

# GETTING TO BETTER PREP:

A State Guide for Teacher Preparation  
Data Systems



## Executive Summary

The strength of teacher preparation programs matters now more than ever, as states and districts work to ensure students are ready for college and careers in an ever-evolving, interconnected, and complex world. Because an effective teacher is one of the most significant school-based levers influencing student achievement and students' life outcomes,<sup>1</sup> our students need teachers who are prepared with the content knowledge and instructional skills to make a positive impact on their learning from day one.

At the same time, many states are experiencing a demand for teachers in particular grades and subjects or within certain regions that are unmatched by the supply of teachers coming out of preparation programs. Compounding the challenge, the needs of the students attending our public schools are rapidly changing. More rigorous academic standards require more teachers with deep expertise and content knowledge, and an ever-diversifying student population calls for a more diverse teacher workforce.

In the face of growing concerns of teacher shortages and the continued pursuit of thriving school systems, states and local education agencies (LEAs) are looking to teacher preparation programs to partner in examining their practices to better align to state, local, and student needs. And many Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) are eager to collaborate to improve offerings to prospective teachers. But most states and EPPs lack information on how their programs are preparing teachers and meeting the hiring needs of schools and districts, as well as the needs of students upon entering the classroom. This vital information must be the foundation of any meaningful responses to the needs of students and districts.

State Education Agencies (SEAs) can play a critical role in supporting teacher preparation by working with providers to make better data available—and where they are already doing this, it is making a difference. Several states are now prioritizing the evolution of their teacher preparation data systems to be outcomes-based and offer more robust evidence of teachers' classroom readiness and experiences after graduation. Providers find this information more meaningful than the traditional input-based systems that only include characteristics of programs and candidates that are unrelated to teachers' classroom success. Of course, outcomes-based data alone does not solve the challenges noted above, but it is a critical—even compulsory—first step in providing the baseline information necessary for states, districts, and preparation programs to work together in ensuring teacher candidates are fully prepared to meet the needs of students and districts.

### Who should read this report?

This report is drafted with state leaders and policy makers in mind, including those who work with or support these education leaders.

The information shared here will likely be most relevant to states that have either not yet considered a new data system on teacher preparation providers, are only now starting to consider the idea, or are currently embarking on plans to design and implement such a system.

### How can this report help your state?

This report offers two primary functions to readers. First, it illustrates the benefits of teacher preparation data systems as they have been experienced by states who have them or are building them. It makes the case for this work through “real-life” examples.

Second, it offers best practices to help states in moving forward on planning and implementing such systems, drawn from the direct experiences of the featured states. Each best practice is accompanied by at least one example of how a featured state chose to implement it.

### How should you use this report?

The best practices offered here are not a linear step-by-step guide, nor do they suggest a uniform method for building one, ideal data system. Rather, readers should use the best practices offered here as a set of guideposts that every state that has done this work believes are critical elements of the process.

States should execute each guidepost in the way that is most effective for their own needs. The various examples illustrate how a state could choose to execute the best practice while making clear that states take different approaches to the same practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Chetty, R., Friedman, J.N., and Rockoff, J.E. (2014). *Measuring The Impacts of Teachers II: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood*, 104(9) AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW 2633, 2633-34 (finding students assigned to an effective teacher are more likely to

Through the generous support of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation (the “Foundation”), Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Illinois, and Louisiana (collectively, the “featured states”) participated in a series of convenings<sup>2</sup> in which they collaborated on the development of their systems. They graciously agreed to share their experiences in doing this work, common best practices, and lessons learned, synthesized and compiled here in this report.

The report illustrates the real-life benefits of prioritizing outcomes-based teacher preparation data systems as experienced by six states that have already done so, and it offers a checklist of “must do” best practices to help other state leaders begin or continue similar work. It is written from the vantage point of SEAs primarily for other SEAs working to create the conditions necessary to promote great teaching in their states.

The states featured in this report have enabled SEAs, LEAs, EPPs, and teacher candidates to collaboratively strengthen teacher preparation and find ways to partner together in doing so. They expect and have already begun to experience a variety of benefits that flow from outcomes-based teacher preparation reporting, including:

1. Better meeting the needs of teachers and state and local workforce demands by identifying and supporting targeted improvement efforts for programs;
2. Strengthened partnerships between districts and providers that enable districts and schools to meet their needs and build stronger instructional teams;
3. More intentional state planning for teacher supply and demand;
4. Added efficiencies in state systems as a result of focusing on improving this aspect of their data infrastructure.

The six featured states were early pioneers in the development of outcomes-based teacher preparation data systems. As leaders in this work, they did not have robust examples or other research to turn to, but through participation in the full convening series, they shared challenges, learned from each other and experts in the field, and refined their systems. Through their collaboration and workshopping of specific challenges, they were able to maintain momentum and advance their systems.

Additionally, their work together uncovered common best practices applicable to states doing similar work. Although each state had a particular set of contexts that shaped the goals and development of their system, they frequently found commonalities in both their purpose and process for developing teacher preparation data systems.

### These best practices include:

- Establish a vision for teacher preparation within a state and a theory of action for how the state will use data in service of that vision.
- Create a multi-year roadmap.
- Meaningfully engage a range of stakeholders in the development and use of the data system.
- Build a system of multiple measures and identify the content (domains, indicators, and measures) within the data system based on your state’s vision, theory of action, and values.
- Continuously improve the system throughout design and implementation.
- Identify opportunities and third parties to provide technical assistance to teacher preparation programs in using the state data to make targeted program improvements.



For additional information on the size of the featured states and details of their systems, please refer to Appendix A.

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attend college and higher-ranked colleges, earn higher salaries, save more for retirement, and less likely to have children as teenagers, in study examining the school data of 2.5 million children in grades 3-8 linked to tax records over 20 years).

<sup>2</sup> Additionally, several of these states also had the opportunity for further cross-state collaboration as members of the [CCSSO Network for Transforming Educator Preparation](#) (NTEP).