Policy Analysis

The Role of State Policy in Preparing Educators to Meet the Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities

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October 2014

IDEAs that Work

Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

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Recommended Citation:

Goldrick, L., Sindelar, P., Zabala, D., & Hirsch, E. (2014). *The role of state policy in preparing educators to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities* (Document No. PA-1). Retrieved from University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center website: http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/literature-syntheses/

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Over the past decade, as their work has grown increasingly complex, teachers have come under increasing scrutiny. Most are coping with more students, smaller raises, and fewer resources (National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2013). Educators are expected to meet higher standards and demonstrate their impact on student learning, often with an increasingly diverse and challenging student population, including more students with disabilities, more English language learners, and more students living in poverty. Teachers operate in complex, multitiered systems in which they are expected to provide high-quality core instruction and effective small group interventions for struggling learners and carefully monitor students to determine who requires more intensive intervention.

In addition, the quality of teachers' performance is judged more and more commonly on the basis of how students perform on standardized assessments. Most students with disabilities participate in standard assessments, and their performance in both reading and math has been discouraging. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2013) reported that in 2010-2011, the median state proficiency rate for students with disabilities was 40% in reading and 48% in math. These percentages declined across grade levels in both reading and math and across time. Since OSEP first reported these data in 2007-2008, the decline in proficiency rates averaged more than 13% across grade levels and assessments.

Scores in math and reading from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) allow comparisons of students with disabilities to their non-disabled peers. In 2011, the average reading-scale score for fourth-grade students with disabilities fell 40 points below that of all other fourth-graders. For 12th-graders, the difference in average scale scores was 41 points.

These differences were statistically significant, as were differences in math scale scores at all levels.[1]

Scholars are reaching consensus about school-based factors that affect student achievement, and foremost among them is teacher quality (Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). As Sanders and Rivers (1996) have shown, teacher effects are cumulative and additive so that on achievement tests, students who have effective teachers for consecutive years benefit substantially. The impact of teacher effectiveness is not limited to measures of achievement. For example, Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2011) found that students consistently taught by more effective teachers were likely to have better health outcomes and better educational outcomes than students not consistently taught by effective teachers. These findings suggest that if the performance of students with disabilities is to improve, then the effectiveness of their teachers must also improve. This general statement applies to both general and special education teachers. On average, in 2011, more than 60% of students with disabilities spent more than 80% of the school day in general education classes (OSEP, 2013). Improving the quality of the teaching workforce will necessitate improvements in initial teacher preparation, beginning teacher induction, and ongoing professional learning, and systemic change of such scale is likely to require substantial state policy reform.

[1]These scores were obtained with the NAEP Data Explorer (http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx). The decline in proficiency rates between 2005 and 2011 may be explained, in part, by two factors. First, states change proficiency standards so that what is considered proficient one year may not be the next, and vice versa. Also, important demographic changes occurred concurrently with this decline. For example, over that span, the number of students with disabilities declined by 5.2%, and the number of students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) declined by 15.2%. These declines in prevalence are likely to have affected the test performance of students with disabilities. The declines in the number of students with disabilities and, in particular, the number of students with SLD, imply that the population of students with disabilities was fundamentally different in 2007-2008 than in 2010-2011. (It seems logical that among students at risk for disabilities, more capable students are less likely to be identified as having a disability.) As a result, the 2010-2011 cohort in all likelihood was less academically proficient than the 2007-2008 cohort. Thus, the absence of progress across years may be explained, in part, by the changing nature of the population of students with disabilities. Nonetheless, the absolute level of performance remains a concern.

School leadership also affects student achievement (Gates, Ross, & Brewer, 2001; Nettles & Harrington, 2007). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), in a meta-analysis of 70 studies, estimated its magnitude as .25. An effect size of .25 means that the average achievement of students in schools with effective leaders is equivalent to students performing at the 60th percentile in schools with average leaders. Essentially, a one standard deviation improvement in school leadership will result in a 10% increase in student performance. Among the important leadership roles related to student achievement, Nettles and Harrington (2007) identified (a) establishing a safe and orderly school environment, (b) establishing a clear mission and vision, (c) involving teachers in decision making, (d) monitoring the effectiveness of school practices, (e) establishing an instructional focus, (f) setting high expectations for student success, and (g) fostering teachers' professional development (PD). Billingsley, McLeskey, and Crockett (2014) identified leadership roles as they specifically pertain to educating students with disabilities. In doing so, they extended the concept of instructional focus to explicitly include students with disabilities and noted that for students with disabilities to succeed, principals must be able to create inclusive school environments and foster parent involvement.

Virtually every school serves students with disabilities, and these schools, along with all other students in the schools, stand to benefit from high-quality school leadership. Improving the quality of school leadership on any reasonable scale will require improved preparation, induction, and professional learning, just as it does for teacher preparation, and, like systemic change in teacher preparation, systemic reform of leadership preparation will require state policy reform to reach scale.

In this paper, we have reviewed state policies related to educator standards, teacher and administrator preparation, teacher and administrator certification and licensure, induction and

mentoring, and on-going professional learning. We have focused on policy questions that have not been addressed elsewhere, with specific attention to how they impact students with disabilities. Our purpose was to provide a knowledge base for developing tools—and to complement existing tools—that can guide the development or revision of policies that support effective teaching and school leadership and the refinement of program evaluation. We have addressed five main questions:

1. Do states have standards for teachers and school leaders? Do the standards address what teachers and leaders need to know to effectively educate students with disabilities and other diverse learners?
2. Do state and accrediting body preparation requirements address the needs of teachers and leaders in dealing with students with disabilities and other diverse learners? Do states require clinical experiences with students with disabilities and other diverse learners?
3. How do states evaluate the quality of educator preparation programs?
4. What are state certification/licensure requirements for teachers and school leaders? Do required assessments address what teachers and leaders need to know about educating students with disabilities and other diverse learners?
5. Do states require and have standards for the induction, mentoring, and on-going professional learning of educators?

We organized this paper into five sections aligned with these questions. We addressed the questions separately for teachers and school leaders and sometimes separately for general and special education teachers. In each case, we elaborated on the question, presented the results from our 50-state policy analysis, and offered what we consider to be leading examples of

effective state policy. We believe these highlighted states may provide guidance and direction for those seeking to develop or reform related policies.

Methodology

This paper summarizes the current state policy context regarding educator standards and how they are prepared, credentialed, and supported to serve the learning needs of students with disabilities. It surveys the status of state policies that impact the quality and structure of the professional preparation for teachers and school leaders. Policy summaries for all 50 states (cataloging specific state policies on educator standards, preparation, certification and licensure, induction, and professional learning) are available on the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center website at ceedar.org.

Our investigation encompassed state statutes and regulations, professional educator standards, and other information found on state government websites. As evidence, we also used relevant and current state policy summaries published by research institutions, think tanks, and policy organizations. These organizations included American Institutes for Research (AIR), Educational Testing Service (ETS), George W. Bush Institute, Learning Forward, National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), NCTQ, and New Teacher Center (NTC). In making determinations about whether individual states have specific policies in place and including them in our state counts offered in this paper (e.g., the number of states with teaching standards that address the learning needs of students with disabilities), we looked first for the existence of such policies and then judged whether the policies were specific about students with disabilities. Finally, we provided every state the opportunity to review and offer

corrections and additions to our policy compilation. Twenty-two of 50 states reviewed and approved the final version of our individual state policy summaries.

State Policies on Teachers and Leaders

The main thrust of our review explored whether and how states build expectations within their policies for preparing educators to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. We also looked at the standards and requirements for teachers certified in the field of special education. Our focus on standards, preparation, certification/licensure, induction, and professional learning was not intended to discount other policy concerns (e.g., educator compensation) or ignore the existing state policy activity in the area of educator evaluation. However, the connection between those policies and the preparation of educators to support the learning needs of students with disabilities is somewhat less explicit. In addition, we believe that other available policy analyses and summaries have sufficiently covered this terrain (Gitomer & Bell, 2013).

Standards

In this section, we have described state policies related to standards for teachers and school administrators.

Teachers

State teaching standards aim to identify the components of professional practice and communicate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of classroom teachers. Standards serve as the foundation for other policy levers and should be enacted within an aligned and coherent pre-service curriculum, program approval/accreditation process, certification/licensure system, educator evaluation system, and professional learning system. Nearly every state in the United States has established standards that describe what teachers are expected to know and be

able to do. Only the states of Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming do not appear to have adopted such standards.

Teaching standards in 31 of the 47 states speak to some degree about meeting the learning needs of students with disabilities. Typical elements of state standards address knowledge of general characteristics of disabilities, knowledge of major areas of learning exceptionalities, establishing an inclusive classroom environment, the ability to provide curricular accommodations and modifications, alternative ways of assessing student knowledge and understanding, and sharing instructional responsibility and developing collaborative relationships with other educators assisting students with disabilities. States with the most specific and detailed teaching standards for general education teachers to address the learning needs of students with disabilities include Arkansas, California, Indiana, Minnesota, and New Jersey.

An updated version of model teaching standards, released by the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Interstate Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) in 2011, has and will continue to influence the redesign and adoption of state teaching standards over the coming years (CCSSO, 2011a). This version represents a revision of the original 1992 model standards (CCSSO, 2011b). The new model standards include a robust focus on personalized learning for diverse learners and have implications for students with disabilities. In addition to the need for teachers to acknowledge differences that students bring to the classroom and the need to differentiate learning for diverse learners, these new standards also articulate the need for teachers to have a deeper understanding of their own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing); the potential biases in these frames; and their impact on

expectations for and relationships with students and their families (CCSSO, 2011b). Examples are as follows:

- Arkansas: The Performance Criteria and Essential Knowledge and Critical Dispositions outlined within four of the 10 *Arkansas Teaching Standards* (i.e., Learning Differences, Assessment, Planning for Instruction, and Instructional Strategies; Arkansas Department of Education, n.d.) specifically outline the expectation that teachers have the knowledge and skills to support the learning needs of students with disabilities.
- California: The *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009) address the particular needs of students with disabilities in all five standards (i.e., Engaging and Supporting All students in Learning, Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning, Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning, Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students, and Assessing Students for Learning).
- Minnesota: Standard 3 (i.e., Diverse Learners) of Minnesota's Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers (The Office of the Revisor of Statues, 2009) succinctly encompasses the breath of teacher knowledge and skills needed to address the needs of students with disabilities. Standards include knowledge about areas of exceptionality in learning, creating instructional opportunities that are adapted to students with exceptionalities, identifying when and how to access appropriate services or resources to meet exceptional learning needs, and identifying and applying technology resources to enable and empower diverse learners.

- New Jersey: Standards 2 and 7 of the New Jersey *Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders* (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014) address working with students with disabilities. Standard 2 speaks to teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to identify and teach to the developmental abilities of students, including those with exceptionalities. Standard 7 speaks to teachers' abilities to modify instruction to meet diverse learning needs, including appropriate assessments and use of technology.

States tend not to differentiate their teaching standards for different classifications of teachers such as special educators. Instead, they tend to use preparation requirements and certification and licensure rules to create different requirements for these specialized teaching areas as well as various specializations within special education (e.g., blind and visually impaired). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2011) has published a national set of *Special Education Professional Practice Standards* that are more specific for special education teachers, but general teaching standards tend not to address students with disabilities in as much detail.

School Administrators

State-adopted school leadership standards address the role that school administrators play in leading schools and districts. They articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to serve in the capacity of principal, superintendent, and other educational leadership roles. These abilities include creating safe and supportive learning environments, eliminating barriers to achievement, and upholding laws and regulations.

Forty-six states have leadership standards. States have either independently created the standards, or they have adopted or adapted the Interstate School Leadership Licensure

Consortium (ISLLC) standards. Nevada is the only state that appears to have teaching standards but not standards for school administrators. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, 2014), 40 states have adopted the ISLLC standards. The six ISLLC standards address the role of the school leader in promoting the success of every student but do not directly address students with disabilities. Only in states that have adapted, rather than adopted, the ISLLC standards do we see this explicit connection articulated.

Although more than half of the states' teaching standards address the needs of students with disabilities, just nine of 46 state leadership standards make this connection. Typical elements of school leadership standards include promoting the equitable instruction of students with diverse learning needs. The states of Indiana, Ohio, and Vermont have leadership standards that most directly and comprehensively address the needs of diverse learners and students with disabilities. Examples are as follows:

- Indiana: *Indiana Content Standards for Educators* (Indiana Department of Education, 2010) require knowledge of working with students with disabilities. Standard 2: Instructional Leadership addresses "ensuring the use of practices with proven effectiveness in promoting academic success for students with diverse characteristics and needs, including English Learners and students with exceptionalities, including high-ability and twice exceptional students" (p. 3).
- Ohio: Standard 2 of the *Ohio Standards for Principals* (2005) requires principals to support the implementation of high-quality, standards-based instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students. One element of this standard is that the principal advocates for high levels of learning for all students, including students with disabilities. Principals who are proficient in this element monitor the identification

and instruction of students of diverse abilities, use disaggregated achievement data to determine the performance and needs of particular students and groups, and regularly examine student performance data to determine the under- and over-identification of students in special education.

- Vermont: Based upon the national ISLLC standards, the *Core Teaching and Leadership Standards for Vermont Educators* (2012-2013) directly address students with special learning needs. "An education leader provides and monitors effects of differentiated teaching strategies, curricular materials, educational technologies, and other resources appropriate to engage and help motivate diverse learner populations, including learners with disabilities" (pp. 34-35).

Pre-Service Preparation

In this section, we have discussed state policies related to teacher preparation standards and accreditation, alternate route (AR) preparation, teacher preparation program accountability, school leader preparation standards and accreditation, and preparation accountability.

Teacher Preparation: Standards and Accreditation

The typical levers that states have used to govern the structure and quality of teacher preparation programs are program approval standards and accreditation. The national organization at the forefront of this work traditionally has been NCATE.[2] NCATE Unit Standards (NCATE, 2008) are composed of six main standards: (a) Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions; (b) Assessment System and Unit Evaluation; (c) Field

[2]As of July 1, 2013, NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) consolidated operations as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). New CAEP standards were approved on August 29, 2013. During the time of our review, NCATE standards were in place in the vast majority of states, and CAEP standards were just beginning to be formalized. See further discussion on the next page.

Experiences and Clinical Practice; (d) Diversity; (e) Faculty Qualification, Performance, and Development; and (f) Unit Governance and Resources.

NCATE standards (2008) are infused with the notion of the teacher candidate's responsibility to provide meaningful learning experiences for all students, creating caring and supportive learning environments, and an understanding of student exceptionalities. Specifically, Standard 3c (Candidates' Development and Demonstration of Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions to Help All Students Learn) requires all candidates to "participate in field experiences or clinical practice that include students with exceptionalities" (Standard 3c, para. 2). Standard 4 (Diversity) specifically speaks to "working with diverse populations" (Standard 4, para. 1). Standard 4a (Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Curriculum and Experiences) requires curriculum and field experiences to provide "a well grounded framework for understanding diversity (Standard 4a, para. 2)," including students with exceptionalities; it also requires that candidates be "aware of different learning styles and adapt instruction or services appropriately for all students (Standard 4a, para. 2)," including students with exceptionalities. Standard 4d (Experiences Working With Diverse Students in P-12 Schools) requires candidates to work with students with disabilities "during some of their field experiences and/or clinical practice to develop and practice their knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions for working with all students" (Standard 4d, para. 2).

The merger of NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) resulted in the creation of a new organization, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the adoption of more rigorous accreditation standards in late 2013 (Cibulka, n.d.). The new CAEP standards (CAEP, 2013) will impact state and institutional

accreditation of teacher preparation programs in years to come as states formally adopt them and utilize them in their accreditation processes.

When it comes to teaching diverse learners, including students with disabilities, state requirements for general education teachers are common. According to NCATE, 39 states have adopted or adapted NCATE Unit Standards as their own and apply them to all institutions for purposes of state approval. In addition, 28 states designate NCATE to conduct the program review process for purposes of NCATE accreditation and state approval (NCATE, 2014). According to NCTQ, 43 states require a student teaching experience; 32 states require at least 10 weeks of student teaching. Nine states require less time, and three do not specify the length of the student teaching (NCATE, 2014). Our policy review, however, identified only 23 states that explicitly require general education teacher candidates to have clinical experiences involving students with disabilities. Examples are as follows:

- Florida: Teacher preparation programs must provide 15 semester hr addressing effective instructional strategies for the needs of diverse learners. The program must also provide each teacher candidate with clinical time in diverse K-12 classroom settings teaching special populations, including a culminating experience of no less than 10 weeks in duration.
- Massachusetts: State regulations require all prospective educators to receive training in strategies for effective inclusive schooling for children with disabilities, instruction of students with diverse learning styles, and classroom organization and management. The state also requires field-based experience to begin early in the preparation program (i.e., pre-practicum) and include a supervised 300-clock-hr practicum. Practicum experiences must include working with students with special needs.

- New York: State regulations require teacher preparation programs to provide instruction about the nature of students within the full range of disabilities and special health-care needs; the effect of those disabilities and needs on learning and behavior; and skills in identifying strengths, individualizing instruction, and collaborating with others to instruct students with disabilities and special needs. Programs must provide at least two college-supervised student teaching experiences of at least 100 clock hr over at least 20 school days each (or at least two college-supervised practica with individual students or groups of students of at least 20 school days each). These experiences must be in high-need schools and with students with disabilities.
- West Virginia: All general education preparation programs must provide at least 6 hr of preparation in special education, including a focus on the impact of each disability, the use of evaluation data generated from special education to assist with instruction, and the effective and efficient use of consultation. They must also address the differentiation of instruction for diverse learners. In addition, a minimum 12-week clinical experience must include work with learners with special needs.

States often require specific course work and tests of knowledge and skills for general education teachers during pre-service preparation. More than half of the states have subject-matter course work requirements for middle and secondary teacher candidates, either requiring an academic major, a minimum number of unit requirements in the subject, or both. According to Quality Counts 2012 (Education Week, 2012), 28 states require teachers to have completed formal course work in their primary subject taught. As noted in a 2007 review of state teacher policies conducted by Loeb and colleagues (2006), states' minimum degree/course work requirements often vary across subjects or within individuals across endorsement areas

(i.e., the teacher needs a major for the first subject endorsement but can add additional endorsements with less course work).

Thirty-nine states have specific special education course work requirements for general education teachers. Although our policy review did not capture the details of these requirements, a 2010 review (Regional Educational Laboratory [REL], 2010) of such policies in the Northeast identified eight special education content areas. The most common included understanding the growth and development of children with exceptionalities, mastering instructional design (including planning and methods), and adapting and differentiating instruction.

Most states utilize minimum passing scores on written tests as a gatekeeper for entry into the teaching profession. Thirty-eight states require prospective teachers to pass a written test of basic skills, and 42 states require them to pass a written test of subject-specific knowledge. Only four states (i.e., California, Florida, New York, and Texas) require prospective teachers to pass a written test of subject-specific pedagogy (NCTQ, 2013). Delaware, Rhode Island, and Texas are the only states that use a generally normed test of academic proficiency for admission to their teacher preparation programs (NCTQ, 2013).

Alternative Teacher Preparation

Our analysis of policy related to AR teacher preparation is based on annual reports published by Emily Feistritzer and the National Center for Education Information (NCEI), a series that seems to have been discontinued in 2010. At the time, the vast majority of states—49 of 51—had authorized ARs, and of these 49, 46 (92%) offered at least one AR option for special educators. However, according to NCTQ (2013), only two states (i.e., Michigan and Minnesota) offer genuine alternate routes that set high expectations for candidate entry. The number of routes authorized by states ranged from a high of 6 in Kentucky and averaged 2.6. Institutions of

higher education (IHEs) are commonly authorized to provide AR programs, often in collaboration with districts and other local education agencies (LEAs; *n* = 12). In three states (i.e., Illinois, Indiana, and Louisiana), only IHEs were authorized to offer ARs. State education agencies (SEAs) also provided a variety of options to prospective teachers, including transcript analysis (*n* = 4), portfolio assessment (*n* = 7), and performance assessment (*n* = 1).

Eight states authorized a single omnibus program that covers most or all disciplines and is available to many providers. Many states (*n* = 26) provided entrees for practicing teachers, but through 2010, only one had developed a route for paraprofessionals. This finding is surprising given the strong potential the paraprofessional step-up model has for addressing the needs of hard-to-staff schools and disciplines (Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey, & Rosenberg, 2007). In fact, when programmatic purpose is articulated in policy, the most common intent (*n* = 26) involves addressing critical shortages of exactly this sort. The other commonly expressed (*n* = 11) purpose is to provide a route into teaching for competent professionals or individuals with other exceptional qualifications.

In 2010, surprisingly few states (*n* = 7) explicitly authorized programs with online or distance delivery modalities, and most of those that did were in the West. Teach for America (TFA) and the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) were the most common private providers authorized in policy or rule, although their purview seldom included special education. In 2010, seven states had authorized ABCTE as a route to full teacher certification. According to the ABCTE website, 11 states currently do so (ABCTE, n.d.). The small number of states that included TFA in policy or rule also underestimates its true reach. According to the TFA website (2012), it now sponsors programs in 35 states and the District of Columbia.

Few states stipulate preparation content beyond listing topics or courses. However, a West Virginia program—Alternative for Special Education Certification—required 6 semester hours in "research-based reading strategies" (Feistritzer, 2011, p. 310) and 3 semester hr in "research-based mathematics strategies" (Feistritzer, 2011, p. 310), and Florida's Educator Preparation Institutes required mastery of "competencies associated with teaching scientifically based reading instruction and strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers" (Feistritzer, 2011, p. 88).

It seems safe to conclude that AR preparation has become a mainstay of teacher preparation throughout the United States in both general and special education. Many programs are designed for practicing teachers who may be teaching out of field without a license or with a license in another discipline. They are intended to address shortages and attract career-changers into secondary school disciplines, like math and science. Most ARs authorized in policy or rule are not abbreviated or streamlined; training requirements are substantive, and IHEs are commonly involved in delivery. However, some SEAs license teachers via transcript analysis or portfolio assessments in lieu of additional training.

Teacher Preparation Program Accountability

Reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) during the 1990s included provisions that foreshadowed an increasing focus on teacher preparation program accountability. The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasized access for students with disabilities to the general education curriculum and required schools to teach these students what is taught to all students, increasing pressure on programs with regard to teachers' content knowledge and their pedagogical content knowledge (National Council on Disability [NCD],

2004). In more recent years, several states have required documentation of program outcomes, surveyed candidate satisfaction, and begun to evaluate teacher preparation programs based upon multiple measures, including student achievement data and stakeholder perception data.

At least 30 states require the collection of some program-specific, objective data on teacher preparation programs. Such data collected by states include number of teachers prepared and disaggregated by subject area, academic area, and credential area; teacher retention rates; number of attempts to pass licensure examinations; average scores on licensure exams; satisfaction ratings from employing schools and districts; and teacher evaluation results. Based on the NCTQ's (2014) 2013 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, 10 states—Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Texas—have policies that include the use of student achievement data to hold teacher preparation programs accountable for the effectiveness of the teachers they graduate.

Fewer states meet NCTQ's accountability criteria, which expect states to (a) collect data that connects student achievement gains to teacher preparation programs; (b) collect other meaningful, program-level data that reflect program performance; (c) establish minimum standards of performance for each data category; (d) publish an annual report card on the state's website; and (e) retain full authority over teacher preparation program approval. According to NCTQ, only one state (i.e., Louisiana) fully meets the NCTQ goal for teacher preparation program accountability, whereas 14 states do not, and 18 others only meet a small part of it (NCTQ, 2014). Quality Counts 2012 (Education Week, 2012), which established a less rigorous accountability standard, suggests that 16 states hold teacher preparation programs accountable for graduates' performance in the classroom.

In our judgment, program accountability policies tend to have two flaws. First, most offer programs little specific guidance about how to improve preparation. Second, most fail to meaningfully link with program accreditation policies. Thus, preparation programs are required to address both *a priori* and *post hoc* criteria, and often, these criteria are not integrated or aligned. Lack of alignment can result in programs satisfying accreditation requirements but failing to satisfactorily perform on accountability measures (or vice versa). States would do well to align accreditation and accountability policies and ensure that they provide programs meaningful information to guide program improvement.

School Leader Preparation: Standards and Accreditation

As in teacher preparation, the typical levers used by states to govern the structure and quality of school leadership preparation programs are standards and accreditation systems. Although CAEP and other accreditation standards are in place in a number of states, our state policy review found far fewer identifiable examples of states that require specific course work in special education issues for prospective school principals than for prospective teachers. Whereas 39 states clearly require teacher preparation programs to offer course work on the learning needs of students with disabilities, only 16 states explicitly require the same of principal preparation programs. Given that most states require prospective school administrators to have teaching experience and/or hold a teaching license, one could argue that this content is covered during pre-service teaching. Nonetheless, there appears to be less focus during the preparation stage of future school administrators on the needs of students with disabilities than in teacher preparation. Although Quality Counts 2012 (Education Week, 2012) reported that 39 states required a supervised internship for aspiring school principals, our analysis identified California as the only state that explicitly requires aspiring school administrators to have a clinical

experience that includes a focus on students with disabilities. The California example is as follows:

- California: California education preparation program standards require field experience and clinical practice for prospective educators, including school administrators. The state's administrative service credentialing program standards require candidates to have opportunities to learn how to maximize academic achievement for students with disabilities and students with a combination of special instructional needs and learn about federal, state, and local laws, policies, and practices that ensure appropriate accommodations for a diverse student population.

School Leader Preparation Program Accountability

Far fewer states have established structures or requirements for administrator preparation program accountability as compared to teacher preparation programs. Whereas 30 states collect objective, program-specific data on teacher preparation programs, we were able to identify only five states (i.e., California, Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) that do so for administrator preparation programs. Typical data used by these states to determine the quality of leadership preparation programs include employer satisfaction, candidate performance on assessments, graduation rates, and job retention rates. Examples are as follows:

- California: The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2009) oversees the state's educator preparation accreditation system that is designed to focus on the demonstrated competence of California's educators. The system involves a 7-year cycle of activities, including ongoing data collection, analysis of data based on candidate competence, and at least one site visit.

- North Carolina: State law requires annual performance reports for all school administration programs to include data on (a) quality of students entering the schools of education, including the average grade point average and average score on pre-professional skills tests that assess reading, writing, math, and other competencies; (b) graduation rates; (c) time-to-graduation rates; (d) average scores of graduates on professional and content-area examination for the purpose of licensure; (e) percentage of graduates receiving initial licenses; (f) percentage of graduates hired; (g) percentage of graduates remaining after 4 years; (h) graduate satisfaction; and (i) employer satisfaction.

Certification and Licensure

In this section, we have discussed certification policies for teachers generally, for special education teachers in particular, and for school leaders. Our consideration of teacher certification includes a discussion of tiered licensure.

Teachers

State policy on teacher certification and licensure has typically established a low bar for entry into the profession. Certification and licensure requirements typically include national tests of basic skills and content-area subject knowledge, and fewer states require some initial demonstration of pedagogical skill. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that as of 2013, 32 states require basic-skills exams, 38 require subject-matter exams, 21 require some assessment of pedagogy, and 22 require an assessment of actual teaching performance.

Basic-skills tests are one device used by states to govern the quality of entering teachers. NCTQ reports that 20 states use these tests, which typically assess middle-school-level

knowledge, as the primary means for conferring teaching licenses. At least 10 states do not require teachers to pass a basic-skills assessment (Education Week, 2012).

All but two states (i.e., Montana and Nebraska) require a content licensure test for elementary teachers. Massachusetts is the only state that sets the passing score for elementary teacher content licensing tests at the 50th percentile. On average, states set the minimum passing score at one standard deviation (16th percentile) or lower than the mean (NCTQ, 2012). Massachusetts is also the only state with a rigorous test of the mathematics content elementary teachers need to know (NCTQ, 2012). Three states—Indiana, Minnesota, and Tennessee—require, without any significant loopholes, all secondary teachers to pass a content test in every subject area they want to be licensed to teach. Twelve states do not require secondary teachers to pass a content test in every subject they are eligible to teach. The other 35 states meet the goal of requiring content assessments for secondary teachers (NCTQ, 2012).

In addition to satisfying state certification and licensure requirements, these exams are used by many teacher preparation programs and are required for either program admission (often using the basic-skills exam) and/or program completion (most often the subject-matter exam) and as the basis for recommendation to the state for initial certification/licensure.

Tiered licensure. While determining advancement from initial educator licensure or licensure renewal, most states rely on inputs, including the completion of a set of activities such as induction, PD hours, advanced degrees, or a PD plan. A number of states, however, are implementing performance-based measures and developing multitiered educator licensure systems (Paliokas, 2013).

We used three data sources for our analysis of tiered licensure—Hoogstra (2009), Paliokas (2013), and the NASDTEC Knowledgebase Portal. We used the policies or rules

posted there for the 50 states and the District of Columbia (and accessed via the Stages and Titles of Teaching Certificates link under the Certification Requirements menu). The analyses by Hoogstra (2009) and Paliokas (2013) were not intended to be comprehensive, although Hoogstra (2009) catalogued policies and rules for seven states served by the Midwest REL and 12 Race to the Top states. When possible, we updated information on the NASDTEC database with information from these two sources. With this information, we identified the number of tiers and their titles, using as a starting point the license available to individuals who complete state-approved teacher education programs at accredited institutions. We also analyzed the requirements for moving from stage to stage. These requirements often included satisfaction of criteria related to experience, degrees and credit hours, paper-and-pencil and performance assessments, completion of induction and PD, and/or board certification. Two-level systems took the form of initial and professional certification, and three-level systems typically added an advanced level to this basic structure. Although a few states had more than one advanced level, we limited our analysis to the first step above professional status. We found that most states (n = 47) have tiered licensure systems, most commonly with two or three tiers. The modal number of tiers was two, with a range of one to four.

Initial to professional certification. By far, the most common criterion used to differentiate initial from professional certification was experience, a requirement in 23 states. This requirement ranged from 1 to 4 years, with a mode of 3 years. Experience was most often used in combination with other criteria, and only two states required only experience for advancement. Completion of an induction program was required by 15 states, and 10 states imposed a PD requirement, most commonly in the form of hours. Thirteen states required formal evaluation, and six states required passing scores on various state assessments. Only two

states required performance assessments, and two others mandated the use of K-12 student data. Finally, seven states required novice teachers to complete credit hour requirements for advancement (M = 11 hours, range 6 to 20 hours), and 6 others required completion of advanced degrees. Typically, states use one or two criteria (M = 1.85) in assessing the readiness of novice teachers with initial certificates to advance to professional status.

Professional to advanced certification. The 18 states with advanced certificates also use one or two criteria (M = 1.72) as standards for advancement from professional certification status. An advanced degree, most commonly a master's degree, is required by 14 states, and experience is required by nine states, all of which exceeded the length of the experience requirements for initial to professional advancement. Board certification was required in 12 states, but in two of those states, it was an option. When a particular process was identified, it was invariably the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification. Two states require formal evaluation or evidence of student progress.

In the Great Teachers and Leaders Center brief, Paliokas (2013) differentiated between input- and output-based tiered licensure systems. Input-based systems require completion of activities, such as an induction program, or satisfaction of requirements, such as credit or PD hours; by contrast, output-based systems more heavily rely on classroom performance, student outcomes, or both. Paliokas also noted that "states are trending toward the additional use of performance-based assessments" (p. 2), a trend stimulated in part by Race to the Top and ESEA waiver requirements and participation in the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium (TPA; Hoogstra, 2011). The edTPA is a subject-specific teacher performance assessment with separate versions for early childhood, elementary, middle childhood, and secondary licensure fields. Currently, six states (i.e., Hawaii, Minnesota, New York, Tennessee, Washington, and

Wisconsin) have formally adopted a statewide policy requiring a state-approved performance assessment as part of program completion or for state licensure and/or program accreditation/review, and another five are considering it (edTPA, n.d.). These trends are less evident in the NASDTEC database, though, perhaps because changes occasioned by Race to the Top or participation in TPA have yet to appear in statute. It is also true that some states have been slow to update the information in the database.

Nonetheless, there are promising practices evident in the rules and policies we reviewed. For example, several states use completion of a formal mentoring program as a requirement for advancing to professional status. Given an extended and rigorous experience, the sensibility and benefit of such policies are obvious. A smaller number of states require a portfolio or performance assessment, but these requirements also bring meaning and contingency to tiered licensure structures. Finally, even though few states have yet to link licensure tiers to compensation or role differentiation, most have multitiered structures in place with which to do so.

Special Education Teachers

States substantially vary in the manner in which they structure special education licensure, and few generalizations are possible. However, it is true that most states offer a mix of categorical (i.e., disability specific) and non-categorical or multicategorical special education licenses. The most common categorical certificates are in sensory impairments, including deaf and hard of hearing, visually impaired, and speech impaired. Also, a substantial majority of states (i.e., two thirds) offer K-12 licensure. When a distinction is drawn within the K-12 range, it may be based on professional function rather than age. For example, 31 states offer

specialization for secondary transition or vocational special education (Geiger, Mickelson, McKeown, Kleinhammer-Tramill, & Steinbrecher, 2014).

NCTQ takes issue with this preference for non-categorical K-12 licensure. In fact, in its 2011 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, NCTQ described state requirements for the preparation of special education teachers as

> one of the most neglected and dysfunctional areas of teacher policy. The low expectations for what special education teachers should know stand in stark contradiction to state and federal expectations that special education students should meet the same high standards as other students. (NCTQ, 2012, p. 37)

However, special educator teachers are subject to the same No Child Left Behind (NCLB) highly qualified requirements as other teachers; special education teachers must have bachelor's degrees and must have satisfied all other state requirements for licensure or be enrolled in a state-approved AR program. The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA extended these basic requirements by stipulating that to be considered highly qualified, special education teachers who teach core academic subjects must "demonstrate subject area competency commensurate with the grade levels they teach" (Geiger et al., 2014, p. 33). This stipulation would seem to belie NCTQ's concern.

States vary as to whether special education licensure is freestanding or contingent upon first having a general education license. Two recent estimates (i.e., Geiger et al., 2014; Sindelar, Leko, & Dewey, 2013) put the proportion of states with freestanding special education licenses at 76% or 80%. Geiger and colleagues (2014) alluded to states' longstanding preference for freestanding licensure. In a comparison of states with freestanding versus contingent special education licensure, Sindelar and colleagues (2013) reported no differences on the proportion of

highly qualified special education teachers or the inclusiveness of special education service delivery—in spite of the fact that because special education teachers working as consultants or co-teachers are exempted from it, the subject area requirement creates real incentive for inclusive service delivery.

In spite of state-to-state variability, two trends in licensing special education teachers are discernible. First, according to Geiger and colleagues (2014), for the past 20 years, states have been adding non-categorical special education licenses in large part because it helps districts and schools address shortages by increasing flexibility in hiring. At the same time, states have eliminated few categorical certificates, leading to the current situation in which most states offer both. Second, on the basis of a national survey of special education licensure requirements, Geiger (2002) noted an emerging shift from course or credit-hour requirements to licensing based upon demonstrations of competence or performance assessments. Geiger estimated that three fourths of the states had or were contemplating such a change.

This seemingly persistent state-to-state variability markedly contrasts with the strong and growing advocacy within the field of teacher education for collaborative preparation and licensing (Blanton, Pugach, & Boveda, 2014; Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011). Indeed, teacher preparation providers have increasingly moved toward collaborative preparation, often in the form of dual certification programs, but state licensure structures have not yet been changed to reflect this increased collaboration.

School Administrators

As with teachers, nearly every state has established certification or licensure requirements for school administrators and principals. Forty-six states have established standards for the certification or licensure of school administrators and superintendents. According to the NCSL

(2014), most states base licensure on the completion of credit hours in an approved educational administration program and require that principal candidates have teacher certification and classroom experience.

Induction and Mentoring

We considered induction and mentoring policies separately for beginning teachers and school administrators.

Teachers

Today, 27 states require new teachers to participate in some form of induction or mentoring and, as a result, more new teachers receive such support than ever before. Although the comprehensiveness and funding of these state policies vary, they have been enacted to ensure the provision of induction support and the assignment of a mentor or coach, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and increasing student learning. Although more than half of the states require some form of induction or mentoring, only 11 states require an induction program of at least 2 years in length, and few differentiate induction and mentoring for special education teachers (Hirsch, Rohrer, Sindelar, Dawson, Heretick, & Jia, 2009). Twenty-two states require completion of or participation in an induction program for licensure advancement. Overall, only 3 states—Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa—require schools and districts to provide multiyear induction support to beginning teachers, require teachers to complete an induction program for licensure advancement, and provide some dedicated state induction funding (NTC, 2012).

With regard to diverse learners and students with disabilities, only 2 states—California and North Carolina—specifically identify their learning needs as a priority within state teacher induction program standards for all beginning teachers. California's *Induction Program Standards* (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2008) Program Standard 5 (i.e., Pedagogy)

requires beginning teachers to "plan and differentiate instruction using multi-tiered interventions as appropriate based on the assessed individual, academic language and literacy, and diverse learning needs of the full range of learners (p. 8)," including "students with special needs (p. 8)." Program Standard 6 (i.e., Universal Access: Equity for All Students) prioritizes protection and support for all students through the design and implementation of "equitable and inclusive learning environments (p. 8)." [3]

In North Carolina, Beginning Teacher Support Program Standard 3 (Mentoring for Instructional Excellence) prioritizes the diverse learning needs of the students of beginning teachers. Mentors are required to "guide beginning teachers in the development of positive, inclusive and respectful environments that support learning for a diverse student population" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2010a, p. 23) and "design and implement a broad range of specific strategies designed to meet the diverse needs of their students and promote high levels of learning (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2010a, p. 23)." Examples are as follows:

- Connecticut: Connecticut is one of only three states that requires and funds at least a 2-year teacher induction program. The state-funded Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program requires new teachers to complete five professional growth modules to attain advanced licensure.
- Iowa: Iowa requires the successful completion of a 2-year induction program in order to advance to the career-level teaching certificate. This includes a comprehensive evaluation at the end of the induction period to determine whether

[3] California's standards also require beginning teachers to fulfill their legal and ethical obligations (including the identification and referral process of students for special services), communicate and collaborate with special services personnel, provide accommodations and implement modifications, use positive behavioral support strategies, employ a strengths-based approach to meet the needs of all students, and use adopted standards-aligned instructional materials and resources (e.g., varying curriculum depth and complexity, managing paraeducators, using assistive and other technologies).

a teacher meets the expectations to move to the career level. There is also a provision to provide a third year of support for the teacher to meet the expectations for a standard license.

- North Carolina: The state requires "all teachers who hold initial licenses . . . to participate in a three year induction period with a formal orientation, mentor support, observations and evaluation prior to the recommendation for continuing licensure" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2010b).

School Administrators

States are far less likely to require induction or mentoring for new school administrators than for beginning teachers. Whereas 27 states require some form of induction or mentoring for all beginning teachers, only 16 states require professional support for first-time school administrators. Only three states (i.e., Indiana, Missouri, and New Jersey) require a 2-year program of support for beginning school administrators (NTC, 2012). Examples are as follows:

- Missouri: All new school administrators must participate in a district-provided induction program during their first 2 years on the job.
- New Jersey: The state requires all new principals to participate in a 2-year residency program for initial certification. New Jersey Leaders to Leaders (2014) provides trained mentors and a range of continuing PD programs and services to support new school leaders in successfully completing the state-required 2-year Residency for Standard Principal Certification.

Professional Learning

As in the previous section, we have discussed professional learning policies separately for teachers and school administrators.

Teachers

Fewer than half of the states have promulgated policy for on-going PD for veteran teachers. Learning Forward (2014; formerly known as the National Staff Development Council [NSDC]) has developed national Standards for Professional Learning that many states have either adopted or adapted for their own use. At least 23 states have enacted such standards. Although these professional learning standards speak to the academic needs of all students, they do not specify knowledge and skills needed by general education teachers to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. The Learning Forward example is as follows:

- Learning Forward: Forty states have adopted or adapted the Professional Learning Standards developed by Learning Forward. These standards outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.

School Administrators

There is less focus within state policy on the on-going professional learning needs of school principals and administrators compared to teachers. Only 13 states have standards for the on-going PD of veteran school administrators, compared with 23 states with such standards for veteran teachers. The New York example is as follows:

- New York: State regulations require holders of an educational leadership professional certificate to complete 175 clock hr of PD every 5 years. New York State's Professional Development Standards define effective PD as that which improves the learning of all students, including those with different educational needs, learning styles, and incremental abilities and those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Summary

In this section, we have returned to the questions we posed at the beginning of this paper and have answered them based on findings of our analysis.

1. Do states have standards for teachers and school leaders? Do the standards address what teachers and leaders need to know to effectively educate students with disabilities and other diverse learners?

Standards are a cornerstone of educator preparation policy, and we found that a preponderance of states has developed or adopted them for both teachers (n = 47) and leaders (n = 46). Among states with teacher standards, nearly two thirds address the learning needs of students with disabilities, although the standards are often couched in terms of *all learners* or *diverse learners*. Among states with leader standards, many fewer (n = 9) address students with disabilities.

Although the CEC has developed standards for special education teachers, states do not commonly differentiate them from standards for general education teachers. Teaching standards tend to address learning characteristics of students with disabilities; inclusion, accommodations, and modifications; assessment and differentiation; and professional collaboration. One common element of leader standards as they relate to students with disabilities is providing equitable access to effective instruction.

2. Do state and accrediting body preparation requirements address the needs of teachers and leaders in dealing with students with disabilities and other diverse learners? Do states require clinical experiences with students with disabilities and other diverse learners?

States influence educator preparation through the processes of program approval and accreditation for new and ongoing programs. Thirty-nine states have adopted NCATE (and now CAEP) standards for program accreditation, and several of these standards explicitly relate to educating students with exceptionalities or diverse populations. These standards stipulate essential content and field experiences, which states typically express in the form or credit or clock-hour requirements. Fewer states require content related to students with disabilities in leadership preparation, and fewer still require field experiences with them.

Although most states have authorized alternatives to traditional teacher preparation, most of these routes are substantive, some are extensive, and many are offered by IHEs. Our analysis suggests that there are few options for individuals to enter teaching without substantive preparation. Most states that offer ARs include special education in the authorization.

3. How do states evaluate the quality of educator preparation programs?

According to our analysis, 30 states require program-specific, objective data from preparation providers. However, only five states do so for leadership preparation programs. Most commonly, teacher preparation programs are required to report graduates' employment and retention, their performance on licensure examinations, and their (and their employers') satisfaction with the program. An increasing number of states require teacher preparation programs to report results of teacher evaluations, including eight that mandate use of K-12 student assessments. Leader preparation programs are most commonly evaluated on the basis of graduation rates, graduates' employment and retention, and graduates' performance on licensure examinations.

Our analysis suggests that program evaluation policy is less commonplace and less coherent than is policy on standards and program accreditation. We also believe this to be an

area of state policy in rapid flux, trending toward the development and use of technically adequate measures of classroom performance and student achievement.

4. What are state certification/licensure requirements for teachers and school leaders? Do required assessments address what teachers and leaders need to know about educating students with disabilities and other diverse learners?

The standard requirement for certification is a bachelor's degree and completion of a state-approved preparation program at an accredited IHE. In addition, nearly half of the states require passage of basic-skills assessments for admission into teacher preparation and a content assessment at program completion. Increasingly, states are requiring candidates to pass performance assessments (e.g., edTPA) for certification.

A substantial majority of states organize certification by tiers, commonly differentiating between initial and professional levels or among initial, professional, and advanced levels. Experience is the most common requirement that differentiates initial from professional certification, and it is often paired with completion of an induction and mentoring or PD program. Some states require additional course work or an advanced degree, but seldom do even these requirements specifically link to educating students with disabilities. Advancement from professional to advanced levels often requires completion of an advanced degree, extensive experience, or, in some states, board certification, most commonly the NBPTS. To date, tiers are only infrequently used to differentiate professional roles or steps on a pay scale.

We found great variability from state to state in the manner in which special education teachers are certified. However, most states do offer a generic certificate that commonly covers several disability areas and the K-12 age range. A small number of states require general education certification as a prerequisite for obtaining special education certification. Given the

range of skills a teacher needs to effectively work with students across the K-12 age range, we are concerned that a comprehensive K-12 certificate may have a negative impact by diluting special education teacher preparation.

5. Do states require and have standards for the induction, mentoring, and on-going professional learning of educators?

Although 27 states require induction and/or mentoring, most commonly for 1 year, only two states have induction program standards that specifically address equitable learning for students with disabilities. Fewer states (n = 16) require professional supports for novice school principals. With regard to PD, half of the states have promulgated requirements for novice teachers, and roughly one fourth have promulgated requirements for novice school leaders. PD requirements for teachers are frequently based on Learning Forward (2014) standards.

There are some but, in our judgment, too few states that use professional criteria like completion of an induction or PD program as a criterion for advancing from initial to professional certification levels. We see the integration of these two policy domains as having good potential for creating a more coherent policy framework.

Policy Implications

Our analysis suggests that states must strengthen their policy focus on developing and assisting educators to address the learning needs of students with disabilities. To ensure that all general education teachers, special education teachers, and school principals are able to support all students, including students with disabilities, there must be an aligned and sustained policy focus on the unique needs of special learners throughout all stages of educator preparation, certification, and professional learning.

We have identified six primary implications of our policy analysis:

1. Standards are foundational: Standards for what educators are expected to know and do must prioritize the learning needs of students with disabilities; however, teaching standards in nearly 20 states do not. These standards should be aligned with other components of a career-long professional learning and support system, and the needs of diverse learners should be represented during all stages of teacher development, beginning with initial preparation.
2. Strengthen expectations of school administrators: Heightened standards for classroom teachers must be matched by similar expectations for school administrators and principals. Because most states require school leaders to have initially been prepared as teachers, one could argue that many were initially steeped in preparation that may have included experience working with students with disabilities. Information obtained in pre-service teaching is likely to be out of date by the time a teacher becomes an administrator. Further, standards for school administrators should have a different focus. In fewer than 10 states, however, do standards for school administrators emphasize the learning needs of specific student populations, including students with disabilities; most place a more generic emphasis on all students. This must change.
3. Enhance clinical preparation during pre-service teaching: It is troubling that only half of the states that require a student learning experience for general education teachers during initial preparation require a school or classroom assignment that involves working with students with disabilities. Further, an increasing number of teachers come into the profession through ARs, and state laws governing these programs are less likely to require clinical experiences prior to a candidate's initial teaching

assignment and, at best, are likely to mirror requirements for traditional, university-based preparation programs. Given the number of students with disabilities educated in mainstream classrooms, it is critical that general education teachers, and not just special education teachers, have training and experience in addressing their learning needs.

4. Build an aligned teacher development system with a career-long focus on learning: An emphasis on students with disabilities present in a majority of state teaching standards falls away as educators progress along a career continuum. This initial grounding and emphasis that many states place on supporting the academic needs of students with disabilities is not borne out through policies more likely to influence the learning and assessment of classroom teachers of record. One reason is that fewer states have policies on beginning teacher induction and professional learning. Another reason is that these policies, when they exist, are far less likely to prioritize, or even mention, the needs of specific student populations such as students with disabilities. In addition to ensuring a standards-based focus throughout the teaching career, there are opportunities to embed a focus on students with disabilities within the policies and standards that govern enterprises such as evaluation, induction, and PD.
5. Link existing certification and licensure tiers to meaningful programs of support, assessment, and PD: Virtually all states differentiate licensure for novice and experienced teachers, but many require nothing more than the accumulation of experience for individuals to progress from one level to the next. Other states link progress to more substantive requirements such as completion of induction or PD

programs or satisfactory performance on performance assessments. In our judgment, if a distinction were to be drawn, progress from one level to the next should be linked to the satisfaction of meaningful, standards-based criteria related to professional growth.

6. Include criteria related to students with disabilities in program approval and program evaluation policies for both teacher and leader preparation: Program approval and program evaluation criteria should be used to leverage change in teacher and leader preparation content and structure. Program approval and evaluation criteria must align and must be complete and coherent. For programs judged to be unsatisfactory, policy should provide guidance for meaningful and responsive improvement.

Throughout this paper, we have pointed to examples of leading states from which others can learn. Although no single state has developed a perfectly aligned system of educator development and support that elevates students with disabilities as an instructional priority, several have articulated aligned standards and policies with tremendous depth that insist that students with disabilities remain a focused priority for educators from their initial preparation and throughout their careers. As states continue to reassess their educator standards, reform educator preparation program requirements, develop teacher performance assessments, build program approval and evaluation systems, and overhaul their certification and licensure systems, they should strive to prepare all educators to ensure equitable opportunities for students with disabilities.

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