State Policy and Practice Portrait

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Teacher Shortages: Meeting the Demand Without Sacrificing Quality Preparation and Support

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Critical Shortages in Special Education. Sound Familiar?

Released by the Policy Center at American Institutes for Research, this blog highlights some of the primary reasons special educators indicate they leave the profession.

The Priority

We simply do not have and cannot keep enough effective teachers. Whether the problem stems from insufficient pay, inadequate preparation and professional learning support, poor working conditions, or all of these, the result is the same. Not all students have equitable access to effective teachers.

Right now, many states and districts are struggling to fill teaching positions. Between 2009 and 2015, enrollment in teacher preparation programs fell by 35% and the number of program completers fell by 18%, meaning fewer teachers are entering the field.[1] Teacher attrition, including all teachers who leave the profession for any reason, is just below 8%, which represents an increase of one third since 1989.[2] There is no shortage of explanations: anemic recruiting efforts by teacher preparation providers, low teacher salaries, and poor working conditions. Teacher quality policies—such as educator evaluation systems, and certification and licensure standards—have also been named as causes for teacher attrition and shortages. Regardless of the exact cause, the two trends of declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs and rising teacher attrition are the major contributors to teacher shortages. Meanwhile, the nation's student population continues to grow, further straining the teacher labor market.

Some specific teaching areas have suffered from chronic shortages, predating the latest national outcry about teacher shortages.[3] What was predominantly a problem in certain teacher specialties (special education), subject areas (science and math), and locales (rural and urban) seems to be spreading into other teaching areas. Some have noted that the real problem is the distribution of teachers across areas of

[1] U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Preparing and credentialing the nation's teachers: The Secretary's tenth report on teacher quality.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://title2.ed.gov/Public/TitleIIReport16.pdf
[2] Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/A_Coming_Crisis_in_Teaching_REPORT.pdf
[3] Cross, F. (2015). *Teacher shortage areas nationwide listing*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/pol/tsa.doc

specialization; there are more than enough elementary school teachers but not enough teachers prepared to teach special education or secondary mathematics.[4] Some studies have suggested that shortages are a natural part of the ebb and flow of the labor market—that the issue is only problematic in a small portion of schools and districts that are disproportionately affected.[5]

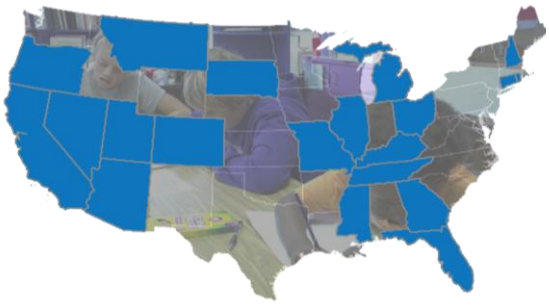
In any case, teacher shortages are ever present and the situation is ripe for quick fixes. Already, several states—Utah, Alabama, and Wisconsin[6] among them—have passed legislation that relaxes or removes the need for preparation and certification. However, untrained and fast-tracked teachers cannot be expected to meet the complex needs of students with disabilities and other struggling learners.

Partnerships as Potential Solutions

One of the most promising strategies for addressing the problem of shortages is for educator preparation providers (EPPs) to partner with school districts. Creating a strategic partnership requires effort from all organizations involved, and these partnerships have the potential to have a powerful impact on teacher supply. Creating the type of infrastructure needed to effectively prepare and support educators requires shared commitment, investment, and ownership on the part of the EPPs, local districts, state education agencies, and the candidates. This type of strategic partnership can establish a coordinated plan to address district supply and ensure that candidates have and are supported to develop the skills they are likely to need to effectively support all students' learning.

The Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center (CEEDAR) is a federally funded organization that supports 20 states in establishing and sustaining these types of strategic partnerships.[7] Each state has created a leadership team of representatives from the state department of education, at least three EPPs, and local districts—including stakeholders from both special and general education. As part of this work, CEEDAR brings these stakeholders together to create both the policy and practice infrastructure to ensure that all teachers and leaders are prepared and supported to meet the needs of all students. The blue states in Figure 1 represent CEEDAR's 20 intensive states.

Figure 1. CEEDAR Intensive States



[4] Voke, H. (2003). Responding to the teacher shortage. In M. Scherer (Ed.), *Keeping good teachers.* Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/104138/chapters/Responding-to-the-Teacher-Shortage.aspx

[5] CALDER. (2015). *Missing elements in the discussion of teacher shortages.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/Missing%20Elements%20in%20the%20Disucssion%20of%20Teacher%20Shortages%20PDF.pdf

[6] See http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2016/06/teaching_degree_utah.html.

[7] CEEDAR is funded by Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

Albeit no quick fix to the shortage issue, the strength of these partnerships has advanced efforts to improve both the rigor of educator preparation and the potential for collaborative, sustained professional learning support by

- Creating coherence across state, EPP, and district efforts to strengthen educator capacity across the career continuum;
- Aligning expectations of practice from preservice to in-service;
- Establishing high-quality field experiences;
- Strengthening the preparation of all teachers and leaders to operate effectively in a Multi-tiered System of Support; and,
- Using innovative strategies to fully license newly hired teachers (as described further below).

These partnerships show great promise for fully and jointly supporting educators across the career continuum as described in Table 1.

Table 1. CEEDAR Center Partnering EPP's Response to Teacher Shortage

University	CEEDAR Partner Strategies to Address Shortage of Teachers
California State University at Long Beach	In response to teacher needs and shortage issues in California, California State University at Long Beach, one of the six institutions of higher education that partner with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Department of Education in the CEEDAR efforts, has established a dual-certification program at the undergraduate and postbaccalaureate levels. Faculty worked closely with their district partners to establish this program and to ensure that candidates receive high-quality clinical experiences in diverse, urban schools. The goal is to strengthen preparation to be reflective of district needs and to produce more candidates who can meet the licensure requirements across multiple teaching assignments.
San Francisco State	In response to teacher shortage issues in California, San Francisco State partnered with San Francisco Unified School District to create a noncategorical program to support newly hired teachers in progressing from preliminary to level II credentials. District and university faculty mentors assist new teachers—on-site at the district—to gain required knowledge and skills through coursework and authentic practice.
Northern Michigan University	Northern Michigan University (NMU), one of the Michigan partnering institutions, has established close ongoing partnerships with local districts to provide differentiated and tiered support for candidates in field experiences. The partnership emphasizes integrating quality practice-based experiences to ensure candidates exit with knowledge of evidence-based literacy instruction and the capacity to operate effectively within a Multi-tiered System of Support. In addition, the observation of candidates in field experiences has been strengthened to ensure alignment of expectations of university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and the candidates. The goal is that through such alignment and support, newly hired teachers will experience a successful transition to employment and therefore, increased retention.

University	CEEDAR Partner Strategies to Address Shortage of Teachers
Weber State University	Weber State University, as one of the partnering EPPS with the Utah State Board of Education, has created an academy designed to recruit, select, and train effective educators within the partnering districts who can serve as mentors through co-teaching to and with candidates during field experiences. The goal of this work is increase the learning opportunities for teacher candidates by having more skilled mentors as coteachers, which will ultimately lead to a successful field experience for teacher candidates, resulting in increased endurance and success.
California State University at Fresno	California State University at Fresno has aligned curriculum for general and special education preparation programs and simultaneously worked to strengthen district partnerships to establish a residency program for candidates that emphasizes Multi-tiered systems of support and inclusive practices. The team is collecting data about this new program to substantiate its impact on recruitment and retention.

Moving Forward: Leveraging the Every Student Succeeds Act to Establish Partnerships to Increase and Strengthen the Educator Workforce

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)[8] allows states and districts to leverage funds to enact innovative initiatives and policies to strengthen the educator workforce. Highlighted below are potential opportunities:

- **State Teacher Preparation Academies**: ESSA, specifically Title IIA, allows funding to create teacher preparation academies to prepare new teachers. These can be created in partnership with traditional EPPs and/or local school districts. This opportunity emphasizes the need for clinical experience with guidance from an effective teacher.

Featured Resources

- CEEDAR and the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders recently released a special issues brief that emphasizes practice-based opportunities to strengthen the preparation of teachers.
- **The U.S. Department of Education recently released Non-Regulatory Guidance for Title II, Part A: Building Systems of Support for Excellent Teaching and Leading.**
- Bank Street Sustainable Funding Project recently released guidance on how ESSA can be leveraged to support efforts to improve teacher preparation through residency programs.
- The Council for Chief State School Officers' guidance on the allowable uses of ESSA funds and a state readiness self-assessment tool.

[8] Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), Pub. L. No. 114–95 (2015).

- **Strengthening Professional Learning, Induction, and Mentoring.** Both state education agencies and local education agencies can potentially use funds available within ESSA—Title I, IIA, and III—as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)[9] funds to utilize educator effectiveness evaluation and professional learning systems to strengthen educator capacity in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and diverse learners. This can include the establishment of induction and mentoring programs, or the creation of residency programs that allow prospective teachers to train alongside an effective mentor teacher.
- **Creating Teacher Leaders.** As part Title IIA funds and/or competitive grant funds including, for example, the Supporting Effective Educator Development Program and the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program, districts can develop teacher leadership positions to serve as mentors. The mentors can receive extra support, training, and potentially compensation to serve in this role.
- **Local partnerships**. Local education agencies can use the funding they receive from ESSA—Title I, Title IIA, Title III, and/or IDEA funds—to create partnerships in preparing and supporting teacher effectiveness in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and/or English language learners.

Please contact the CEEDAR Center at www.ceedar.org with questions about CEEDAR efforts.

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[9] Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. §612 (2004).