

Profession-Ready Teachers

“My barber has to prove that he is prepared to be a barber and earn a license before he is allowed to cut my hair, yet some states and districts allow individuals to be in charge of classrooms and student learning before proving that they should be there. Every student deserves to have a ‘profession-ready’ teacher.”

—NEA President Dennis Van Roekel

What is a “profession-ready” teacher?

The NEA believes that all teachers should be “profession-ready” from their first day of being responsible for student learning. This means that, before becoming a teacher-of-record, teacher candidates must demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed for effective classroom practice. While teachers continue to learn and grow after entering the profession, no candidate should ever be called a “teacher” without demonstrating the ability to improve student learning. Candidates who are placed in classrooms and expected to learn how to teach on the job are not profession-ready.

A profession-ready teacher has had extensive opportunities to develop and learn teaching and basic classroom management skills. This teacher has demonstrated the ability to plan and deliver instruction to students with different learning styles and also to assess and support student learning. A profession-ready teacher has worked with accomplished educators to understand the value of collaboration and reflection and has learned firsthand the importance of home-school connections. While the profession-ready teacher has not yet reached the status of a fully accomplished educator, he or she has had enough opportunities to witness, implement, and reflect on quality

teaching and learning and has demonstrated classroom readiness by successfully completing a pre-service, classroom-based performance assessment prior to receiving full state licensure.

What knowledge must a teacher candidate master to be considered profession-ready?

Teacher preparation providers must ensure that candidates have mastered both subject matter content and pedagogical content knowledge for their areas of expertise, and that they have demonstrated their ability to activate that knowledge toward improving their teaching and their students’ learning.

1. **Subject matter content knowledge**

Using the appropriate assessments, all teacher candidates must be able to demonstrate mastery of the subject for which they will serve as the teacher-of-record, and they must be certified in that subject. Currently, most states measure subject matter knowledge through state-specific content assessments or the Praxis II. The number of courses and/or credits that candidates have in a particular subject area does not ensure their deep understanding of the subject matter.

2. **Pedagogical content knowledge**

All teacher candidates must be able to demonstrate their pedagogical content knowledge in the subject area in which they will be certified. Possessing knowledge of a subject area does not mean that the candidate can separate that knowledge into the smaller segments and units needed to instruct or guide students in understanding that subject. Pedagogical content knowledge does mean that the candidate has the ability to predict common mistakes students may make in learning a particular subject area, as well as being able to manage their classrooms in ways that promote student learning. Candidates must learn these skills through school-based experiences and coordinated, coherent coursework that allows for the integration of theory and practice.

3. **Classroom-based performance assessment**

Pre-service, classroom-based performance assessments provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired during the coursework and clinical experiences of their preparation programs. These assessments include a demonstration of their ability to activate their knowledge of the subject area and develop, implement, and reflect on their teaching and student learning. PreK–12 students need teaching professionals who know their content and can translate it into practices that promote student learning and success. Classroom-based performance assessments provide a uniform tool that allows candidates—regardless of preparation pathway—to demonstrate that they are profession-ready before assuming full responsibility for the teaching and learning of their students.

Examples of Pre-Service Performance Assessments

edTPA

edTPA (formerly known as the Teacher Performance Assessment) is a classroom-based, pre-service performance assessment process being piloted by numerous institutions across the country. The edTPA process is built around three-to-five continuous days of subject-specific classroom instruction delivered by a teacher candidate, typically at the end of their student teaching or internship experience. By focusing on the act of teaching, edTPA complements existing entry-level assessments that focus on basic skills or subject matter knowledge. It is anticipated that edTPA will be used for initial teacher licensure, to support state and national program accreditation, and to guide preparation program improvement. Various states have already begun to use the assessment in different capacities.

Oregon Teacher Work Sample

Pre-service teachers in Oregon are required to submit two samples of work from their student teaching experiences to demonstrate the required competency and effectiveness in fostering student learning. Each work sample must include a unit of instruction, evidence of student learning within the unit, and use of student data for future instructional and reporting plans. A work sample displays, among other things, objectives, instructional and assessment procedures, student performance data, and interpretation of the success of a unit of instruction.

Praxis Pre-Service Portfolio

Development of the Praxis Pre-service Portfolio, an exit-level, pre-service assessment for teacher candidates began in early 2013. This assessment is aligned with the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Standards and the Common Core State Standards. This task-based, job-embedded assessment uses evidence-centered artifacts and videos to show growth over time. The series of tasks is completed during the clinical experience and has content-specific material embedded into the evidence submitted by the candidate. The Education Testing Service (ETS) will conduct a large-scale, online field test with teacher candidates in Spring, 2014. The Praxis Pre-Service Portfolio is scheduled to launch in Fall, 2014.

How do teacher preparation providers ensure they are preparing profession-ready educators?

A profession-ready educator's preparation occurs through a comprehensive residency program. A comprehensive residency program goes beyond a traditional student teaching capstone experience and provides a more substantive and meaningful teacher preparation experience. In this program, candidates engage in a series of school-based experiences and teaching opportunities under the guidance of an accomplished teacher while simultaneously applying theories learned from coursework. A more thorough description of a residency program may be found in *The NEA and Teacher Residencies* (2013).

State preparation program approval bodies should require all teacher preparation providers to meet the

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) national standards to ensure that their programs are training profession-ready teachers capable of teaching in schools across the nation, regardless of socioeconomic and geographic realities. In addition, program providers should engage in program-level, continuous improvement efforts to strengthen the preparation of their candidates. If providers are unable to train profession-ready teachers, unable to meet the CAEP accreditation standards of quality, and/or unable to meet their local district and state teacher recruitment needs, regulatory bodies (e.g., state and/or CAEP) should not allow these programs to continue without a plan for improvement. If programs cannot meet indicators of quality, the program should be shuttered.

Recommendations

To ensure that every teacher is profession-ready, several policy changes may be necessary:

- Candidates must be able to demonstrate their content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and effectiveness in the classroom before becoming teacher-of-record.
- Preparation programs should actively partner with their local districts and stakeholders to prepare future teachers in ways that equip them to teach in these districts and improve PreK–12 student learning.
- States should require teacher candidates to pass pre-service performance assessments prior to earning their initial teacher licenses.
- NEA affiliates, school districts, and public school partners must work together to recruit, train, and support teachers who have demonstrated effective teaching practices to serve as clinical educators.

Conclusions

It is the professional responsibility of practicing teachers—and the NEA—to be actively engaged in the preparation of candidates who will eventually become their future colleagues. The NEA is committed to having all students taught by fully trained and prepared teachers. Further, the NEA believes that every teacher should be trained in a teacher residency program to ensure that teachers are truly profession-ready. The NEA is greatly concerned about allowing teachers to simultaneously complete their teacher training while serving as the

teacher-of-record. This practice is especially troubling because it is so often concentrated in high-poverty and high-needs schools (Lankforth, Loeb, and Wyckoff 2002). While understanding that some states have persistent shortages in specific content areas, the NEA encourages education stakeholders to recognize the disservice that occurs when under-prepared teachers who lack the skills and expertise needed to promote student learning and success are allowed to teach groups of students. The lack of preparation of some is an injustice to all who believe in the power of education to level the access field.

RESOURCES

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2013). *edTPA: Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved on September 19, 2013 from <http://edtpa.aacte.org/faq#17>.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (2013). *CAEP Accreditation Standards*. Washington, DC: CAEP. Retrieved on September 19, 2013 from http://caepnet.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/final_board_approved.pdf.

Council of the Chief State School Officers (2013). *Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession*. Washington, DC: CCSSO. Retrieved on September 19, 2013 from http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2012/Our%20Responsibility%20Our%20Promise_2012.pdf.

Education Testing Service (2013). *Introducing the Praxis Pre-Service Portfolio*. Retrieved on September 19, 2013 from http://www.ets.org/c/praxis_connection/2013/22840_email.html.

Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002). *Teacher Sorting and the Plight of Urban Schools: A Descriptive Analysis*. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. (24)1, 37-62.

National Education Association (2013). *The NEA and Teacher Residencies*. Washington, DC: NEA.

Oregon Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2013). *Teacher Work Sample Resources*. Retrieved on September 19, 2013 from <http://oacte.org/TWSM.htm>.

