receive the tools they need to be successful in their next stage of their lives causing not just the achievement gap to widen, but the socio-economic gap to widen as well. Instances of teacher attrition, especially those occurring mid-year, jeopardize children’s support system, causing a greater need for socio-emotional supports within schools (Walker, 2019). There is a need for teachers who are better prepared, regardless of the state in which their preparation program was located, who will stay in the field for longer
periods of time to hone their skills and become expert teachers and help increase student achievement.

**Political Analysis**

The United States is at a political crossroads, in that the U.S. Department of Education needs to create stricter guidelines for all states to follow regarding teacher preparation programs and the experiences new teachers need to have prior to entering the classroom as a first year teacher. The Department may also mandate states to follow the same teacher preparation expectations. This is why the work should begin within the individual states such as Illinois.

Currently, each state can make their own decisions as to what constitutes a highly qualified teacher and what each institution of higher learning has developed as the scope and sequence for their teacher preparation programs. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) stated that individuals seeking to become a teacher must meet the following criteria:

- **Self-Contained General Education in Elementary Education (Grades K-9) – (23 IAC 1.710)** To be assigned to teach elementary education (self-contained general education), an individual must hold a professional educator license and meet ONE of the following requirements: 1. Hold an elementary education (self-contained general education) endorsement for grades K-9 or 1-6. The educator is qualified to teach within the grade range of the endorsement. 2. Hold a short-term approval valid for elementary education (self-contained general education). 3. Meet the predecessor requirements at a time when they were applicable. Since September 1, 1978, each teacher also must have completed at least one course in each subject area being taught. Educators licensed prior to this date are required to have only a professional educator license endorsed for elementary education.
• **Departmentalized Subjects for Grades K-5 – (23 IAC 1.710)** To be assigned to teach a specific departmentalized subject in any of the grades K-5, an educator must hold a professional educator license endorsed in teaching for the grades to be served, plus have completed one course in the departmentalized subject to be taught. Educators licensed prior to September 1, 1978, are required to have only a professional educator license endorsed for elementary education. Exceptions exist for assignments of reading teachers; reading specialists; library information specialists; and teachers in ESL, bilingual education, and special education. See requirements for these roles in each position’s unique section within this document.

• **Departmentalized Subjects in Grades 6-8 – (23 IAC 1.720)** To be assigned to teach departmentalized subjects in the middle grades, an individual must hold a professional educator license and meet ONE of the following requirements: 1. Hold an elementary education (self-contained general education) endorsement if first employed in grades 6-8 prior to September 1, 1973. 2. For major teaching assignments (subjects taught for the majority of the day), hold a junior high endorsement for the subject being taught and have completed five semester hours of coursework for any subject that is not taught for the majority of the day (minor teaching assignment). 3. Hold a middle school or middle grades endorsement for any major teaching subject (subject taught for the majority of the day) and have completed six semester hours of coursework for any minor teaching assignment (subject[s] that are not the major teaching assignment). 4. Hold a short-term approval valid for the grades and the subject to be taught. 5. Meet the predecessor requirements at a time when they
• **Departmentalized Subjects in Grades 9-12** – (23 IAC 1.737) To be assigned to teach a specific subject in any of the grades 9-12, an individual must hold a professional educator license and meet ONE of the following requirements: 1. Hold an endorsement valid for the grades and subject to be taught. 2. Meet the predecessor requirements at a time when they were applicable, as confirmed by the employing district’s verification of the individual’s qualifications. 3. Have completed 24 hours of coursework in the subject area if first assigned to a position on or after July 1, 2004, and be working toward the endorsement, which must be obtained within three years of assignment. Only nine semester hours of coursework are required for the areas of library information specialist and foreign language. This provision is not applicable to the safety and driver’s education endorsement. 4. Hold a short-term approval valid for the grades and subject to be taught (ISBE, 2020).

To be a highly qualified teacher, one must satisfy only four requirements: (a) possessing a bachelor's degree, (b) obtaining full state certification or licensure, (c) demonstrating subject-matter competency, as defined as a major (or equivalent credit units) in the taught subject; and (d) acquiring an advanced state certification, in-field graduate degree, or passage of a state subject test.

To combat the teacher shortage, many states, including Illinois, have created alternative certification programs for those wishing to change careers into teaching. These programs involve 1 year of intensive coursework, followed by a 1-year residency student-teaching and mentoring period (Teach.com, 2020). While some of these alternative programs fair better than others, such as Teach for America (TFA), teachers are placed usually in high-need areas (i.e., low-income,
limited English language proficiencies, and high crime areas). The results of this alternative teacher preparation program have indicated:

- 43.6 percent of TFA corps members voluntarily remained in their initial low-income placement schools for more than 2 years and 14.8 percent stayed in those placements for more than 4 years.
- 60.5 percent voluntarily remained in the teaching profession for more than 2 years and 35.5 percent stayed in teaching for more than 4 years.

13.2 percent of TFA corps members' transfers and 2.4 percent of their resignations from the profession were involuntary (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2020).

This does not fare much better in comparison to traditional teacher preparation programs. In 2019, the ISBE created a committee to improve the quality of all teachers in all classrooms. They began this investigation by looking at traditional teacher preparation programs, concluding that students that live in poverty communities do not have high quality teachers. The committee also discovered that:

- Educator preparation programs in Illinois have not consistently been held to a high standard, and existing accountability has been focused on compliance, not program improvement. Data are not used thoughtfully across all programs to improve performance.
- ISBE has not provided support to educator preparation programs, especially those that struggle to perform. The state has also not historically recognized exemplary performance.
• The federal government, as well as leading states, have taken steps to drive transformative accountability and program improvement structures for educator preparation programs (Partnership for Educator Preparation, 2019).

Based on the current need for highly qualified teachers, especially in low-income areas serving children of color, the ISBE needs to either establish stricter guidelines on what the scope and sequence of university teacher preparation programs contain or make a uniform policy that all universities must follow in redesigning their teacher prep programs. The Elementary and Secondary Act was first passed in 1965 by USDOE, with its most current iteration (the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]) in 2015. Since its inception, the USDOE has tried to put more and more stipulations on each state as to what constitutes highly qualifies teachers and how they are to be held accountable. With this demand comes funding for each state to use for professional development for teachers, instructional materials, parent involvement, all with a lens focused on educational equity in an attempt to close the achievement gap (ESSA, 2015). The reissue of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) specified that a highly qualified teacher held the following qualifications and at request by a parent, each teacher’s record could be shared with the public: (a) bachelor's degree, (b) full state certification or licensure, and (c) subject-matter competency, as defined as a major (or equivalent credit units) in the taught subject; advanced state certification, in-field graduate degree, or passage of a state subject test (NCLB, 2008).

This caused states to update policies regarding teacher preparation programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965, later amended into the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, focuses on developing teacher preparation programs to ensure the availability of high quality teachers and to prevent “diploma mills” (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). Diploma mills are defined as institutions that are not accredited and offer post-secondary degrees to
candidates that pay for minimal coursework and thus are not truly certified or qualified to be in the classrooms.

These are examples of how the USDOE has attempted to create policies to improve teacher prep programs that will result in highly qualified teachers that will stay in the field and help raise student achievement while closing the gap. In 2020, this field is still facing a teacher shortage and an alarming attrition rate for new teachers. I recommend that the Illinois State Board of Education establishes a uniform scope and sequence for all university teacher preparation programs and standardizes certification testing across the whole state.

**Legal Analysis**

Education is primary in control by the state and the local entities it serves (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b). The federal government only steps in when needed, such as in the rulings of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the Title IX bringing sexual equality to education, and Section 504 and Rehabilitation Act of the 1970s (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b). The mission of the USDOE has been to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b, para. 10). If everyone agrees that teachers are the single most important factor in student success and the USDOE’s mission is to foster educational excellence, it is unclear why the USDOE has not intervened to regulate what teacher preparation programs entail. The future of the country depends on the quality of education that students are currently receiving. States may reject the idea or perceive that the federal government is overstepping its role, but in cases of national emergencies, it is necessary to act with urgency while maintaining compliance with existing laws.
Moral and Ethical Analysis

Educators often preach about creating global citizens that are a productive part of society, but not all teachers embody those ideas in their classrooms. The increase of global citizens would indicate that U.S. students are capable of competing academically with those of other industrial countries such as England, Finland, Denmark, or Norway. The U.S. currently ranks 11th in education, with the top three being Finland, Switzerland, and Sweden (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2020b). In order to be productive members of society, people must possess skills that contribute to the wellbeing of all members of the society. If teachers are unable to interweave social-emotional skills into the academic lessons, they will be unable to cultivate such citizens. Society is founded upon the ability to understand differences in thoughts and opinions; at its most basic, a society is a group of individuals living and working together in an orderly space (Dictionary.com, 2020). When teachers leave schools, especially those found serving low-income and families of color, the feeling of not being worthy of a high-quality education can permeate the community, causing mental and emotional harm.

Teachers are the one career that trains all other careers. Without the consistency that a school district needs, society will begin to crumble. This is why the time is now to create a policy that standardizes teacher preparation programs across the state of Illinois to create a strong pipeline of new teachers entering the classrooms ready to face the challenges of modern society.

Implications for Staffing and Community Relationships

As a result of the recommended policies, staffing will and should become more difficult. Recruiting top quality candidates in each classroom across the state requires that universities consistently produce such candidates. Recruitment efforts in the field of education are associated with difficulties due to low funds, and many organizations conduct national searches to identify
suitable candidates. Most schools simply post an opening and wait for candidates to apply and navigate through the bureaucracy that many districts put in place. Simply because it takes a candidate a considerable amount of time to navigate and complete the application process, however, does not mean it is a rigorous one. If school districts attracted and retained these high quality teachers, the community would stand behind the accrued cost of recruiting them to teach their children. In the end, schools are here to serve the community. In order to have a symbiotic relationship, if the district is transparent about the mission to pursue the best possible candidates because their children deserve it, it is without a doubt that most school boards would pass the motion to approve that cost. Successful schools have developed a true partnership between the institution and they community they serve (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

Conclusion

Even with all of the national policies put forth by USDOE, states are still struggling to keep teachers in the field until they become master teachers that can positively impact student achievement, including the state of Illinois. This country is founded upon the ideal that states have power to govern themselves, and the federal government only steps in on emergency cases; however, the future of this country and the lack of highly qualified teachers to lead the students to be prepared to face those challenges may be classified as a national emergency. The state of Illinois can act as a catalyst in this area by beginning the change and offering its’ findings to USDOE if it is successful. This can be replicated across other states if needed. Again, I recommend the creation of a state of Illinois policy to govern all university teacher preparation programs to follow the same stringent regulations so that all students across the whole state can benefit from these incoming teachers.
Section Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

In an era of teacher shortages and a widening student achievement gap, current teachers cannot continue to leave the field at their current rate. Not only does this turnover and attrition cost school districts large amounts of funds, significant time and human capital are required to recruit, hire, induct, and mentor new teachers into the schools. This has detrimental effects on student achievement, as these funds can be better used for instructional materials or staff trainings. The purpose of schools is to educate students and provide the needed tools for their success in whatever their next level of education may be. As school districts try to figure out how to close the achievement gap, there is a need to focus on the teachers that conduct the instruction. Such an examination must begin with an evaluation of teacher preparation programs.

Discussion

I aimed to explore the extent to which teacher preparation programs help new teachers stay in the field for longer periods of time. As I have mentioned throughout this paper, at least 50% of new teachers leave the field within the first 5 years of service (Riggs, 2013). A revolving door of teachers in a school or district poses challenges other than simply having to replace a teacher. Although many would say that the negative effects on student achievement is the greatest, the funds associated with replacing teachers can be better allocated to instructional materials or further training to support the teaching staff.

If this problem continues to persist, the achievement gap—especially in urban schools—will widen, leaving many families disenfranchised by the country and the educational system that already is faced with inequities in discipline and academics (Ladson-Billings, 2006). For this reason, now is the time for the Illinois State Board of Education to create drastic policies that
will level the expectations for all future teachers equally in all communities. The U.S. Constitution provides individual states the power to govern themselves, but this is national crisis calls for larger changes. The state of Illinois can lead this change by implementing this new policy first. This change involves creating a new policy that regulates the scope and sequence of teacher preparation programs across the state, thereby ensuring that all new graduates have the same foundational knowledge that is aligned to the feedback from advisory groups such as NCTQ and CAEP. This will improve the standard of quality teacher preparation programs available, regardless of what community the teacher chooses to call home.

This new policy should call for standard curricular scopes and sequences in every teacher preparation program across the state. The course sequence will be guided by the current status of education in the state, as seen through data collected by school districts working closely with universities and the data funneled to ISBE. Such a policy could mirror those of other high-scoring nations, such as Norway and Singapore. The certification test should also become standardized for all universities. It is possible that a shift to a competency-based assessment would be more beneficial than a multiple choice exam, like that offered in Illinois.

Chicago is the third-largest school district in the United States. Chicago’s student enrollment is 17,492 in preschool, 24,241 in kindergarten, 208,690 in elementary, and 104,733 in secondary, for a total of 355,156. Of this total, 82.5% are students of Black or Latinx backgrounds (Chicago Public Schools Knowledge Center, 2020). This is precisely the demographic subgroups that are on the lower range of the achievement gap. This means that urban school districts need better qualified teachers who possess updated cultural training, classroom management skills, and social-emotional proficiencies to be able to support the whole child in each classroom across the country.
Professionals such as Darling-Hammond and Ingersoll have cited a need for more classroom management as well as social-emotional training respectively. Without effective classroom management, no learning can occur. Another important focus is the mental well-being of students; in order for students to be able to focus on academics, they must receive the support that they need in order to place other concerns aside. Some of the current respondents indicated that their teacher preparation program did include some classroom management skills, but not to the level that they needed upon entering the field. Most respondents mentioned that they only got better at their craft after practicing more than 5 years. This is the same threshold at which a significant number of new teachers leave the field (Strauss, 2017a). To help these teachers remain in the field beyond the five-year threshold and give them the opportunity to be able to make real academic impacts on students, there must be a stronger foundation of knowledge and practice before their graduation. A strong mentoring program within the organization is also needed to ensure swift onboarding and skill development.

It is necessary for young teaching professionals to possess the skills needed to enter the classroom with a strong sense of efficacy. To achieve this goal, teacher preparation programs across the state of Illinois should contain the same coursework to ensure a common knowledge base. This coursework should include classes on cultural proficiency, classroom management strategies, and social-emotional supports within the classroom. Student teaching should be a year-long effort in conjunction with obtaining evidence for teaching standards to show mastery in each category to prepare for the updated certification process. This aligns directly to the new teacher certification exam, which is common across the state. This will produce teachers that have a common base knowledge that they can transfer to any school community. I anticipate that
when they possess these skills, new teachers will stay in the field longer and achieve real academic achievement growth across all student demographics.

**Leadership Lessons**

As a student of public education, I have a better understanding of how improving teacher preparation programs can begin to turn the tide of the current teacher shortage. The state of Illinois will need leadership from the ISBE to guide them in the correct direction, as well to enforce compliance in order for institutions to retain their accreditation. The United States is hemorrhaging educators, and the students will suffer the most acutely from this shortage. If education is to be a lever to help improve society, the lever itself must be improved.

As a leader, I know have a much better understanding of how to support new teachers in my building. I usually partner them up with a mentor teacher, but then I leave them alone, as my title often intimidates some of the new teachers. In the future, I will be more involved in taking a needs assessment from the new teachers to create a differentiated professional development plan with feedback look to ensure that new teachers feel welcomed and supported. Along with the feeling of belonging, new teachers will fill their knowledge gaps between their teacher preparation program and the real world until teacher preparation programs reflect the needs of a changing society. In anticipation of this proposed change in educational policy in regards to teacher preparation programs, school leaders must have the knowledge in this document in order to provide the supports the staff needs in order to achieve academic success.

Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions. By the year 2024, 44% of the Unites States students enrolled in public schools will be of Black and Brown descent, while the 80% of the teaching force is White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016); this disparity may contribute to the miseducation of minority students if leaders in this field do not
provide the support and learning needed by new teachers to address the needs of such students. School districts will continue to provide support to new staff via mentoring and thoughtfully created professional development plans that are differentiated based on need, but the first changes must occur to teacher preparation programs.

While this change has not been implemented in the state of Illinois, I have had to create opportunities within my building to support the on-going learning of novice teachers so they gain the knowledge that was lacking from their teacher preparation programs. This has led to our school being named an exemplary supportive school as well as rated a 1/1+ for several years in a row, which is the highest rating in the Chicago Public Schools system.

**Conclusion**

As a graduate of public schools, a practitioner in public schools, and a parent of a public school student, I am deeply invested in contributing to the growing body of research on the topic of improving teacher preparation programs. Every generation hopes that the subsequent one is better, and one key component in improving socio-economic status is education. The key to a high quality education begins with highly qualified teachers that better understand the needs of their students. Now is the time to create policy to standardize the curricular scope and sequence of teacher preparation programs across the state. These programs will be guided by the feedback obtained by organizations such as CAEP and NTCP working in conjunction with local school districts to adjust the curriculum in teacher preparation programs to meet the changing needs of the 21st century classroom. This will ensure that every child has a nurturing and highly qualified teacher to guide them through their early impressionable years early into their post-secondary plans.
References


Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2020). *Study finds Teach for America teachers stay in the classroom past initial commitment.* Retrieved from https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/08/05/study-finds-teach-america-teachers-stay-classroom-past-initial-commitment


Appendix A

As-Is Chart

Context
- Over 50% of teachers leave the field within first 5 years
- Teachers struggle with classroom management
- US public schools are seeing a large influx of students of color
- 81% of teachers are white

Culture
- % feel "these" kids don't value education
- % feel parents don't support education
- Community vs staff values clash
- % don't understand WHY % do what they do

Teacher Shortage epidemic
- % feel isolated in the classroom
- % feel unsupported by all
- Classroom management the large concern
- % feel they can't teach because of disruptions
- TPR is slow to change based on need

Competencies
- % don't know how to deal with CM
- Misunderstandings between T and S
- % have no sense of belonging
- % need strong SEL support in class
Appendix B

To-Be Chart

Context
- TPP have begun to focus more on CM, SEL, and Culture Competence
- Teacher are staying in the teaching field for much longer time
- Teacher regardless of gender or race feel welcome
- Achievement is on the rise and gap is closing

Culture
- Teacher efficacy is high
- Teacher feel support from parents
- Teacher are welcomed to have conversations about race in a productive manner
- Teacher know their learning is never over

Teacher Shortage epidemic

Competencies
- Teacher have a good grasp of CM strategies
- Teacher has a sense of belonging
- Strong SEL support in class exists to support those \$\$ with concerns
- Curriculum includes all genders/ethnicities
- Race conversations occur to better understand each other not for negative reasons

Conditions
- TPP are open to feedback and incorporate it into their scope & sequence
- Teacher are open to learning even when it feels uncomfortable
- Everyone understands that there are cultural differences
Appendix C

Teacher Prep Program Survey

Teacher Prep Program Survey v2

Please take this 15 minute survey to gather information in regards to how well you feel your undergraduate teacher program helped you in your years of teaching. Your identity will remain anonymous. Please click on the consent form in order to proceed with the survey. Upon completion, you will be entered to win a $50 Amazon gift card!

I am aware of and have read through the voluntary consent form and agree that I am not obligated to complete this survey. The results will be anonymous and you will have no risk in answering this survey truthfully.

☐ I agree

☐ I disagree
What gender do you associate with?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

What is your racial or ethnic background?

- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Indian
- Mixed race
- Prefer not to answer
How old are you?

- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36 and up

What grades do/did you teach?

- Elementary School (K-8)
- High School (9-12)

What type of school district do you work in?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

How many years have you been teaching?

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- more than 10
What university did you graduate from?

Short answer text

Do you feel you were well prepared to manage student behavior by your teacher preparation program?

1 2 3 4 5

Absolutely not   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Extremely well

Do you feel you were well prepared to create engaging lessons aligned to standards by your teacher preparation program?

1 2 3 4 5

Absolutely not   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Extremely well
Do you feel you were well prepared to implement social-emotional learning into your content by your teacher preparation program?

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely not</td>
<td></td>
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Do you feel you were well prepared to instruct students far below grade level by your teacher preparation program?

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<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely not</td>
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Do you feel you were well prepared to engage students of ethnic backgrounds different from yours by your teacher preparation program?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely not</td>
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What course do you find was the most useful now that you are teaching? Why?

Long answer text

What course do you find was the least useful now that you are teaching? Why?

Long answer text

What course do you wish you had taken prior to entering the teaching field? Why?

Long answer text

Have you had the feeling that you wanted to leave the profession?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered yes to the above question, can you tell us why you wanted to leave the profession?

Long answer text

If you would like to be entered into the $50 Amazon gift card, please leave your email address so I may get in contact with you.

Short answer text
When did you think about leaving the profession?

- Yrs 1-3
- Yrs 4-6
- Yrs 7-10
- NA
When did you think about leaving the profession?

- Yrs 1-3
- Yrs 4-6
- Yrs 7-10
- NA

What gender do you associate with?

- Male
- Female
- other
- prefer not to answer

What is your racial or ethnic background?

- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Indian
- Mixed race
- Prefer not to answer
Appendix D

Strategies and Actions to Improve TPP

- Advocacy Groups Come together
  - Trend found based on new teacher feedback
  - Method for gathering practitioner feedback is developed (e.g., surveys)

- TPP make adjustments based on real-world needs

- Progress is monitored and adjustments made if needed
  - Pre-service teachers receive courses in CM, SEL, and CC to increase skill and satisfaction

- More teachers remain in the field due to being better prepared to meet the challenges in the modern classroom

- Schools embrace shared leadership and continual learning to increase job satisfaction