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LETTER FROM COLLABORATIVE CHAIRMAN NELSON AND VICE CHAIRMAN CHARD

Great teaching is the cornerstone of educational progress and success for Texas children. As leaders who have had the unique opportunity to serve students, teachers, schools, and families in different roles, we recognize now more than ever the critical impact of great teaching to ensure that all students have an effective and prepared teacher in each classroom. Every day, we ask 330,000 Texas teachers to be responsible for preparing a diverse and wide range of students with an academic foundation that will serve them well in an increasingly complicated society. Sadly, our current patchwork system of teacher preparation is not working well enough for our aspiring teachers or our school children.

We too often hear from principals and teacher leaders that new teachers are not prepared for the challenges of 21st century classrooms and that far too many teachers have limited or no actual time in the classroom before becoming a teacher of record. Principals and superintendents are asking for new teachers to have stronger skills and deeper knowledge of strategies to serve our diverse Texas students.

What can we do about these challenges? With the support of Educate Texas, we brought together the Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative to explore some proposed solutions. The Collaborative included the expertise of a diverse group of Texas teachers, school leaders, deans from leading colleges of education, leaders of alternative certification programs, and policy partners who are committed to improving teacher preparation. The conversations were often spirited and always grounded in the desire to give teachers strong foundations so that students can thrive. We examined national and state best practices and policies for school districts, educator preparation programs, relevant state agencies, and the legislature and developed this final report that includes recommendations on how Texas can improve.

This is not a new conversation, nor is it one we expect ever to conclude because education must constantly evolve. The creation of the Collaborative was timely given the growing needs of our schools and the future challenges facing Texas students. The Collaborative’s work hopefully will lead to constructive and effective improvements for teacher preparation through legislative changes, regulatory and administrative upgrades, and improved working relationships between schools and preparation entities.

We appreciate the opportunity to convene such a dynamic body of leaders. We recognize and give thanks to the guest experts who joined us throughout the year including guests from the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Vanderbilt University, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and the Louisiana Department of Education. We also thank the staff at Educate Texas and the American Institutes for Research for their tireless work throughout this process. Finally, none of this work would have been possible without the generous support of our foundation partners. We are greatly indebted to ExxonMobil, the Houston Endowment, the Meadows Foundation, the Sid W. Richardson Foundation, and the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Foundation of the Communities Foundation of Texas for their support, without which this work would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

Jim Nelson
Former Commissioner of Education

Dr. David Chard
Former Dean of the Simmons School of Education and
Human Development at SMU President of Wheelock College
### TEXAS TEACHER PREPARATION COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

<table>
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<th>Organization</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<td>Jim Nelson</td>
<td>Former Texas Commissioner of Education</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
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<td>David Chard*</td>
<td>President, Wheelock College</td>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Anthony</td>
<td>Cypress–Fairbanks Independent School District</td>
<td>Former Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Conlon</td>
<td>TNTP</td>
<td>Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Hirsh</td>
<td>Learning Forward</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diann Huber</td>
<td>iteachTEXAS</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Alvarez McHattan</td>
<td>University of Texas Rio Grande Valley</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy McLeod</td>
<td>National Council of La Raza</td>
<td>Deputy Vice President</td>
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<td>Scott Ridley</td>
<td>Texas Tech University</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Savage</td>
<td>Audelia Creek Elementary, Richardson Independent School District</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Sevin</td>
<td>iSchool High at University Park</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodney Watson</td>
<td>Spring Independent School District</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pam Wells</td>
<td>Region 4 Education Service Center</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall Woods</td>
<td>Burges High School, El Paso Independent School District</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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*Former Dean of Southern Methodist University School of Education*

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- Susan Henderson
- Chris Coxon
- John Fitzpatrick

#### American Institutes for Research Staff
- Garry Davis
- Ann Neeley
- John Spence
- Jenny DeMonte

Thank you to Commissioner Mike Morath and Commissioner Raymund Paredes for serving as experts and providing guidance to the Collaborative. Additional gratitude to Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff for supporting the Collaborative and for their work serving Texas students and teachers.
INTRODUCTION

Texas is in the midst of a teaching crisis. With more than 80,000 new students added to the rolls in Texas public schools each year and the hiring of close to 30,000 new teachers each year, the state confronts a dilemma of magnitude. How do we ensure that each child will be taught each and every day by an effective teacher? It is incontestible that the most powerful in-school influence on learning is the quality of instruction that teachers bring to students. 1 Unfortunately, in Texas, too many new teachers begin the school year without the preparation and support they need to help all students succeed.

New teachers more often get their first jobs teaching students who come from low-income households, are students of color, and are English language learners. 2 Research suggests that many of these students often begin their school career already behind their more advantaged peers in terms of learning readiness, which means the preparation and capability of their classroom teachers is even more critical. 3

The demographics in Texas suggest that the growing and diversifying student population is putting extra pressure on teacher preparation: 4

- The demand for new teachers is especially high given the ballooning student enrollment—between 2002 and 2012, enrollment in Texas increased 19.2 percent compared to 3.3 percent nationally during the same decade.
- Since 2013, the proportion of African-American, Asian, Latino, and multiracial students increased.
- Between 2004 and 2015, the percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged grew by 28.2 percent, and now nearly 60 percent of Texas students fall into this category.
- In Texas, 18.1 percent of students are English language learners compared to 9.3 percent nationally.
Moreover, the variety of teacher preparation providers in Texas is varied, especially when compared with the rest of the nation. There are over 130 educator preparation providers in Texas offering approximately 231 programs to prospective teachers. Eighty-one of them are traditional providers and 55 of them are alternative program providers.\(^5\) The Texas Education Agency (TEA) defines traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs this way:

A traditional provider is an accredited college or university, with programming leading to a baccalaureate or master’s teaching degree. Teacher candidates in traditional programs generally do not become a teacher of record while in training, and typically candidates receive some kind of supervised clinical experience while in the preparation program.

Alternative program providers can be school districts, institutions of higher education, regional education service centers, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Alternative program providers offer programs to candidates who already have their bachelor’s, master’s, or PhD degree. Candidates in these programs generally become a teacher-of-record while they are completing the preparation program.\(^6\)

Of the two types of teacher preparation providers, traditional and alternative certification, Texas has the largest proportion of alternative providers of teacher preparation compared to any other state and to the nation as a whole (see Table 1).

Table 1. Pathways to Teaching, Texas (2016) Compared to the United States (2014)\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Providers</th>
<th>Percent Traditional Providers</th>
<th>Alternative Providers Based in IHEs</th>
<th>Percent Alternative Providers Based in IHEs</th>
<th>Alternative Providers not Based in IHEs</th>
<th>Percent Alternative Providers not Based in IHEs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>1,497</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. IHEs = Institutions of Higher Education

Similarly, a greater proportion of teachers in Texas complete an alternative program than in the United States (see Table 2).
Table 2. Number and Percentage of Completers, by Type of Program (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teachers Prepared by Traditional Providers</th>
<th>Percent Prepared by Traditional Providers</th>
<th>Teachers Prepared by Alternative Providers Based in IHEs</th>
<th>Percent Prepared by Alternative Providers Based in IHEs</th>
<th>Teachers Prepared by Alternative Providers not Based in IHEs</th>
<th>Percent Prepared by Alternative Providers not Based in IHEs</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Texas</strong></td>
<td>9,964</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>1,409</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9,176</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National</strong></td>
<td>163,613</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>13,296</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15,550</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
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Note. IHEs = Institutions of Higher Education

This variety in programs corresponds with a vast difference in the entry, preparation, quality, and graduation rates of candidates across teacher preparation providers. For a number of reasons, not all program completers are ready on Day 1 to lead classroom learning.

Understanding the above factors, it is easy to see the challenges facing the education system in Texas. The growing diverse student population has particular needs, and the demand for new teachers puts pressure on the state’s educator preparation providers. Clearly, teacher preparation, licensure, and support for new teachers should be among the most pressing issues for education policymakers, teacher educators, and education practitioners in Texas to improve outcomes for all students and close achievement gaps in the state.
COLLABORATIVE PROCESS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Educate Texas established the Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative to engage representatives from colleges of education, alternative certification programs, teachers, principals, superintendents, advocacy representatives, and professional development providers in a concerted effort to strengthen the state’s teacher preparation system. The Collaborative’s charge was to examine best practices and policies in teacher preparation at the higher education, school, district, state, and national levels; review research on effective teacher preparation practices; and make practical recommendations to improve both the policy and practice involved in teacher preparation.

Collaborative members met in person and participated in online forums during the course of 10 months. Members identified issues that serve as barriers in improving teacher preparation in Texas, prioritizing four major topics for further consideration: demonstrating quality indicators, defining shared responsibilities for collaborative teacher preparation, transforming the clinical experience, and using data to drive decision making.

Collaborative members researched and wrestled with each topic, identifying the challenges, current status of, and opportunities for how teacher preparation is framed, structured, implemented, and evaluated. This report seeks to shift the focus of teacher preparation in Texas from processes and teacher preparation inputs to the outcomes we expect of teachers. The ultimate goal of the report is to help improve teacher preparation and ensure that every student in Texas has an effective teacher. This report includes:

- a high-level summary of the recommendations and
- details of each recommendation, with action items for the legislature, the state, educator preparation programs (EPPs), and other institutions.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The recommendations of this report primarily focus on three aspects of teacher preparation: (1) licensing and educator support; (2) EPP evaluation and accountability; and (3) research to gain a better understanding of the relationships between teacher preparation inputs, processes, practices, and outcomes. The three recommendations are:

**Recommendation 1**—Establish a competency-based, tiered licensure system that differentiates performance and strengthens teaching as a profession.

**Recommendation 2**—Enhance the Texas EPP evaluation system to increase accountability, drive program outcome improvement, and provide public transparency on program performance.

**Recommendation 3**—Establish a Texas Educator Preparation Evaluation and Innovation Alliance.

Collaborative members believe that, if implemented, each of these recommendations would have positive outcomes on teacher preparation in Texas and on Texas student outcomes. The Collaborative recognizes that many of the recommendations will require more detail from the entity that would implement them. The Collaborative’s intent is to focus on the general design of the policy or proposal and allow the details of implementation to be determined by the entity that would advance that work.
RECOMMENDATION 1:
Establish a competency-based, tiered licensure system that differentiates performance and strengthens teaching as a profession.

1–A. Tiered Licensure—The State Board for Educator Certification and the Texas Education Agency should create and define a four-tiered system, in which:
- progression of licensure is based on demonstration of appropriate competencies, as identified by the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS)* or another commissioner-approved evaluation system, and
- there is a clear differentiation of licensure between teachers with no student teaching or field-based experience (Level 1) and teachers with classroom experience (Levels 2 and above).

1–B. Collaboration—Texas Educator Preparation Programs and Districts should collaborate to support teachers at Levels 1 and 2.

1–C. Support—Texas Educator Preparation Programs should be responsible for monitoring, tracking, and working with their teachers during the first three years of teaching, with the support of the state to share relevant data with EPPs.

1–D. Mentorship—The Texas Legislature should allocate state appropriations for mentoring, and related state agencies should provide support for mentoring, including considering using Title I, Title II, Title III, or other funds to support mentorship, which is a key component of professional development for teachers at Levels 1 and 2.

1–E. Reciprocity—The Texas Legislature should maximize the supply of qualified teachers by expanding the reciprocity of licensure policy. This would entail issuing a Level 2 license with no requirement to complete additional exams to teachers who have been certified in other states and can demonstrate proficiency on appropriate indicators aligned with T-TESS or another commissioner-approved evaluation system.

*The Collaborative recognizes that the T-TESS is not intended to be a performance-based assessment but rather a formative system of educator support. As a result of the wide use of T-TESS throughout the state and its emphasis on teaching standards, the Collaborative concluded that T-TESS would be appropriate to use to identify preservice indicators.
PROPOSED LICENSURE MODEL

The proposed four-tiered system presents requirements and supports for licensure progression throughout a teacher’s career. Although there are four licensing stages that outline the progression of a teacher’s career, the Collaborative focused its attention on the early levels in the tiered licensure recommendation, given the Collaborative’s mission of improving teacher preparation and enhancing the capabilities of new teachers in the state.

Level 1 Licensure

This is the first license a teacher candidate would be required to earn. The Collaborative believes it is important for teacher candidates to reach a level of competency before they work intensively with students. The Level 1 license would be valid for the first two years that a candidate is a teacher of record, regardless of the type of preparation program in which the candidate enrolled (for a candidate in a traditional program, the license would be valid for longer than two years—first for student teaching and then for two years as a teacher of record). If, after two years as a teacher of record, the license holder is unable to earn a Level 2 license, the license holder should be released from the teaching profession. Ideally, both the district and the provider would conduct a performance-based assessment of the teacher candidate. In the event that these assessments are not possible, an EPP may use a third party to authenticate a candidate’s performance.
LEVEL 1 LICENSE

Requirements for Level 1 License

- Be enrolled in a state-accredited EPP
- Achieve a passing score on a subject-matter test in the content area in which the candidate is teacher and/or the candidate will be certified
- Achieve a passing score on the TexES Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Exam
- Complete a background check and get fingerprinted
- Spend a minimum of 30 hours observing in a classroom
- Complete a bachelor’s degree for a postbaccalaureate program or appropriate education requirements for an undergraduate provider program
- Demonstrate skills rated Developing on a selected set of T-TESS indicators from the following domains (or other approved performance-based assessment that indicates classroom readiness):
  - Standards and Alignment
  - Content Knowledge and Expertise
  - Managing Student Behavior
  - Instructional Planning

Required Support for Level 1 Teachers From Preparation Programs and School Districts

Teachers holding a Level 1 license must:

- be assigned a field supervisor from a preparation program and a mentor teacher from the school district;
- receive support, ongoing mentoring, feedback on clinical practice, and professional development delivered by the field supervisor and mentor teacher and other staff, as needed; and
- receive a minimum of five to six structured observations during the course of the school year.

Level 2 Licensure

Before the end of a teacher’s second year as teacher of record, the teacher will need to earn a Level 2 license in order to stay in the teaching profession. A teacher can hold a Level 2 license for up to three years.

LEVEL 2 LICENSE

Requirements for Level 2 License

- Hold a Level 1 license.
- Demonstrate a “mean score of Proficient” on a selected set of T-TESS from the following domains (or other approved performance-based assessment that indicates classroom readiness):
  - Standards and Alignment
  - Content Knowledge and Expertise
  - Managing Student Behaviors
  - Instructional Planning
  - Activities and Instructional Delivery
  - Evaluation and Assessment
- A school district leader and a representative from the EPP should conduct the evaluation of the teacher’s skills.
Required Support for Level 2 Teachers From Preparation Programs and School Districts

Mentoring, which could include clinical coaching and virtual resources, as well as additional professional development from the district, in collaboration with the EPP, to support:

- development of specialized knowledge and skills in key domains of teaching and learning (i.e., reading, writing, mathematics, eliciting thinking, use of assessment, and differentiation);
- use of assessment, differentiation, and eliciting student critical and deeper thinking;
- use of student survey data to inform teaching in lower scoring survey domains and with struggling students through differentiation strategies; and
- use of student assessment data to make sound instructional decisions.

Level 3 Licensure

Before the end of a teacher’s fifth year in the profession, the teacher will need to earn a Level 3 license in order to stay in teaching.

LEVEL 3 LICENSE

Requirements for Level 3 License

- Hold a Level 2 license.
- Demonstrate a mean score of Proficient on all indicators on the T-TESS or the district’s approved performance-based assessment.
- Show value-added scores of at least one-year’s growth in achievement for students taught by the teacher (when available).

The Collaborative recommends that every teacher in Texas earn a Level 3 license. To keep a Level 3 license, a teacher would have to maintain proficiency levels on the T-TESS or district-approved performance-based assessments as well as participate in district-approved professional development.

Level 4 Licensure

Texas teachers would not be required to earn a Level 4 Master Teacher License. However, districts could use this licensure level as a prerequisite for teachers seeking a position as a teacher leader or providing support and mentoring to other teachers.

LEVEL 4 LICENSE

Requirements for Level 4 License

- Demonstrate a score of Accomplished or Distinguished on all indicators on the T-TESS or a district-approved performance-based assessment.
- Show value-added scores of at least one and a half years of growth in achievement for students taught by the teacher, for a period of two or more years.
- Receive recognition as a Master of Teaching within the school and districts, by peers and administration.
Recommendation 1 Rationale

The principles and ideas that provided guidance and direction for these recommendations are based on the following expectations:

- EPPs are responsible for ensuring that every child has a capable teacher on Day 1.
- New teachers must meet high standards for demonstrating expertise and appropriate competencies from the start of their careers.
- EPPs and school districts must work together to support teachers, particularly in their early years in the profession.
- Teachers need a pathway for career advancement that involves growth in professional skills and expertise, improves outcomes for students, and opens the door to greater responsibilities and opportunities.

Choosing Indicators for Licensure Recommendations

The selection of preservice indicators (identified from T-TESS or another commissioner-approved, performance-based assessment) that determine whether a candidate can earn a license should be agreed upon by a group of Texas teacher preparation stakeholders, including teachers, district leaders, and EPPs. This stakeholder group would decide on the indicators for all levels of licensure.

Other states have taken a similar approach: For example, Massachusetts asked a group to review its teacher evaluation rubric and determine which indicators were essential for new teachers and which indicators could be learned in the first years on the job. These indicators now comprise the Candidate Assessment of Performance used by teacher preparation providers to assess candidates’ skills.

The recently released federal regulations from the Higher Education Act (HEA) on data-reporting requirements related to teacher preparation include a list of stakeholders each state should convene to help state education officials decide how to collect data about teacher preparation, how to weight data, and what data points should serve as evidence. This same group would be in a position to recommend indicators for licensure recommendations. The stakeholder group described in the regulations must include:

- an administrator or faculty member from a traditional EPP,
- an administrator or faculty member from an alternative route EPP,
- a student from a traditional or alternative route EPP,
- a teacher or other instructional staff,
- a superintendent,
- a school board member,
- a student in elementary or secondary school and one of the student’s parents,
- an administrator or faculty member from an institution of higher education that serves high percentages of student from low-income households or minority students,
- a representative of the interests of students who are English language learners,
- a representative of the interests of students with disabilities, and
- an official from the state’s standards board or other appropriate standards body.
Under current regulations, a teacher of record in Texas can have little to no prior training before entering the classroom. New teachers with limited classroom experience are often the sole providers of instruction and learning in schools with a high percentage of students of color and students from low-income households—students who are the most in need of well-prepared, effective teachers. This situation presents a significant problem, especially when considering that students from these backgrounds comprise well over half of the student population in Texas.

This recommendation for tiered licensure requires that every new teacher—regardless of the preparation program or where the individual teaches—enter the classroom with foundational knowledge and skills for teaching. This recommendation also recognizes the steep growth that new teachers undergo in the first years of teaching by specifying the kind of support new teachers need in the first years and placing the responsibility for providing support on both the school district and the EPP. As a result, preparation providers and the school districts they serve would become partners in the important work of helping new teachers transition from a preparation program into professional teaching. As we seek to provide all students with a quality education, then EPPs and districts must work together to ensure that new teachers are qualified and competent to teach.

**Tiered Licensure**

As of the writing of this report, all but five states have adopted a tiered-licensure system for teachers, with several transition points as a new teacher grows into an experienced teacher. These licensure structures include, in general, the following points:

- A novice license for college graduates who have decided to enter teaching through an alternative certification pathway and become a teacher of record while still in a preparation program
- A new teacher enters teaching after earning a basic license.
- Within a few years, the new teacher earns a professional license after demonstrating proficiency.
- A professional teacher can earn a master license, which usually is not required, that may allow the teacher to take on leadership responsibilities.
- A special license for out-of-state or out-of-country certified teachers

In almost every state, new teachers can keep the basic license for several years before completing requirements to earn a professional teaching license. The purpose of the licensure systems for many states is to be both supportive and watchful as new teachers grow and improve during their first years in the profession. At each step in tiered licensure, teachers must demonstrate evidence of increasing knowledge and ability to teach. For districts, ensuring new teachers are able to demonstrate increasing capability is an important part of keeping teachers employed in their schools, so offering appropriate professional learning in relation to licensure requirements is critical.
In late 2016, Texas approved a form of tiered licensure with five licenses: Intern, Probationary, Standard, Provisional, and Professional. This system separates initial licensure based on the passage of either the content examination (Intern) or the content and Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities exam (Probationary). Both of these licenses are specific to teacher candidates in alternative certification programs, and both licenses allow teachers to be a teacher of record with little to no experience in the classroom. Graduates of traditional programs would receive a Standard license. The Provisional license, which is the same level of certification as the Standard license, would continue to be for teachers certified prior to the September 1999 law change. The Professional license is for practicing teachers in particular roles.
The Collaborative believes this approved system does not go far enough to promote advancement of the teaching profession or to address the issue of unprepared teachers as teachers of record in classrooms. Furthermore, the structure does not include the demonstration of practice before entering the classroom or support teacher development needs at each level.

**Collaboration and Support for New Teachers**

Under the new federal education law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Texas and all states—along with school districts—can use federal funds allocated through Title IIA to provide support for new teachers. These activities could include training practicing teachers to be mentors for new teachers, creating an induction program for new teachers, and offering other learning opportunities. ESSA also supports the strengthening of partnerships between teacher preparation providers and school districts.¹¹

Use of federal funds to build partnerships and create stronger learning opportunities for teachers could lead to integrated professional pathways for teachers and participants taking greater responsibility for the profession as a whole. Texas students and teachers would benefit greatly from strong partnerships that lead to better teaching.

The structure of support and mentoring for new teachers varies from state to state and from district to district within a state. Twenty-nine states require support for beginning teachers, although Texas is not among those states.¹² In some states, districts can implement their own programs. Some alternative preparation program providers offer minimal training to a novice teacher the summer before the teacher takes over a classroom; some alternative preparation providers offer extensive support and training throughout the teacher’s first year and, in some cases, into later years. A few traditional programs support their graduates into their first year of teaching. Overall, the inconsistent or non-existent support for beginning teachers is an identified barrier to teacher and student success.

Mentors are also identified as a critical component of teacher success. Although teacher candidates in an accredited preparation program are required to have a mentor for clinical training and student teachers are required to have a cooperating teacher for clinical training, Texas does not require beginning teachers—teachers with two years or less of experience—to be assigned a trained mentor teacher either by the school district or the traditional preparation program. Alternative certification candidates have mentor teachers while they are teachers of record and still in training, but, when these candidates complete their programs, they may not have mentor teachers. Despite not having a Texas mandate or state-allocated funding for mentoring, many Texas districts do implement a mentor program for their new teachers. Research suggests that comprehensive, multiyear mentoring programs accelerate the professional growth of first-year teachers, making them more effective in a shorter amount of time; improve student learning; reduce attrition rates of first-year teachers; and provide a positive return on investment.¹³

Of the 29 states that require some type of support for beginning teachers, only 15 states require support beyond the first year of teaching. California requires a two-year program for beginning teachers called Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment that is well established and successful.¹⁴ Likewise, Kentucky recently introduced an induction program called the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP). Beginning teachers spend their first year in KTIP being evaluated and mentored by an experienced teacher in their school or district and by a faculty member from a school of education.¹⁵ At the end of the first year, these two faculty members determine whether the novice teacher should be recommended for a professional certification or spend another year as an intern.
Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Tennessee require induction only for alternative certification teachers: Alternative providers often include support during a candidate’s first year of teaching—while the candidate is completing coursework. For example, both Teach For America and TNTP provide their own staff to help support their teachers’ first year following the summer program. Other providers, such as the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, which operates in 12 states, including Texas, have candidates take courses online, pass an examination, and get hired for a job. At that point, the new teacher is assigned a mentor by the school administrator and is observed teaching four times during the school year. All of these programs support first-year teachers, despite their differences and are important to overall teacher success.

Reciprocity to Increase Capable and Effective Teachers

Every state has policies that regulate the process of obtaining a teaching license for a teacher holding a license from another state. Most policies include providing evidence of completing some kind of teacher training, having earned a bachelor’s degree, and passing an assessment. New York recently relaxed its requirement so that out-of-state teachers do not have to take the New York test to become certified. One of the reasons given by state education officials for making this change is that it could help relieve the state’s teacher shortage and encourage out-of-state teachers to apply for positions in New York by increasing the ease of transferring a teaching license.

Currently, in Texas, teachers from out of state must go through a review process at TEA, submit transcripts and fingerprinting to receive a one-year, non-renewable license while the teachers complete the required Texas testing. The application fee is $164, the fingerprinting and background check fees are $45, and applicants may need to pay to get transcripts sent to TEA. Although Texas currently accepts some tests from other states, the accepted tests differ per state, and the test type does not include core subject or generalist licensing tests. Thus, out-of-state candidates may be required to take a licensure test, which also will have a fee.

Enabling reciprocity for teachers is a key strategy to increase the supply of teachers from out of state, particularly for our shortage teaching subject and regional areas. In addition to waiving some of the testing requirements, the state could consider some fee waivers, particularly for key shortage certification areas to make Texas an attractive destination for out-of-state teachers.

Recommendation 1 would be a step toward guaranteeing that every student in Texas has a capable teacher who has demonstrated the foundational skills to lead classroom learning. This recommendation also asks all stakeholders in teacher preparation to participate in helping new teachers through the first years in the classroom. Students, no matter where they attend school in Texas, would have the opportunity to succeed in school if every teacher is well prepared. Tightening licensure policy and requiring that preparation providers and school leaders support new teachers is essential to improving education in the state.
RECOMMENDATION 2:
Enhance the Texas Educator Preparation Program evaluation system to increase accountability, drive program outcome improvement, and provide public transparency on program performance.

2–A. Accreditation—The State Board for Educator Certification and the Texas Education Agency should raise the standards for EPP accreditation by requiring all EPPs to:

- obtain national accreditation, recognition, or use an inspectorate model and
- reapply for accreditation in Texas under the new rules.

2–B. Measures—The Texas Education Agency should expand EPP performance and accountability measures. Measures should be used to rate and close low-performing EPPs and recognize high-performing EPPs. Suggested measures include, but are not limited to, teacher growth and performance as measured through T-TESS or another commissioner-approved evaluation system, K–12 student surveys, progression from Level 1 to Level 2 licenses, and student outcomes and growth.

2–C. Data Accessibility—The Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should make EPP data transparent through a public, interactive dashboard or almanac.

2–D. Innovation—The Texas Legislature should incentivize EPP performance and encourage program improvement through the creation of a Program of Innovation, in which an EPP demonstrating high performance, as measured by EPP accountability measures, could apply for an innovation waiver.

2–E. Partnerships—Texas Educator Preparation Programs and Districts should use the data to strengthen partnerships aimed at aligning supply and demand needs for trained teachers.

Recommendation 2 Rationale
To ensure well-prepared teachers for all students, Texas needs an evaluation system that sets high expectations for EPP effectiveness, requires collaboration between EPPs and school districts, promotes innovation, and shares and leverages data for continuous improvement.
Accreditation

As a means to identify what makes a quality educator preparation provider, many EPPs across the United States have chosen national accreditation as required by state program approval or in addition to state program approval. The national accreditation process may be more thorough than state-based models and reflects the most recent research in educator preparation. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) utilizes five standards that are deeply rooted in evidence-based practices for successful teachers. Thirteen states require all preparation providers to be accredited by CAEP; four states require public university-based preparation providers to be accredited, and one state requires preparation providers of a certain size to be accredited by CAEP. In Texas, there are 23 providers out of over 200 providers that are CAEP accredited. Of the 23, only one (iTeach) is an alternative certification provider.

This approach to accreditation requires demonstration of outcomes in addition to inputs, which challenges EPPs to prove the value or impact of their activities or programs. For Texas, this approach would mean collecting data about where new teachers take their first jobs and, at the end of the first year of teaching, asking these new teachers whether they believe they were well prepared. The hiring principals would also be asked whether the new hires were capable. TEA currently is revising surveys for principals and new teachers to collect these data.

Another route for enhancing expectations for EPP quality is an inspectorate model. Universities in New Mexico and Texas piloted a British-style inspection in 2014. Similar to CAEP, the inspectorate model allows for a team of reviewers to spend a few days on campus examining four areas of teacher preparation:

- selection;
- content and teaching skills;
- clinical placement, feedback, and candidate performance; and
- program performance management.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

CAEP standards ask preparation providers to give evidence that their candidates know subject matter and know how to teach it; that providers partner with schools; that providers have high standards for admission; that program graduates can raise student achievement; and that there are processes in place to review program effectiveness and make revisions.

CAEP Standards for EPP Accreditation:

1. Content and Pedagogical Knowledge
2. Clinical Partnerships and Practice
3. Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity
4. Program Impact
5. Provider Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

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- selection;
- content and teaching skills;
- clinical placement, feedback, and candidate performance; and
- program performance management.
With the number and variety of EPPs in Texas, the need for a more rigorous review of programming is warranted if the state wants to require continuous improvement of EPPs. As part of the process, data should be collected relating to recruitment, coursework, and clinical- or field-based experiences, with follow-up surveys to measure effectiveness within the classroom. A deeper look and breadth into EPPs can lead to changes in courses, as well as programs, to meet diverse student needs in public education.

Requiring every EPP to become nationally accredited or reviewed by a third party moves the state closer to ensuring all are research based and reviewed periodically. The new regulations for data collection under Title II of HEA ask EPPs to connect more teacher and student data to the preparation program and to display these data on publicly available data dashboards, which should also improve quality.

State System for EPP Performance and Accountability

Texas has an Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) to ensure that each EPP is held accountable for the readiness for certification of candidates completing their programs. The ASEP includes five indicators (listed in Table 3).

Table 3. ASEP Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASEP INDICATORS</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Percentage of Completers Passing Certification Examinations</td>
<td>Includes percentage of individuals that EPPs report as completers who passed the corresponding certification examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Principal Appraisal of First-Year Teachers</td>
<td>Percentage of Principal Survey respondents who reported, on average, that the first-year teachers were well prepared or sufficiently prepared for their first year of teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Improvement in Student Achievement</td>
<td>There is no standard for Indicator 3 at this time. Data for this measure are under development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Frequency and Duration or Field Observations and Quality of Field Supervision</td>
<td>Percentage of candidates who received at least three 45-minute observations, currently percentage should be 95 or above, Percentage of respondents who on the Exit Survey from their EPP reported, on average, that they were Frequently or Always/Almost Always observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Satisfaction of New Teachers</td>
<td>There is no standard for Indicator 5 at this time. Data for this measure are under development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The state has just begun to collect additional data such as a program’s effectiveness in preparing new teachers to use technology in the classroom, teaching students who are English language learners, and whether graduates are still teaching after five years. These additional measures are being collected for consumer information but are not used for preparation program accountability. Although the purpose of the ASEP system is to distinguish between effective and ineffective programs and to ensure programs have information for continuous improvement, thus far the system has not resulted in broad changes to any EPP. The ASEP system should also indicate which programs are not producing effective teachers so that they can be closed; however, to date no programs have ever been closed.

Currently, Texas is working toward a public data dashboard that would report on five indicators as well as the accreditation status for EPPs and alternative preparation programs. The Collaborative recommends an interactive and transparent dashboard that includes an implementation of all indicators in statute and other relevant measures for program improvement (see Table 4 for the Collaborative’s dashboard recommendations).

Table 4. Collaborative Dashboard Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures to Be Included:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Percentage of completers passing certification examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Principal appraisal of new teachers and professional growth as measured by an observation rubric (T-TESS or other approved performance-based assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ K-12 student surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Value-added measures for available courses or grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Teacher and principal surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Percentage of teachers progressing from Level 1 license to a Level 2 license*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Rate of movement from a Level 1 license to a Level 2 license*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Number and percentage of graduates obtaining a Level 2 license and Level 3 license in Years 1–3 post EPP completion*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Student outcomes as measured by ESSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For the dashboard measures not already included for accountability purposes, the Collaborative would like for these measures to be considered to assist preparation programs improve their practices.

*If tiered licensure is adopted
Spotlight States

**Kentucky—Data Dashboard**

Beginning as early as 2003, Louisiana and Tennessee began connecting EPP graduates to student outcomes. In 2014, Kentucky created public-facing data dashboards in the areas of teacher preparation and certification. The Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board dashboards have become a model for other states as a result of the ease of accessing data as well as overall usability. Within the Teacher Preparation Dashboard, stakeholders can disaggregate the data based upon program performance or program demographics. The data report on 30 traditional EPPs and eight alternative route programs and include the following measures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Performance</th>
<th>Program Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Program admission by program type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Program admission by gender and ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 25 percent and first-time pass rates</td>
<td>Program completion by program type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Title II program completers’ assessment pass rates</td>
<td>Program accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of new teachers survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Louisiana—Redesign of Teacher Preparation Programs**

Starting in 2001, Louisiana public and private colleges of education and colleges of arts, sciences, and humanities worked with districts to identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in teacher preparation. EPPs have redesigned programs to address needs as part of program approval by the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Louisiana Board of Secondary Education. The redesign sought to increase recruitment of strong teacher candidates, increase the number of new teachers in the state, and increase the quality and effectiveness of teachers. Louisiana sought to decrease the gap between research and practice in teacher preparation by listening and responding to stakeholder needs. The state’s data dashboard consists of detailed reports on every provider, with metrics related to effectiveness of graduates, along with measures such as the quality of clinical training and passage rates on licensure exams.

The development of a Texas public dashboard would have benefits for multiple stakeholder groups. For individuals considering applying to a teacher preparation program, a transparent dashboard that includes all the data collected under the accreditation system would be a powerful basis for choosing a program. For providers, it would be an opportunity to learn about other programs in Texas and to consider improvements to their practices. Overall, a dashboard would allow all stakeholders in Texas to have access to information on the quality and effectiveness of EPPs.

Another possible outcome of additional data collection by EPPs is the ability for the state agency to offer rewards to high-achieving programs. EPPs that demonstrate high levels of effectiveness, as measured through the evaluation
system, could have the opportunity to become a Program of Innovation, similar to the concept of a District of Innovation. For EPPs, this program could equate to having a greater level of flexibility from TEA requirements to pilot program improvements or innovative practices. There would need to be a process to determine which programs are eligible, the parameters of flexibility, and how to ensure that the EPP maintains high performance by graduates in order to retain the label of innovation. In addition, TEA could spotlight the promising practices of these high-performing EPPs to help other programs learn and improve.

Recognizing Excellent Programs

Other organizations throughout the United States have begun to recognize and utilize innovative programs to help support and spread best practices in teacher preparation. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded Texas Tech nearly $7 million to create the University–School Partnerships for the Renewal of Teacher Preparation. Texas Tech is bringing together five other universities in the South—including the University of North Texas at Dallas and the University of Houston—to help them improve their preparation programs and build partnerships with school districts. Texas Tech is one of five organizations in the United States awarded a grant through this initiative.

Partnerships

Research, data, and analysis are important drivers of accreditation, but school districts are also key in driving improvements.

Districts need effective teachers to meet the demands of a diverse student population. A strong partnership between districts and EPPs can decrease the research-to-practice gap as well as help streamline teacher preparation. A well-run partnership can lead to a better clinical experience, which, in turn, creates teachers exposed to a variety of classrooms, students, and teaching styles.26

Collaboration and strong partnerships:
- aid in field-based placements and high-quality mentor teachers;
- help assure that performance expectations for teacher candidates and interns are aligned with both the EPP and the district;
- lead to better induction programs;
- develop a sense of community and shared ownership in developing effective teachers; and
- increase recruitment to education and retention of staff.27

Such partnerships allow districts a greater understanding of program requirements, evidence-based practices, and increased communication of needs. For EPPs, such partnerships increase the pool of quality mentor and cooperating teachers to select for field-based experiences, ensure that coursework is grounded in the day-to-day realities of teaching and aligns with district needs, and provide an avenue for recruiting effective teachers.28
By raising standards for accreditation and supporting EPPs to analyze and assess their graduate data, the state will incentivize EPPs to engage in continuous improvement. The results would include changes to instructional design; revisions to course offerings; increases in the rigor and relevance of clinical support; modifications to candidate recruitment and support during the program; strengthening of partnerships with districts; and implementation of targeted, ongoing professional development for graduates. EPP performance data shared with the public would lead to aspiring teachers having a greater awareness of programs with a strong record of success in the marketplace. The use of data for accreditation also would aid districts in considering the quality of EPPs, which would inspire greater confidence when hiring graduates.

Raising standards, reviewing the intensity of curriculum and clinical training, measuring the effectiveness of graduates, and then using this information to determine if a program produces capable teachers would benefit Texas districts, schools, students, and taxpayers. Such an accountability system could be the spark that helps jump-start a cycle of continuous improvement in teacher preparation.
RECOMMENDATION 3: Establish a Texas Educator Preparation Evaluation and Innovation Alliance

3–A. Alliance — The Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should establish an Educator Preparation Evaluation and Innovation Alliance that would set the agenda for, oversee, and advise ongoing evaluations of educator preparation policies and practices in Texas to inform state decisions on EPP practices. Evaluation should be based on trends and questions from a study of data on the dashboard.

- The Alliance would function as an advisory board to the State Board for Educator Certification.
- Members should include representatives from traditional and alternative EPPs; philanthropy representatives engaged in educational issues; members of the House and Senate Education Committees; staff of the State Board for Educator Certification and TEA; and K–12 teachers, principals, and superintendents.
- The research and evaluation would be conducted by a qualified research entity.

3–B. Support — The Texas Legislature should fund ongoing work of the Alliance after initiation by the philanthropy community.

Recommendation 3 Rationale

The quality of teacher preparation in Texas is varied and inconsistent, resulting in some graduates who are ill prepared to succeed in the classroom and other graduates who are poised for success. Texas cannot afford such disparity in the effectiveness of teacher preparation. The complex issues that affect the quality of EPPs demand thoughtful, collaborative investigation to identify key research questions and explore strategies for strengthening system outcomes. The Texas Educator Preparation Evaluation and Innovation Alliance would provide a forum for educators, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to support and incentivize the study and evaluation of teacher preparation practices. The Alliance would support research that is based on data collected by the state and EPPs as well as original research that would challenge assumptions and test solutions for producing and supporting better effective teachers across the state. The findings from this work would provide important and actionable suggestions for practitioners and policymakers and would fuel their efforts for improving teacher preparation.

Research about education in the United States is robust, but there has not been as much research about teacher preparation, which creates challenges to developing policies and practices that support systemic improvements. The existing research only suggests that teacher preparation is important. What the existing research fails to do is clarify the essential components and content necessary to impact student performance. The Alliance would support research
and evaluation that helps identify the critical features of effective preparation programs—information that is vital to improving EPPs throughout the state.

As a new entity, the Alliance would need time and resources to establish an infrastructure, define roles and responsibilities of collaborating organizations and individuals, and clarify development and monitoring of the research agenda. Private philanthropy could play a key role in initiating the Alliance, but state funding is crucial for long-term improvements by EPPs and policymakers to programs, policies, and practice.

This recommendation also complements the proposed enhancements to the EPP evaluation system by identifying the type of data needed and the best combination of measures to begin to answer critical questions about teacher preparation. The research agenda developed by the Alliance should inform the types of data collected and allow the state continually to monitor and evaluate both the quality of the data and, more importantly, the evidence of impact on EPPs.

The Texas Educator Preparation Evaluation and Innovation Alliance would address key questions on teacher preparation.

- What is the relationship of teacher preparation practices and student outcomes?
- Which EPP variables are likely to produce the best qualified first-year teachers?
- What is the relationship between different routes to licensure and teacher retention?

Impact on Teacher Preparation

The findings from the work of the Alliance would fill gaps in knowledge about effective preparation practices in Texas and would contribute substantially to the national conversation surrounding educator preparation. The Alliance would provide ongoing research and data that would support EPPs’ abilities to engage in continuous improvement. This would provide policymakers with quality evidence to inform policy changes that would lead to better prepared teachers and improved outcomes for Texas students.

Spotlight States

The proposed Alliance is an innovative approach to addressing problems of practice in education. Few states have established similar alliances, and even fewer states have alliances focused solely on issues of educator preparation. Two states, Tennessee and North Carolina, offer potential models for establishing the functions and structures of a research alliance.
**Tennessee Education Research Alliance**

The Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) started in 2016 and is a joint venture of Vanderbilt’s Peabody College of Education and Human Development and the Tennessee Department of Education that oversees research specifically targeted at improving policy and practice. TERA oversees and brings together studies conducted by multiple researchers from Vanderbilt University. The research priority areas are developed through a joint steering committee at the state level. In determining the agenda, the steering committee considers the current and anticipated needs of educators and students. The state-level steering committee identified the following four priorities areas to be addressed by the research:

- improving early reading;
- re-imagining state support for professional learning;
- driving improvement in low-performing schools; and
- strengthening Tennessee’s education labor market.

These priority areas encompass multiple areas of education, including the labor market, professional development, and student learning needs. An advisory committee, similar to the Collaborative’s proposed recommendation, informs the research agenda and the final research questions. The committee represents education groups and other stakeholders invested in teacher preparation.

TERA publishes the outcomes of the research findings in academic and policy papers as well as in media releases and blogs. The primary audiences of this work are educators and policymakers. TERA measures its success by the extent to which the research findings result in program and policy changes.

**School Leadership of North Carolina Research Alliance**

The School Leadership of North Carolina Research Alliance (NCRA) is a collaborative of federally funded regional research and comprehensive centers, as well as North Carolina–based universities and the state education agency. NCRA is headquartered at the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. After state policymakers identified the need for evaluation and research related to school leadership, NRCA developed a research agenda focused on how to improve the quality of principals and assistant principals in North Carolina. The work is carried out through a collaborative effort of researchers from within and outside of North Carolina.

Teacher preparation is ultimately a “human improvement” endeavor. Imagine the improvements we could make if we understood: What are the ways that teacher candidates can best learn how to perform teaching? What can teacher educators do to ensure that the candidates have the greatest opportunity to be trained to be great teachers? How can instructional improvement be measured? To make headway in these areas, it will take time, thought, and resources to investigate the current practices and policies and then test improvements. The Texas Educator Preparation Evaluation and Innovation Alliance would be a key step toward that end.
CONCLUSION

There is nothing more important to our future than the education of our children. If our children are well educated, they will have the foundation for a productive and fulfilling adult life. Educated adults help ensure the future of the state’s workforce and the strength of its institutions. If we fail to educate our children, these future adults will be more likely to be underemployed or unemployed. They will be more likely to end up in prison. They will be more likely to endure family instability, such as trying to support a family as a single parent.

The Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative was created to address one of the key elements of a strong education system—the preparation and support of capable, effective, and excellent teachers. The Collaborative, which is made up of a diverse cross-section of traditional and alternative route preparation providers, district officials who hire new teachers, teachers, and engaged educator preparation organizations, identified policies and activities that could improve the state’s preparation programs by identifying the challenges and opportunities facing our EPPs. The central theme of the Collaborative’s recommendations is the belief that we should focus on outcomes, specifically prospective teachers’ abilities to deliver effective teaching before they become responsible for the academic welfare of Texas students.

The recommendations are the result of extensive discussions and a shared commitment to ensuring there are more effective and prepared teachers to prepare that Texas students are ready for future challenges. As a state, we have a responsibility to our children. The Collaborative believes these recommendations can move Texas teacher preparation forward, becoming a model to the nation.
ENDNOTES


6 T. Miller (personal communication, September 15, 2016)


14 See http://www.btsa.ca.gov/


16 See http://abcte.org/certification/mentoring/


18 See http://tea.texas.gov/interiorpage.aspx?id=25769812525

19 See http://www.caepnet.org/accreditation/about-accreditation/why-it-matters

20 See http://www.caepnet.org/standards/introduction

21 See http://www.caepnet.org/provider-search?tab=provider&state=TX#provresults

23 See http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/policy.html


Vision

Strengthen the public and higher education system so that every Texas student is prepared for educational and workforce success.

Mission

Increase postsecondary readiness, access, and success for all students by building partnerships, leading innovation, and scaling practices and policies.