One of the core commonalities of a vast majority of the American populace is their educational preparation prior to the post-secondary level. Regardless of public or private, urban or rural, the broad conception of the “American” teacher is very constant.

For better or worse, this shared experience of the American voters brings increased attention to the educational system from both the press and the politicians. This decade, in particular, has seen significant calls for increased accountability of our educational system. Among other issues, this accountability movement has sought ways to ensure the quality of teachers. A noble concept, no matter how ignoble some of the processes.

While governments at the state, local, and federal level seek to hold teachers accountable for their work, the real work of creating high quality teachers occurs in our schools, colleges, and departments of education. Throughout the United States, many of these entities continually work to develop new and improve existing methods of training teachers and preparing them for the world they will encounter outside of académé.

The next two issues of *Teaching & Learning* focus on specific programs that use innovative means to educate the next generation of teachers. Early in 2006 we invited M. Christopher Brown, Vice President for Programs and Administration at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, to guest edit a special edition of the Journal on teacher preparation in an era of accountability that would spotlight specific programs and the opportunities and challenges they face. The contributed pieces were so numerous that we decided to dedicate two issues to the topic so that we could incorporate as many examples as possible.

We thank Dr. Brown and his colleagues at AACTE for their work in assembling the following articles, and we thank all of the authors for their contributions and their outstanding work in the area of teacher preparation.

Jason Lane, Co-Editor
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The data is clear and the fact is undisputed that no one forgets a good teacher. Conversely, the data is clear and the fact is undisputed that no one forgets a bad teacher. There are two questions that face schools, colleges, and departments devoted to the preparation of educational professionals. First, “Are the teacher candidates that we produce unforgettable?” And, more importantly, “Why is that the case?”

The national quiescence about curricular pedagogy and the moratorium on vilification of teachers have both been lifted. The national corpus has entered the classroom with reckless abandon. To be fair, some of the recent scrutiny is warranted. Indeed, in spite of some genuinely valiant, even heroic, efforts, American education continues to sink into a bog where accreditation is confused with competency. Inadequate babysitting is often mistaken for learning. Likewise, many of our classrooms have come to be considered a dumping ground for the underprepared and uninterested. Conversely, many of the recently prescribed panaceas for the academic diagnosis are practices that many educators have already been employing in their pedagogical practice.

Schools and universities have engaged in a series of reform efforts over the past 15 years that have been well-documented in educational literature (e.g., Book, 1996; Cuban, 1990; Sarason, 1990). The recent emphasis on simultaneously restructuring schools and colleges of education includes the recognition by educators that this task requires the cooperation of all participants affected by the reform, including key participants in schools, communities, and colleges of education (Goodlad, 1988; Sarason, 1990). In particular, the focus on dually restructuring the places where teachers are prepared and where they practice requires the development of school-university partnerships.
that go beyond merely symbolic or sequential linkages designed to coordinate requirements for licensing of teachers (Dorsch, 1998; Lewison, 1999; Little, 1993).

Both the promise and the potential conflict in school-university collaboration lie in the recognition that schools and universities are very different entities (Cuban, 1992). They differ, as Goodlad maintains, in “purpose, function, structure, clientele, reward systems, rules and regulations, ambiance, ethos” (Goodlad, 1988, p. 14). Drawing on experience with school-university collaboration since 1947, Goodlad proposed three conditions that must exist for symbiotic relationships to develop. First, potential collaborators must be different enough to stimulate change in each other. Second, the self-interests of each should be satisfied as a result of the collaboration. Third, each of the partners must actively commit to the satisfaction of the self-interests of the other partner.

Education at large must begin receiving and getting the evidence on what works—and that is the pairing of school-site practitioners with university faculty and researchers who best know what is happening on the multiple front lines (Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Hargreaves, 1998). There are some instructional strategies from all three contexts that we know work, and it is very important that we share them with those who need to put the techniques into practice. To many education reform “junkies” who ride the high of the latest trend, the reasons for building school-university partnerships might seem obvious. Public schools provide universities with at least some of their future students, and colleges and universities prepare and train the vast majority of future teachers. Both institutions are devoted, to some degree, to the pursuit of learning and intellectual development, and both play a major role in socializing and preparing American youth for future roles in society. There are too many initiatives that fail to yield any benefits for children and too much research in which the key findings are never translated into practitioner use (even when the research is investigating teacher/principal practice).

Many of the difficult realities grown in school settings emerge from a deep, dark soil—mixed and mired with social problems, economic influences, and community realities (Brown & Land, 2005; Robinson & Brown, 2007). The children who arrive at the schoolhouse doors across our nation are not true “tabula rasa” as philosophy would
suggest. They are not unscripted tablets or blank slates, but rather they are complex and complicated mysteries, epic novels, and cryptic haiku. In this glib and grim context, the only good research is relevant research—research that has use and purpose. Hence we should not do research “on” children, we must do research “for” children (Brown, 2005). The purpose of school-university partnerships must focus on improving the quality and aspiration of school, life, community, and society. Absent this, we have squandered precious dollars doing little and misused a great opportunity to do good for our children, our nation, and our world.

I am a former fifth and second grade teacher from semi-rural South Carolina who left the classroom to research and train educational professionals at the collegiate level. Presently, I spend my days working as a member of the nation’s only voluntary organization of colleges and universities that prepares the nation’s educational personnel. From this central location, efforts are made to gather and disseminate data, propose and analyze public policy initiatives, support professional advancement and networking, and represent the education community before state and national governments. This work is timely and important given the transition of teacher preparation into the era of accountability.

Over the years, the education profession has “gotten by” by using intuition, folk wisdom, parenting skills, and some pedagogical craft (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Cuban, 1984). This is not completely bad. For thousands of years, intuition and almanacs worked in farming, but the science of agriculture did not achieve eminence until large-scale research was conducted in collaboration with land-grant universities through their extension offices, which worked with real farmers. The National Research Council has said that education—unlike defense, unlike healthcare, and unlike industrial production—does not rest on a strong research base. It claims instead that our teacher practice is largely based on personal anecdotal knowledge—that our “so-called” training materials amount primarily to collections of conversations; the result of people talking to each other. The challenge is not for the profession to change the practice of teacher education, but rather, the education industry must document, evaluate, and assess the pedagogical impact of what we have been practicing. Teacher educators must seize this opportunity to “show and
tell” the complex and critical nature of our work. These special issues on “The Changing Landscape in Teacher Education” seek to demonstrate some of the work of the education profession.

The aims of these issues are multiple. The articles in these issues focus on four broad areas. First, each article endeavors to assist the profession in the ongoing challenge of unifying around the issues of professional standards, assessment, accountability, and curricular content. Second, each article revisits the question of who can provide teacher education and in what manner. Third, each article is girded with the chief purpose of improving the quality of professional preparation programs and their ability to scale capacity in response to changing priorities and demands. Finally, each of the articles in these issues is sensitive to the need to serve an increasingly diverse constituency of learners.

The emergent conversations on the complex, correlated, and interwoven nexus between school-university partnerships and the national call for evidence-based pedagogy require the profession to look seriously at our standards, programs, and the issue of content knowledge in a host of contexts (Brown, Dancy, & Norfles, 2006). Popular and professional media both report regularly on the challenges of accreditation, the need for rubrics, the public mandate for rigorous content, the social realities of pedagogical practice, and the importance of accommodating various learning styles. These special issues of Teaching and Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry & Reflective Practice offers state-of-the-art examples of institutional programs and initiatives focused on preparing a national corpus of highly-qualified teachers committed to leaving no child behind.

References


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From Teacher Education to P-12 Learning Outcomes: The New Burden of Proof

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Introduction

The federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) Act (2002) has created a new “burden of proof” for colleges of education. The legislation’s expansive accountability reforms for elementary and middle schools, combined with a spotlight on teacher quality, have redefined what are to be considered key indicators of teacher candidate performance in teacher preparation programs. Traditionally, schools of education have tracked dispositions, beliefs about teaching and students, content knowledge, and teaching skills. Now, however, the focal performance indicator is P-12 student learning. Hence, colleges of education have increasingly become concerned about what constitutes compelling evidence that graduates indeed have a significant and positive impact on the achievement of their students.1

Providing such evidence is not a trivial undertaking. This article offers a view of the requirements and challenges of establishing an approach to assessment that is tethered to P-12 student learning outcomes. We are concerned with two phases of program assessment. The first focuses on evidence of teacher candidates’ progress toward beginning teaching competence prior to full time teaching. The second focuses on evidence of the effectiveness of program graduates in supporting the learning of their students, using data on P-12 student learning outcomes after graduates enter full-time teaching.

A strong assessment strategy is driven by a clear idea of the outcome. Therefore, we begin with a brief accounting of goals for student learning and achievement that permeate both policy documents and current research on student learning across content areas and grade levels. We then turn to the kind of teaching required to support such learning. In describing “good teaching,” we draw on the consensus
vision that has emerged among the communities of teacher education and professional practice, discuss current thinking about the kinds of knowledge and skills required for this kind of teaching, and indicate potential challenges to this vision. Next, we pursue two facets of the assessment challenge:

1. What are the pathways to competence (i.e., good teaching) and how can we assess preservice teachers’ progress along these developmental trajectories; and
2. What are the conceptual, methodological, and logistical challenges of hooking assessments of teacher practice and teacher education program quality to student learning outcomes?

To ground this discussion, we provide examples of our own efforts to document the preparation and education experiences of undergraduate and master’s level teacher candidates in an education program at a private research university. We conclude with an outline of an agenda for research and development that we are pursuing at Peabody. In sharing our initial planning, we aim to create energy and direction among schools of education to move ahead with sound evaluation of programs and practices that are linked to P-12 student learning and achievement.

The Goal: Student Learning and Achievement

International standards for student learning have moved well beyond basic comprehension and computation (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2004). Professional organizations representing most curricular domains across the elementary and secondary curriculum have articulated expectations for student learning that emphasize the ability to investigate, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas, to recognize their relevance, and to apply concepts appropriately in novel contexts. “Successful” schools, then, are those that effectively foster students’ abilities to think critically and creatively; enable students to achieve principled understanding of subject matter that is scaffolded by relevant conceptual and factual knowledge; inspire students’ civic awareness, sense of responsibility, and competence; and deepen students’ social awareness, empathy, and
compassion. While curriculum and pedagogy vary among such schools, it is clear that students must have access to rich and challenging content and opportunities to apply their thinking in authentic situations. Carpenter and Lehrer (1999) have delineated the features of classrooms that support student understanding. They characterize them as places where students are encouraged to construct relationships between related disciplinary ideas, to elaborate and extend upon their knowledge, to articulate their thinking, and to develop their identities as learners.3

From Learning to Teaching

Review of research and standards documents of the past 15 years reveals remarkable consistency in notions of teaching that support the kinds of learning articulated above. As described in the Standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 1992), even beginning teachers must be able to support the intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and physical development of students; respond with flexibility and professional judgment to their different needs; and actively engage them in their own learning so that they can use and generate knowledge in effective and powerful ways (p. 12). Good teaching in action is profoundly complicated. Summarizing research on teaching, Linda Darling-Hammond offers an account:

Studies of teaching (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Clandinin, 1986) describe it as complex work characterized by simultaneity, multidimensionality, and unpredictability. In classrooms competing goals and multiple tasks are negotiated at a breakneck pace, trade-offs are continually made, unanticipated obstacles and opportunities arise. Each hour of every day teachers must juggle the need to create a secure supportive environment for learning with the press for academic achievement, the need to attend to individual students and the demands of the group, and the challenges of pursuing multiple strands of work so that students at varying places in their learning move ahead and none are left behind. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 69)
Navigating these demands well requires that teachers possess extensive subject matter knowledge, the ability to establish respectful working relationships with children and their families, the vision and ability to create rich learning environments, as well as the commitment to continued professional learning.

Although this view of teaching and what teachers must know and be able to do is widely accepted by communities of educational research, professional practice, and accrediting agencies, there is a widening gap in views about what knowledge and skills are essential for the beginning teacher, and thus what teacher preparation programs should emphasize. On the one hand, university faculty generally view teaching as a learned profession and aim to prepare beginning teachers to be caring, committed, and autonomous decision-makers who possess solid knowledge of content and a beginning repertoire of pedagogical strategies to support diverse learners (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). At Peabody, faculty work deliberately to help teacher candidates develop not only subject matter expertise, but also habits of mind (dispositions) that promote teaching as an intellectual process of inquiry, discovery, and engagement with learners and learning.

In contrast, recent federal regulations emphasize technical aspects of teaching and suggest that teachers should be prepared to deliver content knowledge and to handle classroom management (Imig, 2004). According to this perspective, judgment and discretion develop later. The gap between these conceptions of what is essential for a beginning teacher has been exacerbated by an approach to accountability defined by standardized testing of student achievement in reading, language arts, and mathematics. Given a policy environment in which the main outcome of interest is test performance, rather narrowly defined, there is increasing interest in the use of highly scripted, “teacher proof” materials, designed to ensure that even teachers with little experience or content knowledge can enable students to acquire basic skills that are tested on state assessments. Implied here is the notion that “good enough” teaching is achieved by acquiring a static base of technical knowledge and skills rather than learning to negotiate a complex and dynamic enterprise.

We reject this narrower vision of “good enough” teaching. A growing body of evidence supports the conclusion that there is no one script that can support the learning of all students (National Research
Further, while these scripted instructional methods are appropriately used with certain special education populations and may effectively support the development of lower level skills for some general education students, they represent one end of a continuum of strategies and target a particular subset of learning needs. A more sophisticated and flexible teaching repertoire, and the understanding and ability to judge when particular approaches are appropriate, is required to help all students develop the foundation for more complex understanding essential to success in secondary and post-secondary content.

Yet another perspective is that beginning teachers simply need strong subject matter preparation, combined with basic classroom management skills. While there is anecdotal evidence of individuals who succeed starting with a strong liberal arts background and basic classroom management skills, as a broad policy matter we find this perspective wanting for many of the same reasons that we reject the view of teaching as scriptable. As discussed later in this paper, teachers need not only content knowledge, but also the pedagogical understanding and flexible repertoire to transform content into learning experiences appropriate to a wide range of learners.

Assessing the Progress of Teacher Candidates

Pathways to Competence

Part of the difficulty in determining what is essential for beginning teaching results from the absence of an empirically validated model of the path (or paths) to teaching competence. Although there is wide agreement across colleges and universities about the general experiences prospective teachers should be provided (e.g., coursework in content and methods, field experiences, etc.), most teacher education programs operate from an intuitive sense of what increasingly sophisticated understandings of teaching, learning, learners, and content look like. These intuitions—which may or may not be shared across program faculty—are expressed as teacher education faculty make judgments about candidates’ readiness to proceed from one stage to the next in preservice education (e.g., formal admission to teacher
education, entry into student teaching, graduation, and certification). Some have begun to describe these levels of understanding and skill using course or program-specific rubrics (cf. Elliott, 2003). However, to date, most understandings about candidates’ development of teaching competence remain locally articulated, have not been validated through empirical research, and are not tied to P-12 student learning.

The absence of an empirically validated model of teacher candidate development is due in part to the fact that most studies occur within the context of local programs or courses—focusing on the impact of specific program features on preservice teacher understanding and development. Many rely on self-report, survey of program stakeholders, or judgments by individual course instructors. The resulting developmental frameworks thus are tied to particular programs and experiences. Syntheses of these microresearch efforts do not yet exist (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).

Articulation of a model is further complicated by the wide variation in experiences that prospective teachers bring to their programs. Given the impossibility and undesirability of reducing variation in teachers’ prior experiences, it seems clear that any model of teacher development must recognize diverse starting points and pathways. For this reason, a developmental trajectory for preservice teachers might be anchored at one end of development to the strands of understanding and skills that beginning teachers must possess, and then describe within each strand a continuum from naïve to more sophisticated understanding. In the following pages, we sketch a conceptual model that describes teacher development in these terms and we offer examples of the kinds of assessments that might provide evidence of preservice teachers’ progress.

**Learning Strands and Evidence of Progress**

Our thinking is informed by the work of Sharon Feiman-Nemser on teacher learning across the teaching career span. Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggests that there are five central tasks to be accomplished in the early stages of learning to teach (i.e., preservice preparation):

- analyzing beliefs and forming new visions;
- developing subject matter knowledge for teaching;

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• developing understandings of learners and learning;
• developing a beginning repertoire of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and
• developing tools to study teaching.

In the following pages, we illustrate the first four of these tasks within the context of the teacher education program at Peabody—providing examples of activities designed to engage teacher candidates in these developmental tasks and articulating the kinds of evidence we look for as we assess candidates’ progress in accomplishing them.4

Analyzing Beliefs and Forming New Visions. By the time they enter teacher education programs, teacher candidates possess deep-rooted beliefs about teaching, learning, and schooling—beliefs forged from their years of experience as elementary and secondary students (Lortie, 1975). Although they are well-elaborated, these beliefs are naïve and self-centered—construing the work of teaching from a perspective of child or adolescent. More often than not, these beliefs about learning and teaching also are inconsistent with aspirations for student achievement and the vision of teaching we have described. Finally, as Feiman-Nemser (2001) writes, although these beliefs are naïve, they can be tenacious—filtering and, at times, “limiting the ideas that teacher education students are able and willing to entertain” (p. 1016).

The challenge for teacher educators, then, is to help candidates identify and probe their beliefs so that they may form more complex, warranted, and productive understandings of teaching:

Teacher candidates must also form visions of what is possible and desirable in teaching to inspire and guide their professional learning and practice. Such visions connect important values and goals to concrete classroom practices. Unless teacher educators engage prospective teachers in a critical examination of their entering beliefs in light of compelling alternatives and help them develop powerful images of good teaching and strong professional commitments, these entering beliefs will continue to shape their ideas and practices. (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1017)
At Peabody, teacher candidates first take up this task during introductory courses, in which they begin to discuss their ideas about schools, what it means to be a teacher, the learning process, equity and diversity, working with parents, etc. As they progress through the four-year program, teacher candidates are asked to examine their ideas more systematically.

Across three years of field experiences in the undergraduate secondary education program, teacher candidates are asked to examine and make explicit their beliefs about teaching, learning, and equity by explaining how they know their students are learning. Teacher candidates record their thinking in video narratives as sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The recordings serve as evidence of candidates’ development of increasingly more complex and research-based understandings of what constitutes effective teaching. For example, the following students’ comments made early in their program reflect a “banking model” of teaching and learning, wherein students receive and deposit information: “Teaching is offering a commodity and making people want to learn” and “Learning is being receptive to the ideas of others.” A comment made subsequent to participating in a practicum in middle and high school classrooms demonstrates emerging awareness of teaching and learning as social practices: “Teaching and learning involve fostering relationships with people, with ideas, and with subject matter.”

Developing Subject Matter Knowledge. As discussed above, effective teachers possess a solid command of their subject matter. They not only possess solid factual and conceptual knowledge, but also understand the disciplines as dynamic fields of inquiry, each with particular structures for investigation, standards of argumentation, and forms of notation and communication. Further, effective teachers understand how to organize subject matter and design learning experiences that make the content meaningful and coherent. They must have an understanding of appropriate learning outcomes at different levels (i.e., knowing what mastery of concepts and skills looks like) and must also have the ability to help scaffold student learning toward these outcomes. Along the way, they must be able to anticipate student misconceptions and know how to address them. Finally, they must be familiar with and be able to assess curricular resources available to
schools. To foster this pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986; Shulman, 1987), teacher preparation programs operate within the space between content and pedagogy, enabling teacher candidates to translate the knowledge gained in their disciplinary coursework into rich and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for students.

One effective tool with which we gauge candidates’ evolving pedagogical content knowledge is a task that requires candidates to critique and modify available instructional resources to serve key learning outcomes in particular disciplines. Table 1 presents an example.

**Table 1. Textbook Modifications (assignment excerpt)**

Throughout the semester, you have been given opportunities in class to critique textbook lessons based on effective ways to teach certain mathematical concepts. This assignment is a compilation of these activities in a more formal format.

Describe how you will modify lessons taken from a textbook. Select three different lessons in sequence.

- Provide an overview of the general goals and objectives for the lessons as you see them.
- Critique each component on the page. This includes your assessment of its worth and usefulness.
- Reflect back on each lesson and describe generally how you would teach the lesson, including which aspects of the materials you would use, which you would delete, which you would modify, how you would modify them, and your rationale for each decision.

Your objective is not to write lesson plans. You are simply critiquing available information and deciding how you might best use information from textbook publishers.

Successful performance of this task requires that candidates not only understand core concepts in mathematics, but also be able to anticipate students’ challenges in learning these concepts. Hence, the task provides evidence of candidates’ knowledge of a content area, their understanding...
of the development of conceptual understanding within the content area (and the misconceptions that typically arise), and their ability to anticipate the needs of a range of learners. As implied in this assignment, understanding of this bridge from disciplinary content to student learning is essential, whether teachers are generating new instructional materials or working with resources provided by their schools or districts.

**Developing Understandings of Learners and Learning.** The transformation of disciplinary content into rich, engaging, and effective learning experiences requires knowledge not only of content, but also of learners and their development. “Informed perspectives on development and learning provide necessary frameworks for understanding students, designing appropriate learning activities, justifying pedagogical decisions and actions, and communicating with parents, students, administrators, and colleagues” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1018). As Feiman-Nemser further argues, given the fact that many teachers work with “students whose racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds differ markedly from their own,” it is particularly important that candidates “cultivate the tools and dispositions to learn about students, their families, and communities and to build on this knowledge in teaching and learning” (p. 1018).

To promote understanding about learning and learners, during student teaching each teacher candidate in the elementary education program is expected to collect data on one focal student (e.g., artifacts such as samples of student work; assessments; video- and audiotapes; interviews with the classroom teacher, parents, other community members). In this process, teacher candidates are asked to closely examine social, historical, and cultural aspects of the classroom, school, home, and community that may influence their focal students’ learning. After discussions with mentors and peers, each candidate is expected to analyze student work in the areas of literacy and math in light of these examinations and make appropriate accommodations in her/his practice to address the specific needs of her/his focal student. Each candidate then writes a collaborative paper within peer groups of about three or four student teachers that considers how their practices affected student achievement over time. The collaborative nature of this assignment offers opportunities for student teachers to engage in professional dialogue focused on solving problem situations they
encounter on a day-to-day and long-term basis. In addition, this assignment provides evidence of candidates’ understanding of learning as a cultural practice, the relationship between culture and institutional contexts, and the inseparability of learning from the communities that support it.

Secondary education candidates have opportunities to examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions related to diversity as they pursue field experiences in a variety of urban school settings and in community settings serving children and youth. During their junior year practicum, candidates engage in a 30-hour service-learning program with agencies serving teens who are homeless, dropouts from traditional high schools, and in recovery from substance abuse. Structured, written reflections recorded prior to, during, and following the placement, as well as pre/post conferences and performance improvement plans, provide important evidence of students’ evolving dispositions towards students, families, communities, and diversity.

In the special education program at Peabody, candidates’ changing understanding of learners and their development is captured in the repeated assignments to create Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). In schools, an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is developed for each student who receives special education services. Writing an effective IEP demonstrates knowledge and skills in several areas: (a) special education federal law, (b) formal and informal assessment techniques, (c) student’s current academic and behavioral strengths and weaknesses, (d) effective curriculum and strategies, (e) the generation of realistic annual goals and short term objectives, (f) appropriate programs and services, and (g) evaluation methods. Beginning in their sophomore year, undergraduate teacher education candidates write IEPs based on mock student data. During their student teaching experience, candidates are required to write four IEPs for students in their classrooms. These IEPs are evaluated via a rubric that measures each of the seven elements listed. Among sophomores and juniors, we look for evidence of growth in the areas of assessment, identifying current strengths and weaknesses, and writing goals and objectives. During student teaching experience, when teacher candidates have opportunities to work with their students over an extended period of time and evaluate their progress, we especially look for growth in identifying proper curriculum and progress monitoring strategies.
Another core task in Special Education draws on the learning outcomes of P-12 students as evidence of candidates’ ability to design appropriate learning experiences for their students. Teacher candidates in the undergraduate program complete a 30-hour field-based experience tied to a mathematics methods course. Students are required to select a concept and develop 20 one-hour lessons to teach, including detailed lesson plans for each lesson. These lesson plans are evaluated by faculty in the areas of: (a) appropriate objectives; (b) learner characteristics; (c) cultural awareness; (d) instructional modifications; (e) appropriate pacing and chunking; (f) appropriate instructional methods; (g) assessment of background knowledge; (h) use of modeling, guided practice, and independent practice; (i) student evaluation tools; and (j) teacher evaluation tools. Prior to beginning the lessons, the P-12 students are given a pre-test of the skills to be covered in the 20 lessons. After teaching each lesson, students are required to write a reflection of their lesson, focusing both on their students’ learning and their teaching. At the end of the 20 lessons P-12 students are given a post-test to assess growth over the 10-week time period.

Developing a Beginning Repertoire. Wasley, Hampel, and Clark (1997) define a teaching repertoire as “a variety of techniques, skills, and approaches in all dimensions of education—curriculum, instruction and assessment—that teachers have at their fingertips to stimulate the growth of the children with whom they work” (cited in Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1018). As Feiman-Nemser argues, a beginning repertoire includes a limited number of quality curricular materials, models of teaching, and assessment techniques, augmented by a solid understanding of how to choose and use any particular approach.

In our masters-level internship program, where interns share two mentor teachers’ classrooms for an entire school year (one semester in each), two action research projects provide useful evidence of both repertoire and candidates’ ability to adjust approaches based on student learning outcomes. In these projects candidates collect data to study the effectiveness of a chosen teaching strategy on student learning. The teacher intern collects pre-data (student scores/grades) before implementing the new or revised strategy, expedites the change, and collects post-data to determine if there is improved student learning. The interns conduct the project and then present it to peers and a faculty committee for review and feedback. Key evaluation criteria focus on
the degree to which interns are able to make sense of and communicate student learning data and to use these data to plan appropriate next steps for instruction.

Although these assessment tools serve distinct purposes and programs, they have a common focus on authentic and complex performance tasks. This shared emphasis reflects our belief that the most compelling evidence of candidates’ teaching abilities comes from assessment tasks that mirror the actual tasks of teaching. The criteria or markers of progress that guide our assessments of these performance tasks are based on research into teacher and student learning that spans three decades. We currently are working to fine-tune both the tasks and the evaluation criteria so that we can better (more systematically and precisely) analyze the evidence that these assessments provide.

As described in the final section, we further seek to mine these performance assessments—and to establish new ones—toward the goal of articulating an empirically validated developmental trajectory of learning to teach. Given the intricacy of the understandings and skills to be assessed, this research and development project will require the construction, test, and use of complex measures and will involve both longitudinal and “snapshot” views of candidates’ achievements. To add empirical strength, we are currently seeking partners among other teacher education institutions: Carefully designed contrasts and comparisons can enhance the knowledge of the field as a whole about the trade-offs of various program choices.

Tying Teacher Performance to Student Learning Outcomes

The assessment tools described in the preceding section focus on a crucial but intermediate outcome in teacher education: teacher candidates’ knowledge and skills. However, knowledge and skills do not necessarily or straightforwardly translate to improved teaching performance in classrooms. Moreover, improved teaching performance, although unquestionably valuable, is not an end in itself. Ultimately, the most compelling measure of teacher effectiveness (and thus the effectiveness of teacher education programs) is P-12 student learning and understanding. Yet, using such a distal measure as P-12 student learning to assess the effectiveness of teacher preparation entails
conceptual, methodological, and logistical obstacles. In this section, we sketch these obstacles and also highlight efforts underway or needed to address them.

**Conceptual Challenges**

If the ultimate goal is the sort of student learning and achievement described at the outset of this paper, then evaluating teacher education programs requires instruments and measures that can tap student learning and understanding. Currently, instruments and measures that are acceptable, efficient, and affordable are lacking. As a recent National Research Council report concludes, “Much hard work remains to focus psychometric model building on the critical features of models of cognition and learning and on observations that reveal meaningful cognitive processes in a particular domain” (National Research Council, 2001, p. 6). Many assessments sample widely among the knowledge and skills considered important for students at a particular grade level, but in doing so fail to tap a sufficiently wide range of competencies to fairly characterize student understanding within any one area of content. An assessment may be an excellent choice for a certain form of accountability (e.g., to find out at a statewide level whether students are being taught the knowledge and skills delineated in the state standards) but a very poor choice for other purposes (for example, to characterize the level of understanding achieved by students in a particular teacher’s class), and yet the same assessment may be used to serve both purposes. Often, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are poorly aligned so that what is tested bears little relation to what has been taught (Webb, 1997). If so, student test scores would clearly be poor choices to serve as indices of the quality of teaching they had received.

Even with the best of assessments, the road to the outcome of student learning is long and indirect, with unknown amounts of “slippage” between each of the links. Candidates in a teacher education program presumably acquire knowledge, skills, and values. These are expected, in time, to affect the teaching practices of graduates once they are working in their own classrooms. Yet, little is known about the relationship between what preservice teachers know and understand and what those same individuals can do later on as inservice teachers.
Indeed, links between beliefs and knowledge, on the one hand, and teaching are notoriously tricky to establish even at one point in time. What teachers articulate often fails to match what they put into practice.) A second important link is between teaching and student learning. Teachers are one influence among many on their students’ learning, and inadequate measures of student learning make that link even more difficult to establish and characterize.

**Methodological Challenges**

Assuming, for the moment, that adequate measures of student learning are in place, we confront a number of methodological challenges of linking P-12 student learning with specific teachers at a given grade level. In the last decade, there has been increasing interest in value-added modeling based on the work of William Sanders and implemented in Tennessee. The Sanders model used in Tennessee, TVAAS (Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System), attributes student gains to teacher effectiveness and regards teacher effectiveness as both additive and cumulative. A common theme in interpreting TVAAS is “that teachers, not students, are responsible for learning and that teachers hold the responsibility to produce measurable progress in learning outcomes” (Kupermintz, 2002). Although the Sanders model makes exciting promises, the requirements of such models are extensive, and methodology has yet to overcome significant concerns (McCaffrey et al., 2003; Kupermintz, 2002).

One concern is the degree to which changes in student test scores can be isolated to the effects of having a particular teacher—rather than, for example, tutoring, summer school, and other supports beyond the classroom. A second relates to the tautological definition of “teacher effectiveness.” Sanders and Horn (1998) define teacher effectiveness as student academic gain. However, their model posits student academic gain as a separate and dependent variable of teacher effectiveness (Kupermintz, 2002). Finally, there are significant unknowns regarding Sanders’ handling of inevitable gaps and errors in data—decisions about how to handle errors can significantly affect the results (McCaffrey et al., 2003; Ludlow, 2005).
Research is currently underway that seeks to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various models, test potential sources of errors, and determine consequential validity (Ludlow, 2005). Essential to the success of this research will be the broad establishment of nonproprietary databases that contain longitudinal data on student achievement in the form of individual student records and that are accessible for purposes of research and validation of emerging models. Data will need to be formatted and coded to allow appropriate disaggregation—not only by teacher and school, but also by school context, student socioeconomic and sociocultural attributes, etc. Moreover, these databases will need to be designed to handle the more sophisticated tools and measures required to capture student learning of more complex content.

**Logistical Challenges**

Perhaps the most immediate logistical challenge is mobility among teachers and their students. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) reported that in 1999-2000, 29% of new teachers “either changed schools at the end of the year (15%) or left teaching altogether (14%)” (p. 693). In urban systems, student mobility rates within a school can reach 80% over one academic year. Tracking impact on student learning is nearly impossible when new teachers move frequently and the student groupings are not sustained over a period of at least a year. Yet another logistical concern lies in difficulty of gaining access to relevant data; privacy concerns may complicate the collection of scores for students of individual teachers, and school systems may be hesitant to share data with schools of higher education. Overcoming these obstacles will require broad collaboration among school districts, teacher unions, state education agencies, and teacher education programs.

**An Agenda for Research and Development: Toward Evidenced-Based Assessment in Teacher Education**

In an effort to address these challenges, at Peabody we are embarking on a program of research and development that will enable us to design and implement an evidence-based approach to teacher education assessment. By systematically collecting and analyzing data
on teacher candidates’ program achievements (including work with students) and the achievement outcomes of our graduates’ P-12 students and simultaneously working to establish a series of robust measures for learning outcomes, we seek to create a system for quality assessment of our programs. Perhaps more important for the field in the long run, we also seek to provide evidence on the design trade-offs of particular teacher education program components in relation to P-12 student learning. Our efforts to collect and analyze data on our students’ abilities to improve P-12 student learning are organized around four essential tasks. In the following section we briefly explain these tasks and the action steps to pursue them.

**TASK 1: Identifying and Refining Current Tools and Developing New Ones**

What evidence will inform our understanding of our students’ developing ability to support student learning? How can we improve the quality of the evidence we get?

**Action Steps:**

- Gather and review course syllabi and core assignment descriptions for teacher education courses and select required courses from Arts and Sciences. Interview faculty to get detailed understanding of assignment goals and parameters and their alignment with program competencies.
- Target particularly promising core assignments at various levels across programs. Work with faculty to collect student work samples for these assignments.
- Analyze candidate work samples to understand the nature and quality of evidence these offer about teacher education candidates’ learning and understanding of their students’ learning. Based on analysis of work samples, identify core assignments that effectively provide (or have the potential to provide) rich/robust evidence of candidates’ and P-12 students’ learning and articulate features of these assignments. Consider feasibility of focusing on courses related to mathematics and English/language arts.
• Work with course instructors to refine undergraduate and masters’ core assignments to increase their potential for providing evidence of learning.
• “Implement” revised core assignments in undergraduate and masters level courses. Provide coaching support in these classrooms to collect strong work samples.
• Work with recent graduates to identify work samples—including unit plans and artifacts and samples of their students’ work—and pursue similar analysis.

**TASK II: Establishing Measures**

How can we differentiate levels of understanding and achievement as reflected in both preservice teachers’ work and practice and the work of their students?

**Action Steps:**

- Research/pursue resources and practices at other institutions.
- Develop assessment measures for complex, open-ended, student generated tasks (for teacher education and ultimately P-12 students) related to specific literacies (e.g., mathematics and language arts). These measures should be informed by and should inform our work in articulating a tentative trajectory for preservice teacher development.
- Examine Terra Nova, Stanford 9, and other commonly used P-12 standardized assessments to see whether there are potentially fruitful strands (e.g., problem-solving, interpretation of data/graphs) that we might focus on in linking preparation and practice of our graduates to the achievement of their (elementary and secondary) students.

**TASK III: Establishing Infrastructure to Support Our Learning and Systematic Analysis**

What support structures/resources are needed to enable ongoing systematic inquiry and assessment of student progress and program quality?
**Task IV: Developing and Sustaining an Evidenced-Based Culture**

What kinds of structures and routines must we establish for ongoing review of evidence to inform program development and quality assessment?

**Action Steps:**
- Identify team(s) and timeline for ongoing review and analysis (who are the players?).
- Meet at regular intervals to review evidence reflected in student work/practice in order to articulate:
  - What have we learned?
  - What do we need to know?
  - What programmatic changes do we need to make?
- Develop strategies for communicating review and analysis of evidence to stakeholders. These strategies should ultimately support writing and publication.

In pursuing this agenda, we hope not only to develop a robust, but workable strategy for assessment of teacher education candidates and programs, but also to contribute to the “reconnection” of policy
and teacher education research. Despite some profound differences in views of teaching and learning, federal policymakers and university-based educators share a view of students’ “right to learn” (Darling-Hammond, 1997) and of the urgency of preparing teachers who can honor that right. In reviewing the current status (and limits) of assessment in teacher preparation, our intent is both to affirm the goal of valid and meaningful assessment that links teaching with learning and to advance dialogue and research toward this goal.

References


Ludlow, L. (2005, January 2). *Value added modeling: Where did it come from, where is it going?* Presentation to the AACTE Winter Institute on Assessment in Teacher Education, Cancun, Mexico.


**Endnotes**

1 This policy context has stimulated efforts such as that of the Teachers for a New Era (TNE) consortium to develop “value-added tracking systems to assess the impact of program graduates on pupils’ learning” (Cochran-Smith, 2003).
See: for reading and language arts, National Council of Teachers of English (1996); for science, American Association for the Advancement of Science (1993) and National Research Council (1996); for social studies, National Council for the Social Studies (1994); for civics and government, Center for Civic Education (1994); for economics, National Council on Economic Education (1997); for geography, Geography Education Standards Project (1994); for history, National Center for History in Schools (1996); for the arts, Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (1994). See also the National Center for Education and the Economy (1997) in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and applied learning.

We must note that teaching for understanding is a challenging goal, one that has in the past been reserved for students who are considered “advanced” (Gamoran et al., 2003).

Currently we are looking at ways in which Feiman-Nemser’s fifth task might emerge and evolve within the context of other developmental tasks. For example, developing a view of teaching that encompasses ongoing professional inquiry and learning and acquiring tools with which to enact such a vision are intertwined. While at some level all five tasks are interconnected, we suspect that the essential features of this one are different in kind. Therefore, in the section entitled “Analyzing beliefs and forming new visions” (pp. 121-122) and in our ongoing investigation (see final section of paper, pp. 130-134) we do not treat this task separately.

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Teacher Education at Liberal Arts Institutions: Programs in Context or Standardization?

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Teacher education programs at liberal arts colleges and universities currently reflect the unique mission and context of the institutions in which they are situated. In fact the profession, through national and state accreditation standards, has expected, even required, a clear alignment between institutional context and programs. However, recent state and federal policies requiring common accountability measures and the use of those measures to compare and rank programs may threaten this professional standard. This study describes three very different teacher education programs in Washington State that are exemplars of program designs that are consistent with the context of their respective institutions. The discussion provides a rationale for the value of preserving the freedom of schools, colleges, and departments of education to design programs that are congruent with their specific contexts and how the preservation of this freedom in teacher preparation is good for the profession and for P-12 schools.

Introduction

Programs for the preparation of teachers in the United States exist primarily within the nation’s colleges and universities and thus reflect the individual contexts of their parent institutions. John Goodlad (1990) and his colleagues recognized this fact early in their monumental study of teacher education, Places Where Teachers Are Taught: “Approximately 1300 of these colleges and universities prepare teachers. It is not surprising that one finds that unique institutional characteristics spill over in the conduct of teacher education programs.
No two are identical” (p. 16). A more recent study conducted by the Leading Edge Project and funded by the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST), asserts a similar finding.

First, our work challenges the one-size-fits-all brand of teacher preparation. It is still assumed by many that teaching is a kind of follow-the-rules activity; that if one knows a set of teaching behaviors, students will respond and learning will take place. Although additional information to challenge this assumption is not needed by the expert teacher educator, there are still educational professionals and policymakers who persist in holding such a view. (Griffin & Litman, 2002, p. 7)

While they are situated within unique contexts, college and university programs that prepare teachers for work in public schools in the United States must meet a uniform set of standards determined by the states in which they operate; many also meet national accreditation standards. These preconditions have been in effect for decades and have not interfered with the ability of institutions to articulate their unique missions and contexts in their teacher education programs. In recent years state standards have become more prescriptive and have been supplemented by stringent accountability measures imposed by the states and the federal government. Since the publication of Goodlad’s study of teacher preparation, the landscape has changed significantly and teacher preparation programs are under increasing demands to conform to these state and federal requirements. This regulatory constriction of teacher preparation was addressed in a recent editorial in the Journal of Teacher Education by Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2004):

Tighter regulation of teacher education is reflected in increased federal and state control of both the ‘inputs’ of teacher preparation (e.g., number, kind, and content of courses and fieldwork experiences) and its ‘outcomes’ (e.g., assessments of the impact of teacher preparation on teacher learning, professional practice, and K-12 students’ learning). Along these lines, 42 states now require statewide assessments for prospective teachers, 32 states require tests in one or more
subject areas and all states must report annually to the federal government on the quality of preparation programs. (p. 4)

Further evidence of the federal government’s interest in uniform assessments is found in Pub. L. No. 105-244, Title II, Section 207b, which describes the requirements for the “State Report Card on the Quality of Teacher Preparation.” To comply with that section of the law, states must submit reports delineating the status of nine separate measures of teacher preparation quality, six of which address uniform assessments of candidates preparing for teaching certificates (National Research Council, 2001). This federal incursion into teacher preparation has caused increasing concern in academe that the government’s directives will force more standardization of curriculum and further reduce the academic freedom of teacher education faculty (Pullin, 2004).

In Washington State, the setting for the programs discussed below, there have been numerous changes in state standards over the past ten years, including “new standards for residency (initial) certification, new standards for professional (continuing) certification, requirements for candidates to demonstrate a ‘positive impact on student learning,’ performance competencies for all endorsements, teacher testing for basic skills and content, and the collaborative development by all Washington State teacher preparation institutions of a pedagogy assessment instrument” (Sanders, Sterner, Michaelis, Mowry, & Buff, 2004, p. 98-99). Programs in the state have adapted to the required changes but have sacrificed some of the autonomy that they once enjoyed. For example, all institutions must measure basic skills, content knowledge, and pedagogy competence using uniform standards. Prior to 2002, institutions had their own measures for each of those assessments.

This paper is not meant to be an exposé on the points and counterpoints of standards and accountability in teacher preparation. Rather, it is a brief look at one issue that may be affected by those efforts: the ability of colleges and universities to align their teacher education programs with their unique institutional contexts. The premise of the discussion is threefold: (a) diversity of preparation programs does exist as a result of institutional contexts, (b) the current atmosphere of standards and accountability may threaten that diversity, and (c) the
diversity of programs in context adds value to teacher preparation and is worth preserving. While it would be desirable to provide convincing scientific research to support the premise, little credible research about the topic exists. Therefore, I will examine the issue of “program design in context” at three separate private institutions in Washington State and provide supporting rationale for maintaining a system that allows schools, colleges, and departments of education flexibility to design programs that reflect their institutional context in an atmosphere of standards and accountability.

The issue of context in teacher education can have different meanings and be approached from various perspectives. The term “context” is often used to describe the various settings in which candidates may eventually work. Research around the preparation for teaching in urban settings and for working with children and young people from various cultural and language backgrounds is plentiful. Somewhat less prevalent are studies regarding the preparation of teachers for rural contexts. While it is not the focus of this paper, the context *for which* candidates are prepared to teach is an extremely important topic and cannot be fully separated from the contexts *in which* they are prepared. It is this second viewpoint that relates to the context of the preparation program itself that is the focus of this discussion.

An interinstitutional comparison of context might include institutional history and mission; state, private, and faith-based affiliations; geographic setting; market factors; size; selectivity; and financial resources. While the literature is replete with descriptions of teacher education programs that include overviews of context, there has been little formal study of the importance of institutional context and, correspondingly, little mention of it in discussions of educational reform. This paper examines the interinstitutional context of three independent liberal arts colleges/universities (University of Puget Sound, Heritage University, Whitworth College) operating in one state with one set of overarching state and federal standards, but with considerable differences in context that are reflected in their institutional and program mission statements, in the students and communities that they serve, and ultimately in the designs of their programs. This discussion will address several questions about interinstitutional context including:
What is the context in which teacher preparation programs are situated?
How do the teacher education programs at these institutions reflect the larger institutional context?
What differences in programs exist among the three institutions that may be attributed to their unique contexts?

University of Puget Sound: Focus on Academic Excellence

The University of Puget Sound (UPS) is located in Tacoma, Washington, along the I-5 corridor just south of Seattle. Tacoma, a city of about 195,000 people, is part of the larger, heavily populated, Puget Sound metropolitan area. It is on the western edge of the Cascade Mountains, receives ample rainfall (37.6 inches average) and has a mild marine climate with an average temperature of 40 degrees in the winter and 70 degrees in the summer (City of Tacoma, Washington, 2005).

UPS, founded in 1888 as a Methodist institution, is currently governed by a wholly independent board of trustees. It is a selective, nationally ranked liberal arts university of approximately 2,600 undergraduate students and 200 graduate students, with 15% of the undergraduates and 23% of the graduate students listed as ethnic minority. The institution has a Phi Beta Kappa chapter and its entering freshman class in 2004 had an average SAT score of 1252. Its student body comes from 47 states and territories and 17 different countries (2004-05). In addition to a full range of undergraduate degree programs, UPS offers the following graduate degrees: Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Education (Counseling and School Administration), Master of Occupational Therapy, and Doctor of Occupational Therapy. Over the past twenty-five plus years, there has been a consistent effort by UPS to become less of a comprehensive university and more focused on the liberal arts. As part of that campaign, the university eliminated some graduate programs and transferred ownership of the law school to Seattle University in 1996 (University of Puget Sound, 2005). In this same era, the teacher preparation program was moved from the undergraduate years to a Master of Arts in Teaching (MIT) program. This move allowed students to have a more complete academic preparation for teaching and attracted some of the best undergraduate students into teacher education.
The UPS Mission Statement clearly focuses on academic excellence and critical thinking:

The mission of the University is to develop in its students capacities for critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, sound judgment, and apt expression that will sustain a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, active inquiry, and reasoned independence. (University of Puget Sound, 2005)

It is in the context of an urban, Pacific Northwest, highly selective, diverse, liberal arts institution that the UPS School of Education is located. The preparation of teachers for initial licensure occurs through a single track, the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. However, the school also works with undergraduate students planning careers in teaching by assisting them in preparing for the MAT program. The MAT program prepares about 60 candidates per year, half elementary and half secondary, and about 18% are listed as ethnic minority. About half the students in the MAT program come from UPS and half from other institutions. The unit has NCATE accreditation (University of Puget Sound, 2003).

A review of the teacher education program at UPS finds clear alignment between the program and the context in which it is situated. Although perhaps not as selective as its undergraduate program, the MAT program is, nonetheless, selective. The program is graduate level, and students are expected to score 500 or higher on two of the three subtests of the Graduate Record Examination and have a minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA. They must also show “skillful and thoughtful writing” and meet the state requirements for the content required in the areas they plan to teach (University of Puget Sound, 2005).

The mission statement for the program is, like that of the parent institution, weighted heavily toward academic excellence and critical thinking:

The University of Puget Sound’s Master of Arts in Teaching program is designed to prepare professional educators who have a strong liberal arts background and who are able to make knowledgeable decisions about their professional practice. We want our students to develop the capacity to see complexity, appreciate diversity, develop multiple explanatory systems, and
manage on multiple levels simultaneously. (University of Puget Sound, 2003)

This statement is expanded on the institutional website to include:

The faculty of the School of Education desire that students in the MAT program be ardent learners who convey in turn to their students a love of learning. The requirement that entering students have devoted four years to a liberal arts course of study, including a specialized major, ensures that students bring strong academic backgrounds to their professional training, which will give perspective, intensity, and flexibility to their teaching. Professional study is concentrated in a post-baccalaureate year, focusing on theoretical and applied aspects of teaching. (University of Puget Sound, 2005)

The conceptual framework on which the program is based is built around the theme of Teaching for Understanding with the subcategories of Understanding by Seeing, Understanding by Knowing Ourselves, and Understanding by Thinking. The conceptual framework is research-based and, as the narrative below indicates, the program is modeled on the work of several national studies.

The teacher education program that we created is consistent with the recommendations of the Holmes Group in Tomorrow’s Teachers (1986); the Carnegie Report, A Nation Prepared (1986); and, most recently, What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future (1996) from the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. The MAT program was designed to address two challenges:

• teaching demanding content to higher standards and
• meeting the educational, social, and personal needs of a student population that is becoming more culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse. (University of Puget Sound, 2003)

To meet the challenges listed above, the following goals are provided:

We intend to prepare teachers who have:

• deep understanding of subject matter and pedagogies that teach for understanding;
• ability to manage the complexities of teaching;
• ability to promote student learning of challenging content;
• ability to reflect on one’s own practice, to look for principles underlying what “works” or “does not work,” and to persist in determining one’s own appropriate practice;
• commitment to serving everyone’s children, particularly those whom [sic] historically have not been well served by traditional schooling;
• ability to learn and work in a collaborative fashion, and to create settings in which others can learn. (University of Puget Sound, 2003)

The curriculum of the MAT program is, in some ways, similar to the curricula of most teacher education programs and includes courses in child development, curriculum and instruction, and methods. However, in addition to the requirement of a bachelors degree in a liberal arts area, several prerequisite courses are required, including “Schools in American Society.” The program also continues the emphasis on content and thinking by requiring that all students take four courses in “Professional Issues,” a course in “Educational Thought and Practice,” and a seminar entitled “Educational Experience, Context, and Meaning” (University of Puget Sound, 2005).

Heritage University: Focus on Service and Social Justice

Heritage University, the youngest four-year institution in Washington State (established in 1982), is located on the Yakima Indian Reservation near Toppenish, 20 miles from Yakima and 150 miles southeast of Seattle. The area is on the lee side of the Cascade Mountains and boasts “300 sunny days per year.” The Yakima/Toppenish area has hot summers and cool winters with an annual average of just eight inches of precipitation. While there are many small manufacturing enterprises in the Yakima Valley, agriculture is the major basis of the economy. Long known for its apple production, the Yakima area is a growing wine producing region as well (City of Yakima, Washington, 2005).
While Heritage itself is young, it traces its roots to two former institutions that are now closed: Holy Names College, founded in 1907 by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, and Fort Wright College, the successor to Holy Names College. Both of the earlier institutions were located in Spokane, Washington, 200 miles to the northeast of Toppenish, but a branch campus on the Yakima Nation reservation served the Yakima/Toppenish area. Heritage was launched as a result of a local effort initiated when the branch campus closed down along with the main campus in Spokane in 1982. Dr. Kathleen Ross, the former president of Fort Wright College, was the founding president at Heritage and has been the only president the university has known. The college started with an initial enrollment of 85 students. In 2004, the year that Heritage College became Heritage University, there were approximately 800 undergraduate students at the main campus and at several sites around the state. The university enrolls approximately 500 graduate students at its primary sites and at school district sites around the state where it delivers graduate courses and programs to teachers. Approximately 54% of the student body is identified as ethnic minority. Approximately 65% of undergraduate students at Heritage come from families with incomes under $20,000 per year (Heritage University, 2005).

From its beginning, Heritage has been an institution that has provided educational opportunities to an underserved population and has placed a high value on cultural diversity and the individual value and worth of all people. This mission is evident throughout its publications and the mission and vision statements which read:

The mission of Heritage University is to provide quality, accessible higher education to a multicultural population that has been educationally isolated.

From its founding days, Heritage University has been inspired by a vision of education that embraces issues of national and international significance. These issues revolve around the realization that cooperation across cultural boundaries, whether they be geographic, ethnic, religious or economic, is vital to human survival.
Key Values:
1. Honoring each person’s human dignity and potential;
2. Seeking intellectual growth and challenges;
3. Celebrating the shared spiritual roots of all humankind.
(Heritage University, 2005)

The influence of the earlier institutional affiliations, and specifically the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, upon Heritage have been significant. The following statement from the university website makes that connection:

Heritage University was founded as a non-sectarian institution, and is not affiliated with any church or religious group. But the college’s educational values have been influenced by the sponsoring religious order at Fort Wright College. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) were founded in rural Quebec in 1843 to start schools in isolated towns where the poor had no educational opportunities. They emphasized high scholastic standards and enkindling the life of the mind in a personalized learning environment. They envisioned education as the full human development of each student—intellectually, professionally, spiritually and morally—while creating community and inspiring service to others. Over the following years, they embedded these values in educational ventures pursued around the globe, with great respect for various cultures. This is the educational heritage of today’s Heritage University. (Heritage University, 2005)

The mission of the institution is further evidenced in its admission information, which states in part: “Our admissions procedure helps us gather information relevant to making a decision based on these criteria. Acceptance to Heritage University results from an overall assessment of an applicant’s background. We do not set arbitrary standards for grades, test scores, courses taken or achievements” (Heritage University, 2005).

It is in the context of a rural, inland Pacific Northwest, very diverse institution with a mission to reach the underserved people of the region that the Heritage University Division of Education and Psychology is located. The preparation of teachers at Heritage is
accomplished through an undergraduate program, a post-baccalaureate certification program, and a Master In Teaching (MIT) program. There are about 120 program completers per year total in the three programs and the diversity of candidates is similar to the diversity represented in the university. The division also offers M.Ed. degree programs in school counseling, school administration, and several other content-related areas for teachers (Heritage University, 2003).

The faculty in the division have developed a conceptual framework with “Service Toward Social Justice” at its core (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Heritage College Conceptual Framework: “Knowledge Brings Us Together”](image)

The narrative accompanying the model provides extensive support for the tenets of the conceptual framework. However, except for the diversity component, there is little research cited. The teacher
education programs emphasize constructivist methodology and incorporate practical, hands-on experience in a variety of professional settings (Heritage University, 2004). The emphasis on critical reflection is articulated through extensive self-assessments, journal writing, and personal communication. The commitment to diversity includes a thorough inclusion of the topic throughout the curriculum as well as placement of candidates in diverse settings. All candidates for certification are required to take “Diversity Issues in Education” as well as “English as a Second Language in the Content Areas.” The faculty have also made considerable progress in contextualizing (placing students’ learning in the context of authentic settings) the teaching experience of their candidates with that effort funded in part by an outside grant. As part of that process, the introductory education course for undergraduates includes a field experience in which “teams of students work with model teachers in the classroom, so that candidates have an authentic opportunity to relate their content knowledge to teaching practice from the start” (Heritage University, 2004, p. 12). This emphasis on contextualization continues through the program as candidates are involved in numerous experiences both in classrooms and in community agencies and events.

The summary statement in the narrative, perhaps better than any other document, confirms the commitment of the school to an agenda of social justice, diversity, inclusion, and the education of the whole person.

We are proud of Heritage candidates because at the culmination of rigorous courses of study and intensive field experiences, they are able to demonstrate proficiencies that support the learning of all students. We work especially hard at Heritage University to prepare candidates to work with students with exceptionalities and those from diverse ethnic, racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups. We require that our students intentionally incorporate multiple perspectives in their lesson plans. We ask that candidates go beyond merely incorporating artifacts from other cultures in their teaching or mentioning the heroes of other cultures in the history they teach. We insist that they delve into understanding the meaning with which other peoples imbue their material culture.
At Heritage University, we believe that candidates who demonstrate their abilities to serve the needs of all students will contribute to the health of a pluralistic society. We believe that as our candidates demonstrate their abilities to work wisely and sensitively with diverse students, they will be enabled to serve the needs of a just society by challenging the inequalities of the status quo. (Heritage University, 2004, p. 18)

**Whitworth College: An Education of Mind and Heart**

Whitworth College is located in Spokane, Washington, 300 miles east of Seattle with mountains to the east and north and farmlands and ranches to the west and south. The city of Spokane has a population of 195,000 and, with the surrounding communities, the area makes up the smaller of the two major metropolitan areas of the state with a population of approximately 418,000. The climate parameters fall between those of Tacoma and the Yakima Valley with cool winters, warm summers, and 17 inches of precipitation. In an average year, the area will experience over 50 inches of snowfall, more in the nearby mountains (Spokane City, 2005). However, Spokane has not always been the location of Whitworth College.

Founded in western Washington in 1883 as Sumner Academy, the school was the culmination of a calling by Presbyterian minister, lawyer, educator, and entrepreneur George F. Whitworth to leave Indiana for the Pacific Northwest. There he pursued his calling to “establish a good parochial school for the benefit of the children and youth of the colony, to be suited to their immediate wants; and no efforts will be spared to elevate the character of the school, and to make it an institution of learning of the highest grade, so soon as the interests of the colony may demand it” (Soden, 1990, p. 15). Seven years later, on February 19, 1890, the academy board voted to change the name of the school to Whitworth College. In 1899, as a result of very poor economic conditions in Sumner and a sense of isolation from the population base needed to support the school, Whitworth moved to a beautiful spot overlooking Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. Fourteen years later, under increasingly difficult economic pressures and competition, Whitworth accepted an offer from the Spokane community, Presbyterian churches, and land developer J. P. Graves to
move across the state to its current site on the north side of Spokane. From the beginning, Whitworth intended students in his school to receive an education of “mind and heart,” a distinction of the college that has endured to the present day (Soden, 1990).

At the present time, Whitworth enrolls approximately 2,400 students, 2,100 undergraduates and 300 graduate and post-baccalaureate students. About 10% of the student body is identified as ethnic-minority. The college has, over the past fifteen years, become more selective in its admission policies; the current average SAT score for entering freshmen is 1165. While the institution has retained the name “college,” it is consistently listed among the top 10 regional universities in the west by *U.S. News and World Report*. In addition to its traditional liberal arts emphasis, Whitworth has two professional schools (Education and Global Commerce and Management) and an extensive evening program operated through the Department of Continuing Studies (Whitworth College, 2005a).

Like many institutions, Whitworth’s roots are sectarian; the Presbyterian Church (USA) was instrumental in its beginnings and in helping to sustain it in its early years. Today Whitworth is governed by an independent board but maintains an affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and has not strayed far from its founding principles. The current mission statement reads:

Whitworth’s mission is to provide its diverse student body an education of the mind and the heart, equipping its graduates to honor God, follow Christ, and serve humanity. This mission is carried out by a community of Christian Scholars committed to excellent teaching and the integration of faith and learning.
(Whitworth College, 2003b, p. 4)

The eight Educational Principles of the college are grouped into three areas:

Knowledge:
- A solid grounding in the arts and sciences
- An understanding of the Christian faith and its implications for liberal arts learning
Skills:
• Intellectual skills
• Relational skills
• Professional skills

Faith and Values:
• Response to God
• Relationship to others
• Stewardship of creation. (Whitworth College, 2003b, p. 7-8)

It is in the context of a church related, selective, liberal arts college, located in the Inland Pacific Northwest with a mission to “educate the mind and heart” that the Whitworth College School of Education functions. The School of Education has three tracks for the initial preparation of teachers: an undergraduate program, a master in teaching program, and an evening teacher certification program. Approximately 130 candidates complete initial teacher preparation yearly: 80 undergraduates and 50 MIT students. (Note: The evening teacher certification program is new and at the time of this writing has no graduates. It is anticipated that the program will average 30 program completers per year.) The ethnic diversity of candidates in professional education programs has averaged between 9% and 12% in recent years (Whitworth College, 2003a).

The school also offers master of education degrees in school counseling, school administration, special education, elementary education, secondary education, gifted education, administrative leadership, and agency counseling. The Center for Gifted Education and Professional Development is also housed in the school. The School of Education is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

While the programs in the School of Education formerly operated under different conceptual frameworks, the faculty decided to pull everything into one model in 2002. The current framework and mission statement align with the college mission statement centered on preparing “educators of mind and heart” (see Figure 2). The framework is research based with extensive citations to the body of professional literature on teacher education in the full narrative.
The mission of the School of Education is to prepare Educators of Mind and Heart who are scholars, community members, guardians, visionary leaders, and effective practitioners. The School of Education provides opportunities to integrate theory and practice in diverse settings through the study of established and emerging content as well as through pedagogical and professional knowledge. Whitworth College prepares educators to have a positive impact on the learning and development of those whom they are called to serve.

Scholars. Effective educators possess a solid knowledge of the content areas in which they work, understand the connections between their discipline and other disciplines, use the tools of inquiry specific to their discipline, and demonstrate an attitude of lifelong learning along with an understanding that existing fields of knowledge continue to evolve and grow.

Community Members. Effective educators develop and sustain intentionally collaborative and interdependent relationships among teachers, students and their families, counselors, administrators, and other members for the development of a learning community.

Effective Practitioners. Effective educators are intrinsically motivated to analyze situations, set goals, plan and monitor actions, evaluate results, and reflect on their professional thinking and decision making.

Visionary Leaders. Effective educators have a vision. They can articulate a personal philosophy of education that includes a belief in the unique worth and ability of each human being and provides a framework guiding personal and professional decision-making and development.

Guardians. Effective educators act as advocates of children and youth, demonstrating a sincere and equitable commitment to the success of all, paying attention to the role that diversity, including gender, abilities, ethnicity, race, religion or socioeconomic status, brings to the learning and the community. In the Christian tradition of servant leadership, educators serve humankind, seeking opportunities to assist, encourage, and support all those under their care in a manner that leads to transformation in the lives of their students.

Figure 2. Whitworth College School of Education Conceptual Framework
The Whitworth conceptual framework clearly aligns with the “mind and heart” emphasis and overall context of the institution. Graduates are expected to be scholars, leaders, and effective practitioners, but they also need to work within the communities in which they are employed and need to be guardians of children and youth. Candidates must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher in each of the programs but also demonstrate in classwork and field experiences that they have the appropriate dispositions for teaching. Whitworth is a faith-based institution and the “integration of faith and learning” is expected of faculty at Whitworth, including teacher education. However, faith is viewed as a personal issue, and there are no specific doctrinal related expectations for candidates in the conceptual framework or in practice.

In alignment with its mission, the curricula of all three of Whitworth’s teacher education programs require candidates to complete a field experience in a cultural setting different from the one in which they were raised.

For more than 20 years, candidates have traveled to schools in various locations in the U.S. and abroad during January term to complete that requirement. Placements include inner city locations in San Francisco and Los Angeles, a native Hawaiian school on Oahu, a school serving native Alaskan students in Sitka, several locations serving Native American and ESL students, and schools in Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Thailand, and Africa.

Consistent with the “guardian” aspect, all students in the undergraduate program complete two courses in special education, and English as a Second Language strategies are integrated across the curricula of each of the programs.

Candidates who graduate from Whitworth primarily gain positions in public schools, but a significant number (21% on the 2004 employment survey) take positions in private schools (Whitworth College, 2005b).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The three schools of education described above are housed in unique institutions with contexts that have evolved from their historical missions, their geographic locations, and other environmental factors. Each meets the state requirements and federal guidelines for teacher
preparation programs; two of the three also meet national accreditation standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. The evidence supports the claim that, while there is uniformity of standards, the programs that prepare teachers are quite different. University of Puget Sound is clearly the most academic of the three programs. It requires all candidates to have bachelor degrees, maintain high grade point averages, and do academic work that is consistent with master level requirements. The conceptual framework is built around academic excellence.

Heritage University programs emphasize social justice, the center of their conceptual framework, and meeting the needs of underserved populations. This is consistent with the long-standing historical traditions of its founders and that theme is interwoven throughout its preparation programs.

Whitworth programs in teacher education are true to the historical “mind and heart” emphasis of the college, and the framework is built around that concept. Candidates must maintain high academic standards and demonstrate leadership at the same time they serve as guardians and community members. Faith-based discussions can occur alongside strong academic programs and field experiences.

Program descriptions found in the literature about teacher education (including those contained in this paper) provide clear evidence that differences in institutional context lead to differences in teacher preparation programs. This is perhaps most pronounced in small, liberal arts colleges that have evolved from different traditions and express a wide array of emphases through their respective missions. While based on logic and qualitative evidence more than empirical research, I propose that this is a good thing and should be preserved. There are several reasons for this position:

- The standards for candidates in teacher education generally revolve around knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Both INTASC and NCATE base their work on this approach and those three components are found in many state standards as well (INTASC, 1992; NCATE, 2002). Of those three components, dispositions seems to be the area that is least consistent and the area with which the profession seems to be having the most difficulty standardizing. I believe that this is due in large part to the wide range of contexts in which programs are
situated, which leads to a difference of opinions about the relative importance of items on a list of dispositions. Rather than seek the same level of uniformity around dispositions that we have achieved with knowledge and skills, I believe that we should applaud the diversity in our institutions and accept that different dispositions will have correspondingly stronger or weaker emphases at different institutions. This will provide some escape from “standardization” and honor the unique characteristics of teacher preparation programs that have existed throughout our history.

• It is widely accepted that schools are communities. It is also widely accepted that ethnic and gender diversity of the teaching staff in those school communities is desirable. I suggest that it is also desirable to have diversity of thinking within the teaching staff. One way to accomplish that end is to promote diversity of the programs that prepare teachers. This diversity currently exists because of the unique qualities of our colleges and universities, but it is clearly threatened by the ever-increasing push for standardization. We need policymakers in states, the federal government, and accrediting agencies to recognize the importance of differences in programs that prepare teachers in order to insure that our nation’s schools will continue to enjoy diversity in thinking about teaching and learning and for our children to have the opportunities to learn from people that come from preparation programs with a diversity of perspectives.

• It was stated earlier in this discussion that one cannot totally separate the context for which teachers are prepared from the context in which they are prepared. This nation needs teachers for a wide variety of settings that include small rural schools, large inner city schools, suburban schools, private nonsectarian schools, and private sectarian schools. Even though we currently have contextual differences in teacher preparation programs (context in which teachers are prepared), those differences are not being translated in adequate preparation of teachers for hard to staff areas (context for which teachers are prepared). Inner city and rural schools are suffering from too few qualified teachers, while many suburban locations have many more applicants for jobs than they can use. I believe that we can make better use of our unique contexts to prepare teachers for high need areas if encouraged to do so. Here I propose a new accountability
that first celebrates contextual differences and then asks institutions to describe how their unique institutional contexts help them to prepare teachers for at least one high-need area. It is not sufficient to say, “We’re different from them.” Rather, we need to be able to use our differences to meet the demands for teachers who will be willing to work with all children and young people.

• Finally, we need more research to guide policy decisions. Unfortunately, research regarding the importance of institutional context in teacher education programs is nearly nonexistent and, thus, it is difficult to convince policymakers of the importance of the arguments made in this discussion. Follow-up studies of graduates often ask questions that relate to the mission or conceptual framework, but comparative studies of that data have not been done and little of that information is ever published. Without data, the current practice of comparing and ranking teacher preparation programs based on candidates’ test scores is likely to continue even though that practice was decried by the National Research Council in 2001:

> Although the percentage of graduates who pass initial licensure tests provides an entry point for evaluating an institution’s quality, simple comparisons among institutions based on their passing rates are difficult to interpret for many reasons. These include the fact that institutions have different educational missions and recruiting practices, their students have different entry-level qualifications, teacher education programs have different entry and exit testing requirements, and programs have different procedures for determining the institutional affiliations of their candidates. By themselves, passing rates on licensure tests do not provide adequate information on which to judge the quality of teacher education programs. (National Research Council, 2001, p. 170)

It is hoped that our policymakers recognize the point made by the NRC and take steps to ensure that teacher preparation continues to reflect the institutional context of our colleges and universities and that, by doing so, the corps of teachers preparing for our nation’s schools will be enriched.
References


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Teacher Educators Reflect on Standards

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Watercooler conversations among teacher educators in these days of rapidly morphing landscapes include anxious comments about the need to do better jobs at several things simultaneously: bolster students’ multicultural skills, master and model the various technologies preservice teachers require, form viable partnerships with PK-12 schools, and safeguard the role of public education in a democracy. (Eifer, Potthof, & Dinsmore, 2004, p. 91)

There is no question, as Eifer et al. (2004) asserted, that teacher educators face multiple challenges in their contemporary work, but why, we wonder, is the teacher educators’ voice about such critical issues as preparing tomorrow’s educators being confined to a metaphorical watercooler? In particular, how has the increased standardization of what teachers should know and be able to do influenced teacher educators’ work? As we began to explore this question, Ducharme’s (1993) assertion rang true over a decade later, “Education faculty are rarely the subject of sustained study, teacher education faculty even more rarely so” (p. 2). We sought to address that common omission by engaging our own and others’ narratives about the ways the standards movement has influenced our work as teacher educators at a public, land grant university.

This article explores the narratives that emerged in these discussions. We begin our discussion by describing our university context and the process by which we illuminated these perspectives regarding the standards. Second, we include a brief overview of the standards movement and its historical evolution within teacher education. Third, we present five narratives that emerged again and again as we discussed our experiences—narratives about quality and control, dialogue for programmatic renewal, tensions between humanistic and market-driven practices, relationships with PK-12
partners, and the promise of equity—and we consider them in the context of teacher educators’ work. We conclude with recommendations drawn from these narratives for policymakers and schools, colleges, and departments of education.

Inviting Teacher Educators’ Perspectives on Standards

The contribution of narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than to yield a set of knowledge claims that might add to knowledge in the field. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

Our Process

We began this consideration of teacher education standards as a discussion group of four teacher educators: one assistant professor, two doctoral fellows, and one professor who is the Dean of the College of Education and Social Services (CESS) at the University of Vermont (UVM). In this discussion group, we explored both contemporary and historical readings on the topic of teacher education standards. For the purposes of common language, we characterized standards as the recent initiatives that define what beginning teachers are supposed to know and be able to do. Because relatively little literature exists that reveals the influence of the standards on the work of teacher educators, we also invited the perspectives of various colleagues within our college to provide greater breadth and depth to our growing conversation.

The invited group included one professor in literacy education; one associate professor in elementary education; three assistant professors from the fields of physical education, middle level education, and secondary education; three primarily field-based lecturers who work with interns in our professional development schools; and one mentor teacher who serves as an adjunct professor and is a social studies teacher in a partner school. We solicited the participation of these colleagues in particular because they represented the range of experience and disciplines typical within our college and because each person had specific experience with standards. The associate professor, for example, was a substantial contributor to the state’s original standards
for professional educators. One of the assistant professors played a primary role in piloting standards within her field. Two lecturers each had thirty years of experience working with Vermont public schools and in higher education and could reflect on the changes they had seen with regards to the standards movement. Each colleague brought an important perspective to the table.

In conversation, we asked them to reflect on how the standards movement has influenced their teaching, research, service, and collaboration with colleagues and to consider both the costs and benefits of standards to teacher education. Their reflections continually informed our discussion group. As we listened to how our colleagues constructed their understanding of the issues and continued our group’s dialogue in relation to those individual narratives, five different narratives about standards and teacher education began to take shape. We then turned to developing those five narratives, and it is those that we discuss within the body of this paper. We do not present the narratives as “knowledge claims” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), but rather as discursive explorations of five general areas that teacher educators, including the authors, address when they consider standards and their work. Nor do we claim universality about these ideas. Rather, we believe that these narratives provide a glimpse of how a particular group of teacher educators assesses the impact of standards on their work, an introductory exploration that could become the basis for further inquiry.

Our College and University

As a Research Extensive University, UVM holds a strong land-grant mission and both NCATE and state level accreditation. The College of Education and Social Services enrolls about 600 undergraduates preparing to be educators and about 300 graduate students in various educator programs, each defined by significant field-based learning and a commitment to social justice. The college has worked hard over the past decades to enhance its diversity within the faculty and student body and to address issues of culturally responsive pedagogy within its curricula. Additionally, the college has taken to heart the need for complex assessment data to inform programmatic and unitwide change by developing a comprehensive assessment system.
Standards in Teacher Education

Public concerns about teacher quality have turned to a focus on teacher education programs, provoking a level of unprecedented and highly politicized discourse regarding what teachers should know and be able to do. Although the discourse regarding the preparation of teachers has been controversial (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001), state and federal policymakers have rapidly altered the conduct of the education profession through the institution of alternative certification options, new program approval requirements for teacher preparation programs, new definitions of teacher quality, and high-stakes testing.

Historical Context

Standards have deep roots within teacher education programs. The American Association of Teachers Colleges was established in 1927 in order to develop processes and standards for accrediting teacher education programs that guaranteed competent graduates (Kraft, 2001). Then, in 1954, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] was established and offered rigorous teacher preparation standards in conjunction with procedures to measure institutional quality. Although accreditation is voluntary, NCATE now reports that it accredits roughly half of the thirteen hundred higher education institutions that prepare teachers in the United States (Bullough, Clark, & Patterson, 2003). This increasing emphasis on standards was propelled within the past two decades by several reports and legislation, including A Nation at Risk in 1983, the Holmes’ Tomorrow’s Schools of Education in 1986, the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, the Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future in 1996, and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Kraft, 2001). Andreas and Tarule (2003) highlighted a deep connection between these calls for dramatic PK-12 school reform and a subsequent demand for teacher education reform. Most recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emerged as the latest call for increasing the quality and preparedness of the nation’s teachers with, for the first time, specific accountability measures being directed at both the public school teachers and the teacher preparation programs.
The Tension Between Standards and Academic Freedom

As the government attempts to fulfill its perceived responsibility to the public by reforming schooling, higher education seeks to better education while “insuring its integrity as a forum for the free pursuit and exchange of knowledge” (Pullin, 2004, p. 300). This tension between the federal regulation of teacher education standards and higher education’s tenet of academic freedom creates a classic dilemma between teacher educators’ need to respond to external demands and their need to teach from a theoretical or research base that aligns with their research and values. This dilemma, a duality inherent in each of the five narratives we present below, is reflective of the complexity of the influence of standards on teacher educators’ work. One of the ways this conflict played out in the UVM faculty members’ narratives about standards was a concern about who has the control over defining academic programs.

Narrative One: Quality and Control

Standards, whether state, national, or accreditation, have the potential to intrude and profoundly disrupt the practices in teacher education, educator preparation, and professional development. And it is this potential that seemed to emerge in many of the discussions. Addressing how standards impacted what she saw as the core identity and purposes in teacher education, one of the faculty members summarized the possible outcomes of the disruption. “The good news,” she said, “would be a continued professionalization of teaching with a much stronger quality control on expertise. The bad news would be complete lack of autonomy and variety in how we prepare teachers.” In this section, we contrast teacher educators’ perspectives on being silenced in the development of standards with the power of standards as a tool for change.

Controlling Teacher Education

The conundrum about control, in the quote above, echoed Pullin’s (2004) assertion that as teacher educators and public policymakers strive to ensure quality education, they should focus on “the need to promote excellence without denying room for dissent and scholarly evolution in the field” (p. 311). In the UVM programs, most
faculty members struggled with articulating what they thought the balance between excellence and dissent ought to be. Allowing the standards to define the programs was worrisome. As one faculty member put it, “We lose a little bit of our freedom and a little bit of our ability to do whatever we want.” The loss of freedom and control may not be entirely negative but it did have an impact, especially when it felt as if the standards were delivered from on high: “So we want to be in control,” the same faculty member observed, “and the loss of that control is painful to our egos.”

There was widespread concern expressed when the locus of control for developing standards was perceived as being outside of the teacher education community—not only because it was personally painful, but also because when standards were developed without the authentic engagement of professionals, the quality of the standards was questioned by many. As one faculty member stated, “Standards seemed more of an intrusion from outside and another obstacle that … [has] been mandated … to overcome.”

It was clear in this control narrative that who constructs the standards was considered a critical component affecting both the quality and usefulness of standards for teacher education. Concern about control also was evident in a narrative about voice, about losing control when feeling silenced or dismissed. One faculty member observed that as the resources from federal grants and other venues have diminished, it “seems to have taken the voice from higher ed.” While another saw it rather bluntly: “We’re not really in the game. Higher ed. has been deemed irrelevant.”

**Standards as a Promoter of Quality Programs**

Faculty members also envisioned the standards as producing important work in their programs and providing important opportunities for assessing program quality. One faculty member defined how developing standards impacted programs positively:

Because I teach in a nationally accredited licensure program, my work has (for the past 25 years) always been governed by standards—both state and national. These standards have taken various forms … I have always taken the position that a program and its faculty should design and deliver the
courses and experiences that it felt were the very best possible given a contemporary knowledge base and a specific orientation. Then a review of the standards could/should be used as a sort of “check” on whether the program was comprehensive in its scope and was responsive to the latest thinking.

Standards become an important part of how planning and programs proceed. As faculty members turned to standards as a way to think about how they prepare teachers, using them to both prompt and “check” how their programs are run and how students’ emerge as professionals, their view of standards became rather uniformly positive. Taking this perspective, faculty members saw standards as an articulation of current theory about what it takes to prepare educators for 21st century practice. Standards were then seen as an effective tool for change as well as for assessing if that change is making a difference. Kraft (2001) captured the possibilities and pitfalls in this, observing that too often standards,

become ends in and of themselves, rather than the means to achieve the ends. If the end is about ensuring quality teachers for our nation’s children and youth then one of the values of having standards is that they should be used to stimulate debates on what constitutes quality teaching. (p. 17)

It is those debates and dialogues that can engage Pullin’s (2004) dissent and can lead to both scholarly and curricular evolution that include standards as a well-considered and important part of professional preparation.

Narrative Two: Dialogue for Programmatic Renewal

Hamel and Merz (2005) suggested that educators need to “reframe” the language of reform initiatives by speaking “the truth as they see it” (p. 159). Doing so serves the dual purpose of positioning teacher educators as primary players in the policymaking arena and actively involving them in their own self-reflection process. In this section, we explore the ways in which the standards movement has provided what teacher educators felt was a much needed common
ground for dialogue about programmatic direction. In addition, we provide examples of how the process of “framing” and “reframing” (Hamel & Merz, 2005) through dialogue brought about programmatic and curricular changes at the University of Vermont.

**Standards as a Springboard for Dialogue**

The importance of public reflection was evident in all of our conversations as a discussion group and with our university colleagues. According to Kraft (2002), “[Standards] could be used as a springboard to open a dialogue between teachers, administrators, parents, and the community about quality teaching practices” (p. 20). This notion of standards as a stimulus for dialogue was reflected strongly in UVM faculty members’ views as well. As one reported, “Standards enabled our faculty to have a conversation about programmatic coherence that never before had been urged or possible.”

Many of our participants felt that shared reflection provided fodder for productive discourse that was previously unavailable in a field peopled with a variety of pedagogical and practical approaches. As one stated, “In general I am in favor of the movement toward standards, at least it gets educators talking about something in common. We tend to be all over the map—I really appreciate having something to dialogue about together.”

The subjects of these discussions varied. Some were immediately functional. One educator submitted that his department had “struggled with congruence about what those standards mean language wise.” Other conversations were broader in their considerations, embracing the standards as an opportunity for metalevel departmental reflection and evaluation:

(Standards have made) our conversations about what we do far more explicit, and it has kind of forced us to take a look at what we do across the program to make sure that we are meeting the various requirements of the teacher education standards to which we are held accountable.

One faculty member openly stated, “I like the NMSA (National Middle School Association) standards. I think they are very relevant. I think they are well-supported in the research. It reflects what we do in our
program, and it just makes us more deliberate about what we do as a program as a whole.” She simultaneously noted the challenges inherent in juggling multiple sets of standards, as she perceived the national and state expectations at times to be in conflict.

Standards as Impetus for Change

Many faculty members provided specific examples of how standards led to programmatic and curricular change. One faculty member discussed how the standards have led to program modifications,

I think what [the standards movement] has done is make our conversations about what we do far more explicit and it has kind of forced us to take a look at what we do across the program to make sure that we are meeting the various requirements.

In this respect, standards have forced teacher educators to engage in a dialogue that leads them to reexamine their goals and the content of the curriculum. This same faculty member named three positive programmatic changes that resulted from conversations with her colleagues: (a) the integration of more technology into the curriculum; (b) a more integrated approach to addressing diverse learning needs throughout the curriculum; and (c) an added significance placed on the need for students “to reflect on [their] performance in relation to [each] standard.”

Another individual articulated more integrated considerations about how to approach assessment of her students,

We’ve developed a rubric that is reflective, knowing what the requirements are in the two sets of standards that we have to meet. I have developed a rubric with the input of colleagues that is about to be used with the (student teachers’ statement of their) philosophy (of education) that integrates the requirements of the set of standards in terms of developing their philosophy.

Through this lens, the presence of standards was a benefit. Both of these faculty members described departmentwide critical analyses of their teacher preparation programs that were linked to
standards and rooted in student work, demonstrating a commitment to their group’s collaborative reframing process. These educators took the standards as occasion to tell the truth as they saw it (Hamel & Merz, 2005) in an attempt to better structure their own curriculum and assessment tools. In doing so, they subsequently renewed their own collegial culture. Kraft (2001) identified an absence of this type of collegial culture as a potential barrier to the renewal of teacher education programs. In this narrative, the most recent teacher education standards were a positive mandate for “real change” (Kraft, p. 4).

**Narrative Three: Humanistic vs. Market Driven Education Practices**

On the one hand, the standards movement has proven to be a unifying force, helping faculty members come together to revise overarching program and course content. However, on the other, the standards have proven limiting as teacher education has moved away from student exploration and authentic teaching and assessment practices towards a more rigid and narrowly defined knowledge base. Our third narrative examines the ways that teacher educators described standards as subtracting a humanistic approach to education from curricula, themselves, and the preservice teachers they are training.

**Standards and the Dehumanization of Curricula**

Teacher educators perceived a tension between what standards require preservice teachers to know and do and an awareness of individual student needs. One faculty member reflected that, “There is always this danger of only teaching to the standards rather than teaching that is based on student knowledge and experience.”

The portfolio, which serves as an important measure in many teacher education programs, emerged repeatedly as one source of frustration for faculty members. They felt that portfolios have come to focus on demonstrating how the candidate meets the standards with no coherence or connection to a theme. As one faculty member put it, “We are raising a generation of students who are much more looking at what people are requiring of them rather than what makes them special or what expertise they have.” This led some faculty members to become discouraged.
I used to get people … who really wanted to explore whether or not they wanted to be in the profession. There’s no time to do that [now] … to me, I find that troubling. It’s one thing to pack it all in, but it’s another thing to remember that we’re talking about human beings who are at different places. I think that the rush to excellence overshadows the need to be careful about where people are.

Teacher educators struggled to implement curricula that were developmental and learner-centered, modeling the sort of teaching they would like their students to practice upon entering the field. Many saw the standards as promoting a more skills-based, simplistic form of education.

A key issue that forged a link between the developmental and skills-based approaches was how assessment was viewed and used. One university faculty member, clearly drawing on the work of Stiggens (2002), stated,

There is not enough emphasis on authentic assessment related to standards. More emphasis on assessment for learning and less on assessment of learning is needed. Teachers are in desperate straits—they want to teach in constructivist ways but feel trapped by an antiquated model of assessment that they don’t know how to escape. The standards movement largely avoids the issue of authentic assessment.

Just as this faculty member described the constraints on PK-12 teachers, teacher educators felt that the current standards movement packed their own curricula full of specific knowledge acquisition. This left little time for teachers and teacher educators to focus on these important developmental considerations. Many faculty members deemed the importance of developing the habit of lifelong learning as missing from the standards.
Standards and the Dehumanization of Teacher Educators and the Students They Serve

The dehumanization of curriculum that surfaced in the context of the teacher education standards movement was compounded by a more startling phenomenon: the dehumanization of teacher educators and the students they served. This largely developed as a reaction to the “market driven response to incentive and punishment” (Hamel & Merz, 2005, p. 159) that emerged in reaction to current teacher education standards. Hamel and Merz argued that standards produced more intense pressure on those who want to enter the “marketplace” of PK-12 educators. One faculty member described how she saw this impact on preservice teachers:

I had a seminar yesterday where a student was clearly ill and was afraid to be absent, and that broke my heart. Over the past couple of years, several students have crashed, become very, very ill and that’s a phenomenon that I’ve seen more frequently in the last four years over the ten that I’ve done this. People have always been stressed, but more often than not, it was the personality of the person and not the pressure of the program.

Experiences like these denote competition at the ultimate cost of self-care and reflect the market-based economics used to frame teacher growth under current standards. One cannot help but wonder what the implications of such extremes mean for the field, especially when merit-based pay and the threat of financial repercussions for underperforming schools are part of the market-based equation. Her words were a call to ensure that people are “never treated as means to an end, but treated as ends in their own right” (Kraft, 2001, p. 2). In sum, this narrative illuminates a fairly intense concern among teacher educators about the central issue of how standards impact the fundamental human aspects of learning and relationships in teacher education.
Narrative Four: Relationships with PK-12 Partners

In the recent past, teacher educators have established partnerships with PK-12 schools as an important component in professional education. Research supports this as critical: Increased levels of preservice clinical time, school immersion, and feedback have been correlated with more instructionally effective teaching in the first three years of a new teacher’s career (Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett, & Miler, 2005). In this narrative, teacher educators view the impact of standards in schools on PK-16 relationships and the importance of acknowledging issues of organizational culture if we are to succeed in widespread standards-based reform.

The Cyclical Nature of Standards

Field-based faculty perceived that teachers felt frustrated by both the PK-12 and teacher education standards movement due to a sense of having seen it all before. After years of watching “the pendulum swing back and forth,” one faculty member said about PK-12 standards,

I’ve gone through the cycles. I’ve seen the cycles in education … (and) the hardest thing to get (past) … as I work with standards is (a teacher’s) comment, “We’ve taught a long time. These are going to be gone in five years, so why do we bother?”

When PK-12 partners want to dismiss standards, both PK-12 and the teacher education ones, the field-based relationships may well suffer.

Standards as Obstacles to Collegiality

Public school teachers who mentored preservice teachers engaged in standards-based reflections similar to those of the university faculty members. One teacher educator felt it was crucial,

to include teachers into the dialogue each time we feel a ripple effect of the NCLB (Act), especially when a new “initiative” or implementation is handed down. I also wish the state would create more opportunity for dialogue about implementation of new policies.
The absence of these opportunities may distance university level educators and their PK-12 partners from educational reform efforts in general and from each other in particular. This distance can produce a kind of blame between teacher educators and mentor teachers, straining a relationship historically characterized by mistrust. A mentor teacher spoke to the importance of avoiding the distance by focusing on the task of preparing new teachers.

You need to constantly refresh yourself with the philosophy of teaching and best practices. You don’t want to turn away from that and say, “They don’t know anything. They’re just up in the university.” If you’re going to survive in teaching long term, you need to make it past the philosophy and really take a deep breath about what you see on the ground.

One of the possible costs of teacher education standards, then, is that they serve as another obstacle to collegiality between the university faculty and their PK-12 partners who host preservice teachers, which can be detrimental to the preparation program.

Narrative Five: The Promise of Equity

One of the most compelling questions in the standards dialogue pertained to equity. Is it possible to ensure both equity and high standards in education? Cochran-Smith (2002) described well the central connection between teacher preparation and equity.

Indeed, a birthright of all students is access to the bare essentials of a good education: basic materials, well-qualified teachers, healthful conditions, and schools with enough seats to go around. The debate will rage on, but it is surely time to ask, Would anyone want less for their own children? Why do some people argue for less for other people’s children when all of us live in the strongest democracy and the richest country in the world? Is access to fully prepared teachers a birthright only of those children who live in school districts rich enough to attract them? (p. 101)
Equity concerns emerged in the narratives at our land grant university that illuminated standards as both a hindrance and a help in the work toward social justice and equity.

**Standards as a Hindrance**

While the call for equitable learning conditions is convincing to many, there is less agreement about the path our nation should embark upon to attain such equitable schools. Many argue that the emphasis on high stakes testing, and the subsequently attached funding, derails efforts to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students. One faculty member expressed concern regarding the identification of specific groups of children.

I am … conflicted about the current policy where schools have to identify the test scores of “student subpopulations.” In other words, identify those students—special needs, English language learners, etc.—who have not been successful with state tests. In a way, I think it is effective to identify the needs of students in schools that are failing, but I don’t trust the NCLB (Act) and feel that such policies are more punitive and instead take away funding from the very schools that need it to provide good curriculum, good teaching, and an overall positive climate. I feel that the effects will be of a more subtractive than additive nature.

Although she responded to state standards and professional portfolio requirements by expecting her students to work with specific subpopulations within their classrooms and to document their progress in case studies, she remained conflicted about the purposes and outcomes of identifying students in this manner.

Another echoed these concerns as she elaborated on what she perceived as the dark side of standards: the inherent competition between students and the status it assigned.

The backlash to this sharp-edged division and description of people’s progress is to me hand and glove with the backlash of the conservative political environment that we find...
ourselves in. It’s about, “I’m better than you and I can show you how many points better than you I am.”

Standards as a Help

Although teacher educators were vocally concerned about the negative impact of standards and testing in the name of accountability, they also expressed support for the equity narrative on which the standards movement is built. Contrasting with the perspectives above, one faculty member described the positive premise of such efforts. She explained,

The idea behind NCLB is a good one in that it does not allow for anybody to make excuses for why kids can’t learn. In the past we as educators have said, “Oh they come from a bad background so therefore their home life is lousy, therefore they can’t learn”; or “they’re in special ed therefore they can’t learn”; “they’re bilingual, therefore they can’t learn”; whatever it is. The good thing that NCLB does is to take those excuses away in that we look at how those kids are doing so that teachers change their practice so that they do learn. Because there is no excuse for not having those kids learn.

This division in opinion about the impact of mandated student tests is mirrored by the divided opinion about mandated teacher tests, both in the name of accountability. Cochran-Smith and Dudley (2001) reported on the demoralization of teacher educators as a result of the high-stakes attached to the Massachusetts teacher test. Yet, others have offered testimony to the beneficial outcomes of standardized tests in teacher education, enhancing equitable opportunities for students. Sutton (2004), for example, identified a benefit, claiming that her teaching practice and curriculum were changed for the better by the “greater complexity of the day-to-day decisions, the wider range of teaching activities used, and the increased complexity of the teaching dilemmas” (p. 472) that students needed to know to perform successfully on the required PRAXIS II: PLT.
Each of these examples illustrates the predicament inherent in educating teachers in an era of standards. Do standards force teacher educators to conform to externally driven demands at the cost of their own beliefs and integrity? Or do they improve the preparation of teachers through heightened expectations and increased rigor? These arguments sit on the two ends of a starkly polarized continuum. And yet in many ways this dichotomy is a pretense, suggesting black and white circumstances while ignoring the myriad shades of grey. In many ways, equity is the Achilles’ heel of the standards movement. The promise of equity is the humanizing factor of the initiative and, therefore, keeps the arguments against standards from dismantling current accountability reform.

Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

Misgivings about public schools’ performance result in increased interest from business about school efficacy and politicians’ increased involvement in holding schools accountable, insisting that the field of education requires external accountability measures in order to improve. “In this vision, because teachers’ professional competence is too often insufficient, political leaders need to micromanage educational systems … (this vision) emphasizes increased investment in student assessment and educator accountability measures” (Crochunis et al., 2000, p. 1). Those connected to the preparation of teachers feel this contemporary emphasis on standards deeply. Their insights and experience lead us to conclude with three policy recommendations that reflect the narratives we have highlighted.

Recommendation #1: Engage teacher educators in the development of standards and in ongoing assessment of their effect on professional practice

In the narratives about quality and control, although some of the concern expressed was voiced in language about whose ideas would prevail, there was also the assertion that standards were an important innovation that holds the potential for increasing quality in professional practice. Involving teacher educators in standards construction could well increase the likelihood that the standards will be effective and will have a reliable research base. Moreover, we suggest that the
assessment process should engage teacher educators who could ensure that standards are subjected to rigorous, evidence-based validation procedures and, thus, win greater acceptance in and respect of professionals in the academy, in the field, and among state and national policymakers.

**Recommendation #2: Standards should not become the handmaiden of high stakes testing and accountability, because they lose power as promoters of pedagogical and theoretical change in teacher education**

Standards in teacher education provide a common starting point for discussion amongst school and university-based stakeholders in the teacher education process. It is important to temper this opportunity for teacher education renewal while, with vigilance, regarding the potentially high personal costs of the market-driven economics that undergird and propel the current standards movement.

**Recommendation #3: To ensure that standards promote equity, the evaluation of those standards must be complex and sensitive to local and specific contexts**

Equity and standards can only coexist when assessment is based on multiple measures, considers contextual factors, and has been developed with input from local stakeholders. The ways in which policies unfold are highly contextual, influenced by various factors including community demographics. Equity through standardization can only be attained when equity is not equated with equality. The voices of all constituents are an integral part of ensuring equitable and rigorous learning opportunities: Equity, like politics, is fundamentally local.

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Teacher Preparation at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

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Introduction

People who have never ventured to Minnesota generally associate the state with cold weather, Garrison Keillor, and good education. The reality is a bit more nuanced. The winters are undeniably very cold, but the thermometer often registers in the 90s in the summertime. Keillor’s *Prairie Home Companion* is a source of much pride among most Minnesotans, though less so with a growing and increasingly vocal right-wing conservative group. And, while the state’s young people almost always rank in the top five when the results of standardized tests are reported by state from across the nation, these scores mask one of the largest achievement gaps between white students and students of color anywhere in the country (Education Trust, 2004).

It is in this “Land of 10,000 Lakes” (in reality, closer to 100,000) that over 450 preservice teachers at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities are prepared annually. In this article, we describe the state and institutional educational contexts in which our programs are situated. We provide an overview of our programs and then describe in some detail two challenges we currently face and how we are addressing them.

The State Educational Context

Historically, the education system in the state has enjoyed a strong commitment from the public. Similar to trends across the country, however, funding for public education has eroded. This has been accompanied by an increase in the number of charter schools, a push for greater accountability, and reduced support for the notion of “education for the public good.” Higher education, too, has come under greater scrutiny, and a struggle for financial support continues at each
legislative session. Amidst these constraints, the education community has several ways it comes together to work for the improvement of education. A P-16 Council was created in 2003 to set the broad direction for education in Minnesota; it is composed of the heads of the state higher education system (University of Minnesota, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and the Private College Council) along with the leaders of the major educational organizations, such as: Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Association of Elementary School Principals, Minnesota Association of Secondary Principals, Education Minnesota (the state teacher’s organization), Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Minnesota Department of Education, and others. The Standards and Rules Committee of the State Board of Teaching is made up of representatives of the various education groups, including teacher preparation institutions, and works on issues that directly relate to teacher licensing. Finally, an “Education Leaders Group” meets regularly with the Commissioner of Education to discuss issues affecting the state. Although disagreements about education policy do arise, they are situated within strong positive, ongoing relationships of mutual respect.

A consistent voice for teacher education in the state is the statewide Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE). This organization works across institutional types (public and private) to support the high quality teacher preparation in the state. Most recently, MACTE has been instrumental in collecting, organizing, and making accessible on its website data about its member institutions and their programs (http://mtqm.mnteachered.org).

The Institutional Context

The University of Minnesota has four campuses—Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, and Crookston—a collaborative center in Rochester, extension offices, and research and outreach centers throughout the state. It is both the state land-grant university, with a strong tradition of education and public service, and the state’s primary research university, with faculty of national and international reputation.

The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities is situated in a seven-county metropolitan area of 5.7 million people. With its enrollment of 51,000 students, the campus is second in the United States only to
Ohio State University in terms of student population. The U of MN offers 161 different bachelor’s degrees, 218 master’s degrees, 114 doctoral degrees, and 5 professional degrees. As a “Research 1” land grant university, its 2,382 tenure-track faculty are expected to maintain ongoing research agendas and provide service to local and state communities in addition to their teaching responsibilities.

The College of Education and Human Development. The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) is one of 20 colleges within the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities campus. With an enrollment of 3,800 students each term, it is the fourth largest of the colleges. Within the CEHD there are six academic departments: Curriculum and Instruction; Educational Policy and Administration; Educational Psychology; Institute of Child Development; School of Kinesiology; and Work, Community, and Family Education. Courses of study are at several levels: baccalaureate, master of education for preservice teachers and inservice professionals, master of arts, specialist, and two types of doctoral programs. In addition, the college offers certificates in particular areas of focus, options for additional licenses, and professional development for a range of education professionals.

Each department has specialty areas ranging from adult education to child psychology, physical activity courses to human resource development. And, while there is a variety of faculty interest areas, all departments are engaged in some way with the teacher preparation programs. There are 21 different initial teacher licensure programs with additional specialty areas in elementary, science, and world languages.

Almost all of our licensure programs are offered at the graduate level. Current undergraduate students and working professionals can apply. We offered our first post-baccalaureate programs in 1987 and by 1992 had converted all of our teacher preparation coursework (except agricultural education and technology education) to the graduate level. Incoming students must have a minimum of 100 hours of work experience in an educational setting with an age group that corresponds to their planned professional field. They also must have work or volunteer experience with students from ethnic or cultural backgrounds different than their own. Typically those accepted have a GPA between 3.0 and 3.5 and an undergraduate major in their content area.
Experience has shown us that students who meet these requirements are more likely to succeed in the classroom and in their careers. According to surveys of our graduates and the school administrators who hire them, students completing our initial licensure programs are reflective practitioners who routinely analyze their own work, monitor their students’ progress, and adjust and improve their teaching practices.

Those students accepted into our programs—about two-thirds of those who apply—will face a challenging, graduate-level course of study, one that prepares them to meet Minnesota’s Standards for Effective Practice for Beginning Teachers (http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/arule/8710/2000.html). They will work closely with faculty whose research sets the national standard in literacy, math and science education, teacher leadership, early childhood education, and other critical areas.

During a 12- to 15-month program, students focus on three core areas:

- **Foundations:** Students explore learning theories, the needs of diverse students, child and adolescent development, assessment tools, using technology for teaching, and the interaction between school and community.
- **Methodology:** Students learn how to teach. Topics include instructional methods, assessment of student learning, and classroom management, each geared to the student’s particular content area.
- **Integrated clinical experiences:** Rather than separate campus learning from schoolroom learning, we weave clinical experiences throughout the program. Students progressively increase the amount of time they spend in schools, concluding with a full-time teaching experience during their final semester.

After successful completion of the program, students are recommended for licensure. Many of the credits earned during the licensure program apply toward a Master’s in Education degree; most students complete one to four classes after their licensure in order to obtain their degree.
Challenges and Responses

Like every institution, our college constantly grapples with challenges that vary in terms of source (internal, external, or combination), duration, intensity, and potential consequences. The transition from undergraduate to post-baccalaureate teacher licensure programs, for example, required extensive human resources, but the goal was clear, and the process was contained within a specific timeframe. In this section, we will describe two challenges that shape our work and have a significant impact on the decisions we make in our daily lives as teacher educators. The first challenge—facilitating faculty communication and achieving consensus—is endemic to a large institution. The second challenge—preparing preservice teachers for teaching and learning in a diverse, urban environment—is related to broader societal demographic trends. We chose these issues because they are ones that teacher educators in all contexts face; at the same time, they are particularly significant issues in a large university located in an urban environment. Additionally, although the issues may seem distinct, they are interconnected: The degree to which we can enable our students to be successful teachers in diverse, urban schools will likely depend in part on the degree of communication and consensus among our faculty.

Facilitating Communication and Achieving Consensus

One of the primary functions of a university is to foster the development of independent, critical thinking among faculty and students. We steadfastly support this mission and see it as the essence of university life. Why, then, would we want to facilitate communication and achieve consensus among faculty? While we want our faculty to reflect a diverse range of perspectives, we also strive to have a shared vision of the purpose of our programs. Indeed, empirical studies indicate that programs that reflect a coherent, integrated conception of teaching and learning have a more powerful impact on their preservice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

The size and specialization of the faculty in the College of Education and Human Development, however, often present organizational challenges when it comes to communicating and achieving consensus about the goals of our programs beyond mere
platitudes. In this section, we describe the organizational framework that supports our teacher preparation programs and how it is intended to facilitate communication across programs and the community. We also describe the development of our conceptual framework—a document that articulates the purpose of our programs—as one example of how we sought to achieve consensus across programs.

**Organizational Framework.** When the college shifted to a post-baccalaureate model in 1987, the Council on Teacher Education (CTE) was created to oversee all of the licensure programs to ensure that we were providing a consistent program of study to all of the students. In its early years, much of the Council’s work focused on logistical issues associated with transitioning from undergraduate programs to the post-baccalaureate model. Later, the focus became the identification of standards for students who completed our programs. As the state moved to a standards-based model for all licensure areas, the CTE provided the link to plan and determine appropriate content for all licensure students.

Today, there are 32 members on the CTE who meet once a month and a seven-member steering committee that also meets once a month. The Council includes representatives from each licensure program and foundation course as well as student and teacher representatives. The “real work” of the Council often takes place in the four subcommittees: Assessment and Evaluation, Clinical Experiences, Program/Professional Development, and Policy Connections. The Assessment and Evaluation Subcommittee, in its third year of operation, is implementing a plan to systematically evaluate our teacher preparation programs. Prior to this subcommittee’s inception, most of the teacher preparation programs developed and administered their own evaluation systems (some fairly elaborate, others of a more ad hoc, anecdotal nature), thus precluding any overall assessment of our programs on a standardized, systematic basis. The goals of the subcommittee, which are partially realized at this time, are to develop a data-driven continuous self-improvement cycle at the program and college levels and to demonstrate and communicate the nature and impact of our programs to external audiences (e.g., the state legislature, potential applicants, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Minnesota Board of Teaching, and the research community).

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The general goal of the Clinical Experiences Subcommittee is to assess and improve clinical experiences in our teacher preparation programs. Toward that end, the committee has developed an online handbook for cooperating teachers, standard instruments for assessing various aspects of the student teaching experience, and workshops for preparing student teacher supervisors. Recently, the subcommittee has been wrestling with developing policies for international student teaching experiences (e.g., What are the criteria for admission to an international student teaching experience? What standards should be used to select appropriate international student teaching experiences for students? What special preparation should the college provide students prior to these experiences?).

The Policy Connections Subcommittee monitors developments in the legislature related to teacher education, meets with legislators as deemed appropriate, keeps the CTE apprised of developments, and calls for member/council action when necessary. The Minnesota legislature takes a strong interest in education; Steve Kelly, a well-respected state senator, recently co-chaired a national commission that was highly critical of No Child Left Behind. In the 2004 and 2005 legislative sessions, a sample of bills that were introduced sought to promote alternative teacher licensure, change the way teachers of science add another science area (e.g., through test only or development of a different type of license), and identify what new and continuing teachers need to know and be able to do in terms of reading in the content area.

The Program/Professional Development Subcommittee was formed in the fall of 2004, and its focus represents a broadening of the Council’s interests and concerns. The Council’s work has historically been limited to the teacher preparation programs. Two factors have converged to prompt the Council to expand the scope of its work: first, the postbaccalaureate programs at the University are now well established and have a solid reputation in the region; second, the growing complexity of teaching, particularly in urban environments, leads us, as well as many prominent educational researchers, to appreciate the role of teacher induction programs and teachers’ need for continual renewal and support throughout their careers. The subcommittee’s initial role is to heighten the awareness of council members regarding the phases (or stages) of the professional
development process of educators, to explore teacher educator programs at comparable universities and how their programs address the developmental needs of teachers, and to propose strategies to provide programming to meet the professional development needs of educators at all phases of their development.

Three years ago the CTE developed an advisory board comprised of teachers, principals, superintendents, human resource personnel, legislators, and a representative from Education Minnesota, the state teacher’s organization. This advisory board meets twice per year with representatives of the CTE and provides feedback on the programs as well as suggestions for improvements.

Identifying Common Values and Directions. Even if we were a small faculty of 10 or 15, we would likely bring a range of perspectives to our work. Academicians tend to be people who are constantly inquiring into and questioning the world around them. We would, however, likely interact with one another on a regular basis and be familiar with one another’s professional and personal lives. In the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota, departments are spread across seven buildings and two campuses (Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses). Occasionally, it happens that two full professors who have been at the University of Minnesota for their entire careers have their first conversation upon appointment to a college committee!

We recently revisited our conceptual framework, the document that describes the rationale for our programs and identifies the values that provide the foundation for the programs. Naturally, we faced formidable obstacles in developing a conceptual framework in which everyone would feel as if they had participated. We decided to use a modified Delphi Approach to facilitate communication and identify areas of consensus across faculty, students, and the Advisory Board. This method involves repeated surveys, throughout which respondents receive information about the group’s responses. After an initial round of the survey, for example, participants receive a second survey that includes their previous response to individual items, the group’s mean response to individual items, and comments from other participants. Thus, the Delphi Approach facilitates a type of “conversation” aimed toward building consensus.
Through the Delphi Survey, members of our educational community responded to statements about educational trends, assumptions, and actions. A consensus emerged around three themes: inquiry, research, and reflection; diversity; and lifelong learning and professional development. We believe these themes reflect what we as an educational community value and provide direction for our future endeavors. In the next section, we describe how we are addressing one of the themes of the conceptual framework, diversity.

Preparing Teachers for Diverse, Urban Environments

Just as the size of the CEHD presents opportunities and challenges for our programs, so too does the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of our communities. The characters in Garrison Keillor’s Lake Wobegon convey a monolithic white, Lutheran, Norwegian populace, but a walk through the hallways of Twin Cities schools paints a much more diverse picture. The Twin Cities is home to Hmong and Somali communities that are among the largest in the nation. But similar to demographic profiles throughout the country, the CEHD teacher preparation faculty, as well as our student population, is predominantly white, middle class, and (increasingly) female. What are we doing to prepare our students to work in diverse, urban settings? Our response is multifaceted: We have programs to attract and retain students of color; we have developed pre-admission and curricular experiences that will better prepare all of our students to work in diverse, urban settings; and we are actively recruiting and working to support more faculty of color.

Recruiting and Supporting Students of Color. We are aware of the urgent need for more teachers of color. While almost 40% of the young people in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools are students of color, less than 10% of public school teachers are members of minority groups (Snyder, Tan, & Hoffman, 2004). Gains in the number of students of color admitted to our programs in the College of Education and Human Development have been slow, however. In 2003-2004, 12.2% of our initial licensure post-baccalaureate students were students from minority groups, up from 9.7% in 1999-2000. The college has three key initiatives designed to increase the number of teachers of color in K–12 schools: The Multicultural Teacher Development Project
The Multicultural Teacher Development Project (MTDP) is designed to support students during their initial licensure program, the Homegrown Teacher Partnership Project (HTPP) identifies and recruits students into the initial licensure programs during their undergraduate program at the University, and the Multicultural Educators Project (MEP) connects high school students of color with our teacher preparation programs.

The Multicultural Teacher Development Project (MTDP) recruits and helps to retain students of color for teacher development programs. It is a scholarship and professional development program specifically for culturally diverse students enrolled in an initial licensure program at the College. MTDP provides students with information about opportunities at the University of Minnesota and in local school districts and helps them navigate their degree programs and the transition to their first professional positions.

Because our preparation programs are primarily at the post-baccalaureate level, we developed structures to identify and support undergraduate students of color who are interested in teaching careers. The Homegrown Teacher Partnership Project (HTPP) offers academic advising, financial assistance, social events, mentoring, professional development workshops, and assistance in finding teaching jobs. HTPP mentors meet monthly with their mentees, who are primarily first-year students at the university. Local school districts support individuals in teacher preparation programs and then ask the new teachers to teach in their districts.

We have learned that we must actively identify and recruit students of color during their high school years. The Multicultural Educators Program (MEP) is a collaboration between local accredited teacher preparation programs and public school districts in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. MEP is a scholarship program for students of culturally diverse backgrounds recruited to licensure programs at colleges and universities. MEP is designed to increase the diversity of licensed teaching professionals in Minnesota by linking students with a school district to support them through their initial licensure/teacher preparation program.

The college’s diversity programs provide financial support, a sense of community, and the tools to negotiate university life where participants will often find themselves the lone student of color in a
classroom or social group. We firmly believe that greater ethnic and cultural diversity within the preservice teacher enrollment enhances the educational experience for all students as well as all faculty.

Pre-Admission and Curricular Experiences. Our efforts to prepare our students for working in diverse settings begin prior to their admission to the program—at the application stage. Applicants to our programs are rated on five criteria, one of which is their prior work with young people from ethnic and cultural backgrounds different from their own. This criterion is given the same weight as the other criteria: grade point average, goal statement, prior coursework, and work or volunteer experience in the schools with the age groups with which the prospective applicant wishes to work. These criteria are shared with potential applicants, thus conveying to them our value of and commitment to diversity. This is an example of what Mary Kennedy (1998) calls “enrollment influence”—the fact that a given program tends to attract those students who are predisposed to the program’s goals and substance. In this sense, our programs recruit to the teaching profession those students who reflect particular orientations and values with regard to teaching.

The curricular experiences we offer to students are increasingly more attentive to issues related to teaching in diverse settings. For example, in addition to a course in human relations, over half of our post-baccalaureate students now complete a course on working with English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in the mainstream classroom. Within specific courses, there is a greater emphasis on students developing an understanding of the social, political, and cultural context in which they teach. Whereas this was always a focus of the “School and Society” course in the foundations area, today there is a shift within methods courses from the traditional “teaching strategies and techniques” to situating student learning in a social and cultural context. For example, in the social studies methods courses, preservice teachers learn about how young people bring their own culturally-shaped interpretations of history into the classroom and how teachers can build upon these interpretations for all of their students. In English methods courses, preservice teachers examine ways in which students’ cultural backgrounds and attitudes shape their responses to literature and reading interests. Social studies and English student teachers’ lesson
plans and instruction must reflect their understanding of how culture influences young people’s orientation toward and interpretation of content.

Recruiting and Supporting Faculty of Color. We know that faculty must play a very important part in our efforts to prepare our teachers for diverse urban environments. Preservice teachers of color must not only work with faculty who are sensitive to diverse contexts, but also see faculty who are themselves persons of color. It is just as critical that our white students and faculty work with faculty of color. Similar to our efforts to recruit students of color, however, the results of our efforts to recruit and retain faculty of color have been disappointing. Of our 123 tenure-track faculty, only 9.7% are persons of color; that percentage has remained fairly stable the past five years. The college’s Diversity Committee has as one of its goals the recruitment of faculty of color. Toward that end they are preparing a video to provide information to departments as they launch new faculty searches. In addition, the College and the University central administrators have committed resources to work with departments to assist with programs such as “Recruiting and Retaining Faculty of Color,” a universitywide project to assist departments.

We believe that by employing multiple strategies in critical areas—the recruitment of students and faculty of color, the focus on diversity as part of our admissions criteria, and the emphasis on cultural contexts and perspectives in our curriculum—our students will be better prepared to teach in diverse, urban environments. Today there is a consensus among our faculty that a central part of our mission is to provide leadership for honoring the diversity of our communities and learners. That consensus will need to be continually renewed and redefined each year as the faculty changes. Our dialogue will continue with new voices and perspectives. Our challenges, and our commitment to addressing these challenges, will continue as well.

References


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Making the “A” List: Negotiating Assessments, Standards, and Teacher Development

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Creating an assessment that captures all the complexities of teaching has been a difficult and elusive feat for the field of education. As in the case of distinguishing good art from bad, we all recognize the differences between good and bad teaching when we see or experience it. However, as with art, there is a degree of subjectivity in valuing the quality of teaching that reflects the experience and expertise of the evaluator. Most parents are certainly willing to tell you who the good teachers are in a school and which teachers are best avoided, yet what appears to be “good” teaching to one person may be valued quite differently by another. One parent may describe a horrible yearlong ordeal for his or her child with a teacher who turns out to be perfectly acceptable for your own. What determines “good” and “bad” varies greatly between individuals because of differences in values and differences between the needs and characteristics of their children.

Each semester I give a “Three Teachers” activity to the students in the Seminar on Learning and Teaching, the introductory course for the Program in Teacher Preparation at Princeton University that I co-teach with Helen Martinson. The activity, borrowed from a workshop hosted by Alverno College on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards of teaching, asks students to rank three teachers based on written descriptions taken from portfolio evaluations of their teaching. Each semester, students have little problem discriminating between the three teachers and reaching a consensus on the ranking of the three from best to worst. When we ask them to provide the criteria they used to distinguish levels of quality, we find that these characteristics nearly always correspond to the descriptions of the ten INTASC standards. The conclusion the students draw from this exercise is that they are able to develop criteria that describe good teaching, and they essentially recreate the INTASC standards by working through this task. What becomes problematic, however, is using those criteria to assess. Each semester during the same exercise, there are always
one or two individuals out of a class of eighteen who disagree with the rankings of the majority of their peers. This inconsistency does not arise because of disagreement over the criteria; disagreements usually occur over how much value should be given to specific criteria.

It is impossible to assess concurrently all the variables associated with the complex act of teaching. Students, parents, administrators, teacher educators, and government bureaucracies tend to focus on the variables that matter most to them in making their respective judgments about teaching and to use the variables they can measure most efficiently. Differing values result in subjectivity and inconsistency, and the field of education will always struggle to create consistent measures that can discriminate between levels of quality for teaching. The problem arises in the inevitable gap between what we can measure reliably and what we value and would actually like to measure. We can all but eliminate subjectivity in our assessments by creating carefully structured instruments that prove reliable and consistent over time and with large numbers of individuals. The price we often pay for such consistency, however, is the narrowing of what it is we are actually measuring. The result, then, is that we tend to measure selective elements of teaching or learning outcomes. In acknowledging this level of complexity, many teacher preparation programs turn to portfolios to collect various pieces of evidence that, when taken together, provide a somewhat comprehensive representation of a teacher’s work and the impact of that work on students. The challenge, of course, is evaluating and interpreting a complex collection of artifacts.

This paper describes how the Program in Teacher Preparation at Princeton University approaches the problem of collecting and evaluating evidence that represents multiple facets of teaching. This discussion does not present the program’s evaluation process as a model that others should adopt. Rather, the intent is to begin a frank and open discussion about the challenges of teacher evaluation and to describe how the program’s context helped to shape its evaluation and assessment procedures and instruments. The program’s context is partially defined, of course, by the current political climate that is preoccupied with the use of “data” and for evaluating teaching and program performance. The paper will describe how the program negotiates the tension between
the procedures for collecting data and the process of valuing and interpreting those data in making judgments about the quality of teaching.

**Summative Assessment: Using Quality Measurements to Rank and Sort Students**

One of the purposes of evaluation is to rank and sort students according to levels of performance. Programs of teacher preparation have an ethical responsibility to safeguard the profession from mediocre or poor performance, and this task requires summative evaluations of students for the purpose of determining whether or not they perform at levels that warrant their entry into the teaching force. State governments do not leave such determinations solely to individual programs, and most states require some sort of standardized examination that must be passed as a prerequisite for licensure. In New Jersey, teacher candidates must take the PRAXIS II test, administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), in their certification content areas. The PRAXIS II assesses only subject area knowledge, and the state sets the passing level for individual tests. Students must earn scores above these levels to be eligible for teacher licensure. In a sense, the tests are pass/fail; students are either eligible for certification or not, depending on the score they earn. Recently, ETS has issued certificates acknowledging candidates who have scored within the top 15% of test takers. Evaluation of a candidate’s pedagogical and instructional skill is appropriately left to individual programs during preservice experiences and to schools during a candidate’s first year in the profession. The PRAXIS II serves as a safeguard, ensuring that teacher candidates are adequately prepared in their subject areas, and the federal government recently decided to use the performance on the state standardized testing requirements as the primary measure of the quality of a candidate’s preparation.

Title II, Section 207 of the 1998 federal Higher Education Act (HEA) requires all teacher preparation programs, starting in 2000, to report their pass rates on tests that states require for certification. The state collects these scores and then divides the programs into quartiles according to their pass rates. The Title II website states that the “ranking by pass rates is an incomplete measure of the relative quality of a state’s teacher preparation programs,” and for this reason the guide emphasizes
that institutions of higher education (IHE) and states may report supplemental information that they believe will help the public “better understand the relative quality of each IHE’s teacher preparation program” (Title II, 2005, ¶ 3). In the case of New Jersey, the “supplemental information” consists of an overview of teacher preparation in the state including the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) mission statement, a brief description of a comprehensive review of the administrative code, a brief statement explaining that the levels of qualifying scores have been reviewed and raised, a three-paragraph overview of the 21 IHEs that provide teacher preparation, and other information relating to national accreditation policy and DOE initiatives. The overview of teacher preparation explains that pedagogy is assessed during the teacher’s first year of teaching because New Jersey candidates initially receive a provisional certificate that becomes a permanent certificate after the first year of teaching and that more than 99% of the teacher candidates prepared by New Jersey programs are successful in the classroom during this first year. The overview also provides some descriptive information, such as the number of public and private higher education institutions that prepare teachers in the state. This supplemental information supposedly provides the appropriate context for helping the public to interpret the rankings of programs by the pass rates of their students.

In 2003, the summary PRAXIS II pass rates in New Jersey ranged from 100% to 93%. The first quartile had a mean of 100%, the second quartile a mean of 98.3%, the third quartile 96.7%, and the fourth 94% (Title II, 2005). Thus, a scant 6 percentage points separates the “top” performing schools from the “lowest” performing schools. The Title II website states that the purpose of this system of ranking is to provide the public with “a clear and comprehensible public reporting system on state licensure and the success of institutions in preparing teachers” (Title II, 2005, ¶ 2). Thus, the purpose of these rankings, along with the supplemental information, is to enable the public to make judgments regarding the “success” of particular institutions. The federal government evidently prioritizes the values of “clear” and “concise” over such values as “complex” or “comprehensive.” Certainly, the evaluative information presented by Title II is exceedingly narrow and captures only one small element of teaching quality—content knowledge as measured by the PRAXIS II. The irony of this
whole endeavor is that, for the most part, the content knowledge of
teacher candidates is developed within colleges of arts and sciences,
not in teacher preparation programs. Thus, teacher preparation programs
are being ranked according to a quality of teacher preparation that is
largely beyond their control. A second irony involves the narrow range
of percentage points that separates the top performing schools from
the “lowest” performing schools. The teacher preparation program at
Princeton is very small; we typically certify between 20 and 25 students
each year. Princeton currently enjoys a 100% pass rate and is therefore
ranked in the first Title II quartile. If only one of our students had
failed the PRAXIS in 2003, Princeton would have fallen from the first
quartile to being dead last in the state. The running joke among our
students is, naturally, “Don’t be the one!” Each state has its own testing
requirements, but the situation in New Jersey certainly demonstrates
the inherent dangers of placing inappropriate emphasis on simplistic
one-size-fits-all measures of complex processes.

The problem with Title II is not the PRAXIS II. The test is
developed and administered by ETS, the quintessential force in
standardized testing, and the company rightly vouches for the validity
and reliability of its tests. The test is objective and consistent. The
problem with Title II is that public rankings of “success” in teacher
preparation are being compiled based on a single limited measure, a
seemingly inevitable policy reality when comparative measures are
desired across a broad population. To rank something as complex as
the quality of teacher preparation by such a limited measure raises
legitimate concerns, but Title II is nevertheless taken very seriously by
teacher preparation programs because rankings are indeed formulated
and made public. Title II serves as a prime example of trying to use
what we can easily measure—the PRAXIS II is the only assessment
taken by all teaching candidates in the state—to evaluate something
complex that we want to measure: success in preparing competent
teachers. A complex activity necessarily requires complexity in
evaluation. No single piece of evidence or measurement can or should
be used to represent complex performance.

Grant Wiggins, a leading voice in educative assessment,
emphasizes the importance of gathering a range of different types of
evidence in order to demonstrate understanding. In Wiggins’ (1998)
“backwards design” framework, understanding is a complex entity,
and he describes six facets of understanding to help guide educators in shaping instruction and assessment. His framework encourages educators to focus units of instruction on a few “enduring understandings” and to develop educative experiences that allow students to deepen their understanding while producing a range of evidence to determine whether the intended understandings had been developed. Such evidence can range from informal evaluation during instruction to simple quizzes and tests targeting knowledge and skills required for understanding to complex performances that indicate depth of understanding and the ability to apply that understanding to concrete tasks. The Wiggins system also relies on rubrics to describe and distinguish between levels of performance (Wiggins, 1998). These same principles certainly apply to the evaluation of teaching, but even complex assessments with carefully designed rubrics can be problematic.

A complex, rubric-based, evaluation system is used by Princeton’s Teacher Preparation Program staff to rank individuals who have been nominated for the Distinguished Secondary Teacher Award, a prestigious honor bestowed upon four New Jersey teachers each year at the University’s commencement ceremony. Discriminating among these individuals is exceedingly difficult because each represents “the best” teaching within an individual school. These are all accomplished individuals achieving remarkable feats in the classroom, in their schools, and in the profession. The nomination process requires each school to compile a dossier that presents the case for the nominee. The program staff reviews the dossiers of approximately 80 nominees that are submitted each year and selects the ten or twelve strongest for the second phase of evaluation which entails classroom observations and interviews. A committee of university staff and faculty and representatives from local schools then reviews the dossiers and school visit reports to select the four winners.

The program staff developed a comprehensive rubric and corresponding scoring form to rank the nominees for the first phase of the evaluation. The scoring form allows points to be assigned for each category of the rubric, covering such areas as the nominee’s effectiveness as a teacher of the subject matter and his or her intellectual leadership among colleagues. There are six categories for evaluation. Complicating the task of identifying fine distinctions among a group
of talented and accomplished individuals is the fact that the nominees are drawn from an incredibly varied array of instructional positions and school environments. This past year’s 76 nominees included, for example, an AP history teacher from a prestigious independent school, a computer teacher from a vocational school, a ballet teacher from an urban school, a middle school science teacher, and several Latin teachers. Creating a rubric that can compare the quality of teaching in such disparate circumstances is difficult at best. After applying the rubric for the first time in 2004, the staff decided to add two additional categories. The first new category covers “Special Considerations” that allow credit to be given to teachers who are working in unique circumstances or who have made distinctive contributions to schools or students that extend beyond the realm of “normal” teaching. An example might be a teacher who created or revitalized an entire area of study within an impoverished school district. The second new category allows the reviewer to assign a modest number of “Personal Quality Points” if the reviewer decides that elements of a dossier are particularly compelling. Essentially, these last two categories are provided to address complexity and circumstances that cannot be predicted but should, nevertheless, be considered.

We tabulate our individual scores to select the twenty or so teachers who receive the highest ratings from program staff, and then we meet for the better part of a day to discuss each teacher in detail. Although the staff developed the rubric and procedures for evaluating the dossiers, there can be wide variation in the ratings of some nominees. The rating correlations between individualassessors and the entire group of raters range from .55 to .80, and there can be high agreement on the ratings of some nominees as well as wide disagreement on others. The average range of scores between the highest and lowest raters was 16 points on a 75-point scale. Some nominees were scored with as little as a 7-point difference between the highest and lowest raters while one nominee had a substantial 27-point difference between high and low scores. Interestingly, none of the teachers with the narrowest (7 points each) or widest (27 and 26 points) spread of scores made the final selection of ten teachers. The average scoring range for the ten selected teachers was 13, indicating that there was a slightly higher level of agreement between raters on the “best” nominees than with the group overall. Although our staff is comfortable using the rubric
scores to help identify the top third of the dossiers, none of us would be comfortable relying on the scores alone to determine the final ten or so teachers selected for the second phase of evaluation. We have found that the discussion among our five staff members is essential because rubrics and scores are necessarily limited in what they capture and are therefore inadequate for making fine distinctions between individuals who have all attained a high level of quality in the evaluated area.

During the staff discussion, scores can be challenged, defended, or adjusted as information is reinterpreted or new perspectives are considered. For example, two individuals may have similar levels of accomplishments within the classroom and in school life, but one teacher may have stayed in the same school for thirty years while the second, younger teacher, has changed jobs every three to five years. Whether, or how, differences in employment patterns or length of career should be considered as evaluation criteria is beyond the capability of the rubric and can only be addressed through thoughtful discussion and by considering specific circumstances and professional context for each individual. Partially by design and partially through trial and error, we have developed an evaluation process that has intentionally integrated some subjectivity into the scoring process that results in less consistency between raters but allows for consideration of the wide variation we find among the nominees. This subjectivity is resolved with collective professional judgment through thoughtful discussion. We are evaluating the “best” teachers from schools across the state, and the staff takes this responsibility seriously. Collectively, we are much more comfortable with this hybrid form of evaluation than if we had worked to refine the rubric and scoring sheet to improve the consistency of scores between our staff. To do so, we feel, would mean narrowing the criteria to the extent that we would not be able to consider the “whole” teacher. The addition of two “catch all” categories to the process created flexibility to more effectively discriminate between widely ranging teaching situations. The staff discussion, structured by the rubric and scoring procedures, allows us to apply professional judgment to the interpretation of individual scores. The scores provide an essential and useful common measure, but relying upon the scores alone without some process to interpret the meaning of those numbers would not yield our current level of satisfaction that we truly select the “best” dossiers.
We essentially use this same process of blending “objective” measures with collective interpretation when evaluating the clinical performance of our teaching candidates. There are significant differences between the two processes, but perhaps the most important is that we use the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers as the primary rubric for evaluating teacher candidates. A second important difference is our ability to collect a wider range of evidence over a longer period of time for our students than we can with the teaching award nominees. A third significant difference is that the discussion involving our students is ongoing during practice teaching. During the course of a semester, our staff meets every other week to discuss in detail the progress and challenges of each student who is practice teaching. At the end of the semester, the staff then meets to discuss the practice teaching grade of each individual.

Grading decisions for students completing their practice teaching reflect a range of evidence. This collection of evidence includes interim and final teaching evaluations rated by the three individuals directly involved in the practice teaching process: the university supervisor, the cooperating instructor, and the student teacher. These evaluations are supplemented with a submitted Work Sample, observation reports, journal entries, and anecdotal information. Student teachers, cooperating instructors, and university supervisors all use the same standards-based form to evaluate student teaching performance, and these evaluations are considered the most compelling evidence of a candidate’s teaching skill. Student teachers can be rated for a given criterion as “Targeted for Improvement,” “Proficient,” or “Exemplary.” An analysis of these scores indicates that supervisors and cooperating instructors were very close in their scoring, giving exemplary scores an average of 38% and 36% of the time, respectively. Student teachers, however, were much harder on themselves, giving exemplary scores only 19% of the time. The potential for discrepancies among the three raters highlights the importance of establishing a process of evaluation that can account for a wide range of performance indicators and variations between those measures. The grade discussion of each student begins with the supervisor describing the overall performance of the student, performances on the individual assessments, and a proposal for a course grade or range of possible grades. Each member of the staff has the opportunity to discuss the grade proposal,
to ask questions about performance, or, if necessary, to advocate for the student. Because we regularly discuss all candidates during their student teaching and because so many of our staff have interactions with most of our students (as course instructors, as advisors, or as supervisors), the discussion of any particular student will involve most of the staff. This process of interpreting the entire range of evidence also allows for the consideration of unique circumstances, such as personality clashes between a student and the cooperating instructor or university supervisor. As in the case of the Distinguished Secondary Teacher Award evaluations, data are considered but are interpreted with the application of professional judgment through thoughtful discussion.

**Formative Assessment: Helping Students to Meet Standards**

In January of 2004, New Jersey adopted new licensing regulations for teachers. The new regulations contained the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers, a set of ten standards based on the INTASC general standards. Like the INTASC standards, the ten New Jersey standards are each broken down into the areas of knowledge, values, and commitments (called dispositions by INTASC) and activities (called performances by INTASC). The adoption of standards was a very significant decision for New Jersey because teacher quality was now defined in terms of what teachers know, believe, and are able to do. In the previous iteration of the New Jersey licensing code, teacher quality was defined in terms of required academic experiences, based upon the Boyer Topics, for teaching candidates. Although the new licensing code also contains prescriptive requirements governing the content of teacher education curricula, the shift of emphasis from coursework to performance-based standards was a welcome development, especially for a small program like the one at Princeton.

In Fall 2002 and in anticipation of the new licensing code, Princeton’s Program in Teacher Preparation staff began the process of completely aligning the program elements with the INTASC standards. We began by reviewing every component of the program to identify whether or not the standards were being addressed and to determine whether or not artifacts were being generated that could be used as evidence that students were meeting the standards. This process led to substantial revision of program components and to the alignment of
student teaching evaluation instruments to the standards. When New Jersey passed its own standards, these changes were adjusted to reflect the relatively minor differences between the two sets of standards. The transition to standards facilitated revisions that increased the coherency and consistency of the various program elements while preserving the unique character of the program.

Our small program has succeeded over the past 35 years because we give students a great deal of individual attention. We typically certify between 20 and 25 students each year, spanning all content areas and all levels of teaching. Students fulfill state requirements by taking courses taught in our program and in other academic departments. Our students can be majors in any department at the university, and they fulfill our program requirements along with their departmental and general education requirements. We do not have the luxury of being able to require our students to take a large number of education courses, as is the case with programs embedded in larger schools of education. We must compensate for fewer course offerings and fewer contact hours with our students by individualizing the program to students. When New Jersey moved toward a standards orientation in their licensing code, our program seized the opportunity to reinvent itself with the goal of developing teacher candidates who perform skillfully in the classroom as defined by those standards. Our program philosophy is to move each student to that level of performance by differentiating program instruction and providing individual attention for each student. As we revised our program, the staff decided that a teaching portfolio was the best vehicle to help our students meet the new standards.

When a student is admitted to the program, he or she meets with our director, John Webb, for the Introductory Practicum. This program requirement is a non-credit experience that serves as an introduction to the program and to the standards with which we are aligned. The student is given a CD-ROM that contains all the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, the Professional Standards for Teachers, and Subject Specialty Standards for the student’s area of certification. The student is also introduced to an observation form (used by student teachers, cooperating instructors, and university supervisors during practice teaching) based upon the Professional Standards. The student is then given a second CD-ROM containing
the video of a lesson taught by a past student teacher, and the student views the video through the lens of the standards. After completing this “training” exercise, the student again meets with our director to discuss and interpret the video from the perspective of the standards. After this in-depth, one-on-one discussion, the student is placed with a teacher in a neighboring school district for a day of observation. Again, the standards provide the lens for processing what is observed that day, and the student returns for a final discussion to debrief this experience. This introductory exercise is fundamentally important to our program in that it introduces all the relevant standards and because it allows each student to examine teaching in light of the standards. The in-depth, tutorial nature of this experience allows our director to ensure that the students begin the program with an orientation that serves as an advanced organizer for the rest of the program. The experience also allows the director to identify and develop the relevant dispositions of students as well as address any misconceptions or detrimental preconceptions that might surface and inhibit the learning of the student.

Upon the conclusion of the Introductory Practicum, the director assigns an advisor to the student. The primary role of the advisor is to oversee and assist the student in the development of the portfolio. Students are required to submit two to three artifacts, or pieces of evidence, of their competency for each of the three areas of knowledge, values, and activities under each of the ten Professional Standards. Our program recognizes that students may take many different pathways to the same end: professional skill as defined by the standards. The portfolio provides the means to truly individualize instruction. Students self-assess their portfolio in anticipation of each of the five advisor meetings scheduled for each academic year, and this assessment serves as the starting place for the advisor meeting. There are required elements from the program that must be represented in the portfolio, but students have considerable latitude in deciding which specific pieces of evidence they would like to submit. If there is an area of weakness identified in the portfolio, advisors might recommend readings or other educative experience to address the area. In this way, the portfolio allows the program to both assess and develop on an individual basis the student knowledge, dispositions, and performance defined by the standards.
Most of the assessment given to students during their practice teaching is formative. It is our goal, as a program, to raise every student to the “A” level of teaching skill, as defined by the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. Although the cooperating instructor provides regular feedback in the form of observation reports and the interim and final evaluation forms described above, we consciously avoid bringing the cooperating instructor directly into the grading process to avoid interfering with the mentoring relationship that develops between the host teacher and the student teacher. The evaluations by the cooperating teacher are included among the many pieces of evidence considered for each student during our grading meeting at the end of the semester. We make it clear to the students that the university supervisor, representing the program, has the sole responsibility for the grade.

The supervisor does not formally “grade” the student teacher during the weeks of practice teaching. Our program chooses to base the practice teaching course grade on a body of evidence considered in entirety at the conclusion of the practice teaching experience. The supervisor writes up six formal observations of each student during practice teaching and meets with the student for about an hour to discuss each observation. These observations serve primarily as opportunities to provide feedback to the student and to prompt student reflection and self-adjustment, rather than to generate a grade. The interim evaluation is also considered formative, and the supervisor truly serves as a coach rather than evaluator during the practice teaching experience. The formative nature of the student teaching experience is designed to help each student evolve into a competent and skilled teacher, as defined by the standards.

Self-assessment by the student is also an important part of this process. The student fills out the same interim and final evaluation forms that the cooperating instructor and university supervisor use. Each student is videotaped twice during practice teaching. The first taping is done early in the placement and provides an opportunity for the student to view him- or herself in the process of teaching. The supervisor provides an observation report on this taped lesson, enabling the student to have an experienced educator’s perspective of the lesson. The students are then videotaped a second time during the second half of the placement. The student, and not the supervisor, responds to this
second taped lesson using the same standards-based observation form that the supervisor used for the first taped lesson. The student’s response to the second lesson is turned in as part of the student’s Work Sample and is included in the range of evidence, to represent both teaching skill and the student’s ability to reflect upon his or her own performance, when considering grades at the end of the semester. Students also keep a daily journal during practice teaching. The journal provides the opportunity for reflection by the student and also provides the supervisor with some description of events between scheduled observations. The supervisor provides responses to journal entries, and though not graded, the entries provide some indication of a student’s ability to informally reflect and self-assess.

The grades assigned for student teaching serve as a means for conveying quality to potential employers. Student grades reflect the program’s judgment of teaching skill, defined by the standards, but the program must also adhere to university guidelines on grading. On April 26, 2004, the Princeton University faculty voted by a two to one margin to approve a new policy setting universitywide guidelines limiting the number of A’s (defined as A+, A, or A-) awarded by departments or programs to fewer than 35% of the grades given to students in undergraduate courses. The impetus for this new policy was to combat grade inflation, a growing problem that Princeton shares with most other institutions of higher education. Why did Princeton take such a bold step toward curbing grade inflation? In a letter to parents, the Dean of the College, Nancy Weiss Malkiel (2004), who proposed the grading guidelines to the faculty, described the reasoning this way: “We think it is important to address grade inflation because of the way it affects teaching and learning at Princeton” (p. 9). The Dean went on to describe the following four assumptions about grading and assessment:

1. Grading, properly done, is an educational tool that assists students in evaluating what they have learned, how well they have learned it, and where they need to invest additional effort.
2. Grading done without careful calibration and discrimination is, if nothing else, uninformative and therefore not
useful; at worst, it actively discourages students from rising to the challenge to do their best work.

3. Students are entitled to a fair and reasonable assessment of the work they have done; there should be some correlation between performance and reward.

4. It does students no favor to grade them in a way that fails adequately to differentiate routinely good from really outstanding performance. We need to do a better job of distinguishing the excellent from the competent and of holding students accountable for negligent, weak, and unacceptable performance (Malkiel, 2004, p. 9).

Princeton’s new grading policy, and these four underlying assumptions, have implications for teaching and learning in any academic area, but they pose specific challenges and considerations for a program that prepares teachers. The first assumption describes the feedback inherent in an awarded grade. Grades are the symbolic representation of assessment outcomes and can provide global feedback to students regarding performance. But, as Wiggins (1998) emphasizes, students must not only receive feedback after their performance, but should also be given feedback during the performance so that they might self-adjust and improve. In fact, argues Wiggins, such self-adjustment (as opposed to self-assessment) should be the goal of any instruction. And the most effective way to promote self-adjustment is to provide feedback during a performance and then provide an opportunity for the student to apply the feedback. Post-performance global feedback is useful to a point, but specific and value-free responses to ongoing student performance are the keys to providing students with the information they need to truly improve. If the instructional goal is student self-adjustment, then the formative assessments during student performance are much more important than summative assessments given at the conclusion of the performance.

The second and fourth assumptions provide a compelling argument against grade inflation. If student evaluations are skewed toward the “A” range, then the ability of grades to discriminate between levels of performance is diminished because a smaller number of grade levels are used to describe the same number of students. But using a wider range of scoring levels is not necessarily useful unless students
are informed of the criteria used to discriminate between the levels. In the case of teacher preparation, national standards can provide specific indicators for discriminating between levels of performance.

The third assumption is a powerful statement regarding the rights of a learner. Too often, assessments are used solely to sort individuals by level of performance, a function that primarily aids the assessor and not the learner. Assessments must also serve the learner, and learners have the right to high-quality assessments that provide them with information that is useful to them in the process of learning.

The rationale behind this new grading policy is entirely consistent with our program’s perspective on grading, but we experience a unique tension because we arguably provide more feedback during the practice teaching experience than does any other course at the university. During practice teaching we have the conscious goal of developing each student into an “A” level performer. Of course, we never completely attain that target, and the program strives to ensure the quality of the students we certify by using summative assessments as gatekeepers to the profession. We use convenient measures like GPA and PRAXIS scores to prevent low-performing students from entering the teaching force. We also use the Student Portfolio as a final check that students have tangible evidence of their teaching skill as defined by the New Jersey Professional Standards; students must pass the portfolio review before we submit their names for certification. Course grades in our program and letters of recommendation also provide information to potential employers regarding the quality of a student. However, the most effective way for our program to ensure the quality of our students is to put substantial resources into the formative evaluation of students and to provide feedback to students that will enable them to evolve professionally and to perform skillfully. Our staff meetings allow us to address, as a program, the strengths and weaknesses of each student and to use our collective wisdom for creating strategies to help each student develop their potential to the greatest degree.

When problems with student performance do arise, we can formulate responses that take into consideration as many variables and perspectives as possible, and we have confidence that our collective wisdom yields better strategies, decisions, and grades for our students than to rely on the cumulative score of a series of assessments or on
the professional judgment of a single person. By separating the process of grading from the process of coaching during the supervision process, we are able to establish productive relationships with our students that promote honest reflection on their teaching performance. Assigning grades to observations or evaluations would only confound the mentoring and coaching that takes place. Our challenge, though, is not to create a “black box” atmosphere where the determination of a grade is a mystery to our student. If we have done our job in providing detailed and honest feedback to students during their practice teaching and during the course of their portfolio development, then grades are never a surprise. Feedback and the reflection it generates with the student are the most important ingredients in the process of professional growth. If we can produce students who can reflect and then self-adjust, then we have taken a huge step towards producing beginning teachers who will evolve into master teachers. Thankfully, the university administration supports our efforts to produce as many “A” level teachers as possible, provided we submit convincing justification for each “A” awarded. We can only hope that our students find employment in professional settings that value the professional growth of teachers and provide feedback, and not just summative performance evaluation, that will promote their continued development as teachers.

Program Considerations and Evaluation

When New Jersey passed its new licensing code, the regulations contained a requirement that all programs of teacher preparation must be nationally accredited by 2009. Our program chose the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) as the accrediting agency. TEAC requires programs in teacher preparation to use TEAC’s three quality principles and standards for capacity to make “the case that its program has succeeded in preparing competent, caring, and qualified professional educators” (TEAC, 2005, ¶ 1). TEAC’s three quality principles require programs to provide evidence of student learning, to demonstrate that the assessment of student learning is valid, and to demonstrate that the program exercises decisions based on evidence to improve program quality. The TEAC framework requires that each program develop a claims statement that describes the accomplishments of its students and graduates. The program faculty must then support
its claims statement with evidence that the claims have been realized. Finally, TEAC conducts an audit to verify the evidence submitted in support of the claims statement.

Our program claims that we prepare teachers who demonstrate teaching skill as defined by the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. We will supply TEAC with ample evidence for that claim and its relationship to the TEAC quality principles from the assessments that we administer and from data that we collect about our students and program. The accreditation process is rigorous and demanding, to the point that we have formed a consortium of the New Jersey institutions that are being accredited by TEAC. More than half of the teacher preparation programs in the state are represented in this consortium, and the group meets with the purpose of aiding each other as we negotiate the challenges of accreditation. The TEAC accreditation process examines a wide range of evidence and emphasizes the analysis and interpretation of that evidence in terms of defined notions of quality. The process is designed to ultimately assist programs in using evidence and data to assess and improve the quality of their own work.

The rigor and complexity of the TEAC accreditation process serves as a stark contrast to the severely limited information provided by the Title II reporting and ranking process. Evaluation of a program and its ability to produce quality teachers is best left to accrediting agencies able to devote the time and resources for thoroughly evaluating a program with methodologies that reflect the complexities of the task. Government agencies can facilitate this process with policies that promote the transfer of information that programs and accrediting bodies find useful for program evaluation. For example, the real test of the quality of a program’s preparation of students is how well its graduates perform as professionals. Tracking graduates, however, is an exceedingly difficult and time-consuming task. At the time of this writing, there is no mechanism in place within the State of New Jersey for providing programs in teacher preparation with employment data that would allow programs to follow their graduates into the teaching force. Locating graduates is only the first step—evaluating the performance of graduates once they take over their own classrooms is the next. Such evaluation would require access to pupil test data and to school-level teacher evaluation data.
Unfortunately, no mechanisms are in place to facilitate this flow of information from schools to teacher preparation programs, and most programs simply do not have the resources to seek out and collect the data themselves. Since these data already exist, the problem is primarily one of access. For institutions like Princeton, whose graduates often leave the state in which they are initially trained and certified, the problem is compounded with the movement between licensing jurisdictions. If government agencies could facilitate the flow of such information, programs would be better equipped to both follow and support their students during the first years of employment. Such steps might improve the quality of the nation’s teaching force by allowing programs to monitor and mentor graduates as they enter the teaching force while also providing programs with valuable information on student professional performance that can be used to more fully inform program adjustment and improvement. The challenge for evaluating teaching at all stages is to be mindful that the collected data represents only a limited perspective of the complexity of teaching. Safeguards must accompany the collection and dissemination of such data to ensure that the information will be given sophisticated interpretation and will be used responsibly.

References

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How Can Creating Standards Ensure Teacher Quality?

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Teacher quality is at the heart of student achievement. Accounting for variables traditionally associated with poor achievement—student poverty, poor school climate, lack of resources, class and school size—if teacher quality is high, so are student outcomes. If the quality is poor, the same goes for student achievement. But what is quality when it comes to teaching? Studies have identified an array of teacher attributes and their impact on student achievement levels, from teacher verbal ability measured by standardized tests, flexibility and breadth in implementing instructional strategies, subject area expertise, previous teaching experience, subject area knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. But few individual, isolated traits have been identified that correlate with levels of student achievement. In a recent large-scale national study measured by NAEP, however, which correlated a state’s student achievement gains with a number of teacher characteristics, Darling-Hammond (1999) found the greatest predictors of student achievement to be teachers’ subject area expertise (as measured by college major or equivalent) and appropriate pedagogical knowledge (as measured by certification in the area of one’s teaching). The study also found that states that have consistently high criteria for teacher credentialing have the highest scores on state aggregated NAEP data. It is not surprising, then, that the current climate for federal and state education policies supports the establishment of setting standards in the preparation and credentialing of new teachers.

As a result of the twin pressures to apply high standards for entering the teaching profession (and staying there) as well as to seek alternative routes to acquiring those standards in order to allow unprecedented numbers of well prepared teachers to enter a field that is facing staggering shortages, we are at a threshold of enacting policies that will transform the way teachers learn their craft and receive certification to teach. Setting standards for teachers is more complicated than setting student achievement standards, we will argue, because the
teaching standards refer to performance, which relies on more than mastering a specified body of knowledge. There is no battery of tests that can capture the complexity of the teaching craft. It needs to be evaluated in its enactment.

The main argument we present in this article is that a responsible approach to establishing standards for teacher licensure will need to allow for variation. We describe the implementation of a standards-based approach to preparing novice teachers through an examination of a case study of the Teacher Education (TE) program at Brown University, and we argue that an attempt to set standards in a one-size-fits-all federal or state-level legislation will not improve the preparation of teachers. We need to avoid standardization, the “evil-twin” of standards arising from the need for national-level, reliable accountability. Teaching contexts in schools, as well as schools of education in universities and colleges across the country, vary and so should their unique abilities to educate teachers well.

This is not a defense for an “anything goes” approach to the preparation of teachers. Rather, it is a call for better understanding the conditions of teacher preparation that best result in high quality teachers getting and staying in teaching positions in the many diverse settings of our nation’s public schools. As we describe in our case study, we find that conditions which support excellence in teacher education are not unlike those recognized as improving failing secondary schools—collaborative efforts in small learning communities so that students and teachers know each other well in the multiple contexts that constitute their preservice preparation. Teaching, and learning about teaching, should maintain continuity across practicum and high education classroom experiences. This is best accomplished through personalization, which relies on teacher educators knowing their students and “best” classroom practices well, enabling them to coach teacher candidates in the acts of teaching and reflection on teaching.

The State of Standards

Standards for teacher quality and procedures for ensuring them are less uniform across the nation than the standards set for student learning (curriculum) and outcomes (achievement measures), but the current impetus to solve the problems in our nation’s education system
by legislating accountability systems shows the direction in which we are heading. At present, the political will, as well as the need for significantly more teachers in the profession in the near future, seems to favor setting national standards for all teacher preparation programs and at the same time promoting alternatives to traditional teacher credentialing which, traditionally, has followed the completion of an accredited college teacher preparation program. We know from numerous studies of teacher quality, however, that it takes more than a college degree in a subject area or a high IQ to manage the complexities of educating children well. But establishing standards that define a high quality teaching craft is no simple matter. It may even be counterproductive to creating experiences that promote optimal teacher learning. On the one hand, there is a danger in specifying very broad and generic, measurable standards for accountability purposes. As mentioned earlier, having quantifiable, measurable benchmark criteria is attractive, but the likelihood of test scores in subject matter and pedagogical knowledge actually demonstrating the quality of one’s teaching is minimal. Even the requirement to have earned a major and to be certified in the subject area and grade level of teaching, which follows from the findings of research on teacher quality and student achievement, is problematic. Do social studies teachers need to have multiple majors or their equivalents in order to teach geography, history, and economics? Or does a math/science teacher need multiple majors in math and various science disciplines? Teaching algebra, chemistry, and physics is a common load assignment in traditionally hard-to-staff or small schools. The National Council of State Legislatures’ (2005) recent report recommending changes to NCLB describes this “flaw” in the legislation as follows:

The law sets fairly broad parameters for what constitutes a highly qualified teacher and provides states some latitude for setting their own definitions and qualifications. Even so, the federal parameters have posed problems for certain schools and school districts in all states. The portion of the law’s definition that requires teachers to prove content knowledge for each subject they teach is particularly problematic for hard-to-staff schools—for example, those in urban and rural districts. In addition, areas that were affected by teacher shortages even
prior to NCLB have more challenges to adequately staff class-
rooms. (Executive Summary)

And how does having completed a list of required courses actually
impact one’s craft of teaching? Isn’t it more likely the case that
meaningful standards would need to address what teachers know, value,
and actually do in the classroom?

While this might seem like a more responsible way to define
quality in teaching than relying on a test score and a checklist of courses
completed, it is a difficult enterprise and one that requires a great deal
of flexibility, because it is virtually impossible to specify the myriad
facets that contribute to quality teaching applicable to all teachers in
all classrooms. Teaching is a contextually-bound, interpersonal activity
that requires the simultaneous interplay and adjustment of subject
matter, learner, and teaching strategy. As Labaree (1997) states in his
analysis of why prescriptivism can be dangerous,

[t]here is no simple checklist of teacher knowledge. … Instead,
the practice of teaching reveals interconnected sets of rule-
governed behaviour which vary from context to context from
social context to context. It is possible to identify some of these
rules, but it would be a basic mistake to attempt to generalize
from them so as to produce a definitive list of teacher knowl-
edge. (p. 39)

Similarly, while educators regularly refer to “best practices,”
which might be articulated in standards, the reading and math wars
show us that general agreement about the “one best way” to teach
conceptual knowledge and skills is far from agreed upon. 1 Nevertheless,
many state departments of education and professional educational
organizations have attempted to do just that—define the basic
dispositions, knowledge bases, and instructional practices that a teacher
needs to master to be considered “highly qualified.” Given NCLB
specifications that require accountability for teacher quality and
encourage new pathways to acquire and demonstrate it, we will surely
see more attempts to work through these conundrums as the need for
new teachers continues to rise, in some areas, dramatically.
A Case Study of Standards-Based Teacher Education

In this article, I will present the Brown University Teacher Education (TE) program as a case study of how standards for beginning teachers have been determined, addressed programmatically, and accounted for in the accreditation review process. It includes insights and convictions that my colleagues share and, hopefully, reveals the benefits and potentials of applying rigorous standards to teacher education programs. At the same time, it raises serious concerns about the regulation of standards in preparing (or standards regulating) highly qualified teachers.

It begins, however, with a caveat. What I will present is not based on rigorously determined “scientific” evidence. It is, rather, an accumulation of experiences of both teacher educators and graduates of the TE program at Brown over the past five to ten years. We are in the process of collecting information on all of our graduates from the past five years that will indicate who has pursued a teaching career after graduation, for how long and where, with attention to the whys of their decisions. But even that information won’t tell us much about the teaching quality of our graduates. For that we rely on where we expect graduates of our program to be on the learning continuum of teaching at the end of our program, their hiring rates and in which schools, as well as continued contact with a large number of our graduates that informs us of their career paths post graduation. We keep track of their teacher certification test scores, but that seems the least revealing indicator regarding the quality of their preparation to teach upon leaving our program. The accumulation of this information about our graduates is not sufficient to scientifically demonstrate that what we are doing at Brown is the “best” practice, if there even is one for educating all teachers, but we continue to modify our attempts to educate new teachers in line with what we believe is most important. It is that belief and its actualization that I present here.

While my colleagues and I take pride in the program we have constructed, sometimes considering it the “best” way to educate beginning teachers, we nevertheless continually grapple with complexities in creating a standards-based system that can account for producing quality and highly qualified beginning teachers. I present this case as a thoughtful model of standards-driven teacher education...
and as an illustration of how context conditions the implementation and interpretation of standards in teacher education.

**Brown University Practice-Based Standards**

The Brown TE program is standards driven. Practice-based standards stating the desired qualities and capacities of our graduates were developed by the clinical faculty in the early 1980s to guide TE candidates’ learning of the teaching craft. We consider it good teaching practice to have clear expectations for learning and to share those expectations, in the form of a rubric, with students. The Brown Practice-Based Standards (BPBS) address seven areas of the teaching craft:

1. *Roles and Relationships* established with students, parents, colleagues, and the wider community.
2. Understanding the individual *Student as Learner*.
3. Ability in *Planning* individual lessons and curriculum units.
4. Implementing *Classroom Practices* that are appropriate for the task, delivered as whole group instruction or for collaborative group work, and that support cognitive development across a range of student abilities.
5. Using a variety of *Assessment* tools to monitor student learning and to inform instruction.
6. Demonstrating *Professional Knowledge and Growth* as a reflective, developing teacher.
7. Demonstrating depth and continued growth in the *Content Knowledge* of the teacher’s disciplinary concentration.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, broad standards such as these represent uncontestable qualities of a highly qualified teacher. They are so broad that all desired attributes of a good teacher can fit under one or more of these categories. For example, facility with technology and issues of diversity are two areas that state departments of education are increasingly requiring as components of an accredited teacher education program. Rhode Island is one of those states. At Brown, we find multiple standards where they can and should be included—Roles and Relationships, Student as Learner, Classroom Practice, and Professional Knowledge and Growth.
Further, the breadth of these statements as standards provides little more to guide the teacher candidate in what it takes to attain them than an introductory chapter in a generic textbook on teaching methods. They serve as commendable ideals, but what do they mean, exactly? How does a teacher candidate know what it means to demonstrate these qualities? And, even more difficult to determine, how do we know what is good enough for a beginning teacher in each of these standards? These are the complex questions that must be answered for a standards-based accountability system to be effective, and we will argue, certainly no one score on an exam nor a single, broadly applicable assessment template can be used to monitor accountability in achieving these standards.

Articulating the Brown Practice-Based Standards

To address the issue of breadth of quality teaching standards and the vagueness inherent in declaring largely indisputable traits of qualified teachers, standards need to be carefully articulated and clarified. To inform teacher candidates of what we think it means to embody the qualities we have identified in our practice-based standards, we have included indicators to each of the seven general statements to describe them in detail. For teacher candidates and for mentors and supervisors we pose these indicators as questions. For example, Standard One is articulated by these indicators:

Standard One: Roles and Relationships

A. Relationship with Students

In what ways does the student teacher:

• create a safe and secure learning environment for students?
• encourage learners to become independent, responsible citizens in the classroom who demonstrate self discipline while carrying out assigned tasks?
• organize resources, materials, and the physical space allocated and organized to support active engagement of students?
• discern and address stereotypical references to gender, race, class, age, culture, disability, or sexual orientation?
• exhibit a consciousness of classroom community dynamics and climate?

B. Expectations of Students
In what ways does the student teacher:
• establish and maintain an orderly and cooperative classroom?
• enforce, fairly and consistently, classroom rules and deadlines?
• demand high expectations for all students? Are students expected to take responsibility for their own learning?
• create an active learning environment characterized by mutual respect and intellectual risk-taking?

C. Relationships with Colleagues and the School Community
In what ways does the student teacher:
• fulfill classroom and school responsibilities?
• work with fellow teachers?
• interact professionally, fairly, and equitably with students, colleagues, parents, and others?
• work collaboratively with agencies in the larger community (when necessary and appropriate)?
• follow school policy and procedures, respecting the boundaries of his/her professional responsibilities when working with students, colleagues, and families?
• make use of codes of professional conduct adopted by his/her professional organizations?
• understand local, state, and federal laws and regulations related to students’ rights and teacher responsibilities?

In this detailed articulation of what we mean by establishing an appropriate professional role and developing relationships in the classroom, with students and their families, colleagues, and the wider community, we define what we believe are “best practices” for high quality teachers. I doubt that all teachers, or even all teacher educators, would agree that these are universally held values in what it means to establish one’s role as a teacher. The principles embodied in these questions guide our design and implementation of teacher education at
Brown. In deciding on standards for preparing new teachers, the angles are in the details. This should be the place where a teacher education program expresses its philosophy and intentions. Articulating standards makes those principles explicit or sheds light on where faculty cannot come to agreement on “best practices.”

**Assessing the Standards**

Along with the challenges of defining standards, the second problem of a standards-based approach to teacher preparation is that of assessing how a candidate meets standards: Where is the bar to be set for a beginning teacher in a preservice teacher preparation program? How should meeting standards be demonstrated (how many indicators need to be met; how consistently; how many times; by artifacts, reflections, student work outcomes, external judgments)? And, finally, who is responsible for making the global assessment as to whether or not a candidate has met the standard for licensure?

It is no wonder that many policy analysts, policymakers, and educators seek refuge behind a single, telling test score, because to answer these questions in terms of one’s teaching performance is extremely difficult. It reminds us of the 1964 statement of Justice Potter Stewart regarding the definition of hard-core pornography, “I shall not today attempt to further define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within the shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case [The Lovers] is not that” (italics added). Quite the same problem, when it comes to determining “quality teaching.”

In order to describe how we have dealt with the problem of assessing practice-based standards at Brown, we need to put the assessment process within the context of the TE program as a whole. We present the context of the program here in two layers:

- what we hold as fundamental tenets of good teacher education,
  and
- how the program has been designed to maximize these principles.
Teacher Education at Brown

The central tenets we consider critical to quality teacher education and that distinguish our program are:

1. **Small size**
   We offer certification in only four discipline areas and the desired number of students in each of those divisions is from twelve to fifteen.

2. **Cohort based**
   All students follow an intensive eleven-month program together. There are no part-time students, though additional time student teaching is sometimes required before candidates qualify for certification.

3. **Faculty teach and supervise**
   Each of the four disciplinary strands is directed by one clinical faculty member who recruits, admits, advises, teaches, and supervises each of the students in their discipline area. Clinical faculty have significant school and teaching experience.

4. **Centered on practice**
   The core of the teacher education program is practice-based, including an introduction to teaching in a specially designed summer lab school that is organized by the clinical faculty but entirely taught by teacher candidates.

5. **Mentors (cooperating teachers) as partners**
   The recruitment of mentors is deliberate so that there is generally a long-term commitment on the part of cooperating teachers to the program, and cooperating teachers are selected because they use methods in their classroom similar to the methods in which we instruct our student teachers. University classes and school experiences are connected.3

6. **Seeking diversity**
   We specifically recruit and support candidates of color into our program who want to enter a teaching career, and we all struggle with issues of race, class, culture, and home language as they affect student achievement.
7. Content knowledge emphasis

In the secondary disciplines, candidates spend an academic semester taking courses in their content area. In the elementary program, methods courses in elementary content areas are year-long and prepare teachers by engaging them in content area instruction that they are encouraged to use and modify for their elementary age students.

Personalization in Teaching Students to Meet BPBS

Small is the key word in this case study. Both the teacher education program and Brown University itself are small, as is the State of Rhode Island, where Brown resides. The hallmark of our program is its personalization. As Ted Sizer, the major architect of the current TE program configuration at Brown, says, “You can’t teach someone you don’t know.” We also believe that teacher candidates should be taught at the university the way they are being asked to teach in their classrooms. This means small class sizes, hands-on/minds-on learning tasks that foster habits of mind needed in teaching, teaching the whole student, an emphasis on collaboration and community in learning and teaching, and teachers coaching while students do authentic work (in this case teaching). The resonance with Coalition of Essential Schools principles is not a coincidence since Ted Sizer, the founder of CES, reorganized the 100-year tradition of secondary teacher certification available to Brown undergraduates interested in becoming teachers at the same time he founded the Coalition at Brown. Themes that underlie CES principles have greatly impacted and, we would argue, facilitated the standards-based approach to teacher education we have developed.

Brown University is a private Ivy League university with a liberal arts emphasis. Although a recently launched academic enrichment campaign intends to transform Brown from a small, primarily undergraduate, student centered, liberal arts university into a moderately larger university, teacher education historically fits within the student-centered, liberal arts tradition at Brown. The current teacher education program was designed with the intent of developing a teacher’s craft along with content area knowledge. Today there are approximately fifty-five students enrolled in the eleven-month Teacher
Education program, divided among three secondary disciplines—biology, history/social studies, and English—and an elementary MAT program. The secondary teacher education program enrolls some undergraduates, but serves mostly MAT students.5

Faculty. The unique clinical role of the teacher education faculty has a great deal to do with rigorous attention to standards in the program as well as maintaining the personalization of the program. The teacher education faculty are non-tenure track, clinical faculty because their expertise in teaching is considered more relevant than their highest degree. Moreover, their responsibilities to both teach and supervise students in the field as they learn by teaching are considered primary, with service to the local community of great importance as well. Conducting and publishing research, though considered a desirable addition to clinical faculty work, and grant writing, while valued at the university as a whole, are not mandatory criteria for keeping one’s faculty position in Teacher Education. This explicit sanctioning of dedicating one’s professional energies to the training and coaching of preservice teachers in their practice-teaching placements allows the TE program to help a small, carefully selected group of students master the fundamentals of teaching at a beginning level, but often at a more accomplished level than the average first-year teacher.6

Each of the four divisions of the TE program has one clinical faculty person to oversee their portion of the program and, along with an assistant director of teacher education, administer all aspects of the program. Clinical faculty teach a seminar accompanying each of the clinical teaching experiences covering instructional methods and analyses of teaching practice. They also supervise all student teachers frequently. The secondary program relies on other Brown faculty to teach discipline area courses during the academic semester of the program. The elementary program, a relatively recent addition to TE at Brown (begun in 1997), has one clinical professor and five adjunct faculty members whose primary responsibilities are in local area schools as teachers, coaches, and administrators. One of the adjuncts serves as an additional clinical professor in the elementary program and is the Director of the MAT Program at The Wheeler School, our partner institution in the elementary program. The adjuncts provide content area instruction and methods as well as a touchstone in the day-to-day reality of schools.
Program of Study and Teaching Experiences. At the center of the TE program are coached teaching experiences and reflection. The program begins with an intensive seven-week summer semester during which all MAT and UTEP (Undergraduate Teacher Education Program) candidates team-teach in a three or four week special summer lab school designed by the TE faculty—Brown Summer High School for secondary candidates and SummerPrep for elementary. A mentor teacher is assigned to each team, with his or her role based on a peer-coaching model in which the mentor consults with the team about curriculum planning, observes each lesson, and debriefs with the team daily. Clinical faculty supervise MAT and UTEP students daily and closely follow their growth as teachers in this intensive summer enrichment program. The lab-school morning teaching experience is accompanied by daily afternoon classes specifically related to learning the fundamentals of the craft of teaching. At the end of the summer semester, students produce an electronic portfolio that describes and documents their growth in each of the seven practice-based standards and posts it on the education department website.

The fall and spring semesters differ for the elementary and the secondary candidates. Since secondary candidates have an academic semester in which they take university courses primarily in their content area, they may choose to student teach in either the fall or the spring, leaving the non-student teaching semester for academic concentration. Student teaching for fourteen weeks is accompanied by a weekly methods course taught by the clinical professor of that discipline.

The elementary program, on the other hand, has one path for all students in the cohort. The fall semester contains a practicum experience of 2.5 days a week in a single placement and the majority of education courses constituting the program. Spring semester is dedicated to student teaching—full-time classroom teaching in yet a different school and at a different grade level. Methods classes in math, science, and literacy continue to meet occasionally, while the analysis seminar continues to meet weekly.

Teacher candidates are placed in multiple school settings, and cooperating teachers are selected on the basis of how their practice aligns with the instruction candidates receive in their methods classes, their willingness to co-teach with and coach a novice in all teaching responsibilities, and their specific knowledge of the Brown program.
and its standards. We tend to work with cooperating teachers we have recruited for a sustained period of time, but we are always looking for and adding new mentors and schools to our team. We ask them to communicate regularly with clinical supervisors regarding the progress or glitches teacher candidates experience in the practice-based standards.

Practicum and student teaching experiences are supervised by the clinical professors of the various disciplines, who also teach weekly seminars, that help students collectively reflect and connect their daily experiences to pedagogical learning. Clinical faculty rely on each other and on cooperating teachers to corroborate their assessments of the candidates’ teaching, as well as students’ self-assessments on their progress in the BPBS. A three-way conference between teacher candidate, supervisor, and mentor towards the end of the teaching experience confirms areas of growth and sets goals for further attention.

At the end of each teaching semester, students produce a digital portfolio demonstrating their continued growth and understanding of each of the seven standards. The digital portfolios contain a self-selection of curriculum units, lesson plans, student work, academic coursework, and reflective exercises that students have completed, described in the narrative of their cumulative teaching and learning experiences. By the end of the TE program, successful teacher candidates see themselves as “works in progress” and have acquired the meta-awareness of what constitutes quality teaching to continue to guide their learning as teachers.

Assessing Students Using Practice-Based Standards. Given this description of the Brown TE program, it should be clear how the central tenets of the program support an assessment-driven, “personal” coaching approach to the preparation of new teachers within the context of a cohort support network. The proverbial village is co-constructed to teach the teacher. It is, I believe, the unusual juxtaposition of a standards-based, assessment-driven, personal coaching approach that underlies the accomplished, reflective, meta-cognitive, knowledgeable practitioner we manage to congratulate repeatedly on the graduation stage each May.

Challenges. Would that it were this easy all the time! Most of the time—with a great deal of work, interpersonal coaching and advising, and successful communication—the vast majority of our
candidates fall somewhere between the qualitatively assessed and agreed upon “closely approaching” to “exceeding standards” continuum of Meeting Practice-Based Standards. It is in the case of the few “beginning to approach standards” towards the end of their student teaching experiences, that the dilemma of defining “how good is good enough?” surfaces.

As a nation and a profession, we are entering new territory as credentialing programs are being held to particular, strict outcomes within university or college contexts that have traditionally offered multiple avenues to an earned degree. Earning a teaching degree is being regarded as scrupulously as other degrees conferring a professional status and eligibility for a license to practice, as in the fields of medicine, law, psychology, and pharmacology. Since the ability to teach well is more than mastering a body of knowledge, it is extremely difficult to define and quantify. Add to that hurdle the widely-held opinion of nonteaching professionals that the ability to teach is an automatic byproduct of a good general education and we are faced with the dilemma of how to specify what an input-outcome system for teacher education would look like in a context of national regulation with strong support for alternative, deregulated routes into the profession. As regulations seek to define what the higher education system of preservice teacher education should look like with greater specificity, other entities are being encouraged to offer alternatives for educated, talented people just out of college or changing career directions in midlife to enter the teaching corps with less red tape. National and state-level policy and legislation are in the dual horns of the dilemma that surrounds knowledge and beliefs about what it takes to prepare highly qualified teachers.

State Standards for Program Approval

In order to understand the Brown TE program within the state context regarding standards-driven teacher education and credentialing, I will explain Rhode Island’s newly implemented standards-based approach to approving credentialing programs for teachers. Many of the same issues I have described in how Brown’s TE program grapples with standards for assessing teacher quality reverberate at the state level since the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) shifted to a standards-based system to accredit teacher credentialing programs.
To accomplish this, RIDE developed eleven standards for beginning teachers (RIBTS) that are detailed in fifty-six indicators attached to the eleven beginning-teacher standards and, in addition, it created four standards for credentialing teacher preparation programs. The context of state mandated standards governing the preparation of teachers is presented below.

**Accrediting Teacher Preparation In Rhode Island**

In the late 1990s, the Rhode Island Department of Education embarked on designing a new, standards-based accreditation process for teacher education programs. Over the past several years, the Rhode Island Standards for Teacher Preparation Program Approval have been introduced, refined, and as of 2005, applied to all teacher education certification programs in the state. This was not an easy or painless process. Most of the state’s certification programs received conditional approval, which required Accreditation Committee recommendations to be implemented within a prescribed time frame, usually within one year. These ranged from minor modifications—such as refining a particular reporting system—to more substantive changes within not only the teacher education programs but also within the wider university community. Several individual certification programs in the state were denied accreditation and required to disband or wholly reconstitute themselves according to the Accreditation Committee’s recommendations.

Rhode Island accredits all teacher preparation programs according to four broad standards:

**Standard One:**
Prospective educators recommended for licensure by Rhode Island Educator Certification Programs are proficient in the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards (RIBTS).

**Standard Two:**
Prospective educators in Rhode Island Educator Certification Programs have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, develop the dispositions, and practice the skills that are encompassed in the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards and the opportunity to develop their learning in a
variety of high quality field sites with professionals who model effective educational practice, assume responsibility for educating prospective colleagues, and are committed to ongoing professional development.

Standard Three:
Rhode Island Educator Certification Programs and their institutions demonstrate a commitment to affirming the diversity of our state, our communities, and our public schools by preparing educators who can work effectively with students, families, community members, and colleagues from diverse backgrounds to create learning communities in which all students succeed.

Standard Four:
Rhode Island Educator Certification Programs:
• have adequate resources to ensure a faculty that is engaged in scholarship,
• demonstrate exceptional expertise in its teaching fields,
• are actively involved in PK-12 schools,
• contain structures that ensure coherence within and across programs, and
• specify systematic processes of evaluation to ensure program improvement.

These standards are further articulated through process and performance indicators that need to be supported by evidence to show that a TE program is meeting the standard. For example,

Standard One specifies the assessment and accountability system that TE programs need to adopt;
Standard Two specifies, in great detail, the kinds of knowledge and experiences required to prepare highly qualified teachers;
Standard Three specifies that diversity is a subject to be encountered throughout the coursework and classroom experiences leading teacher candidates to not only appreciate, but accommodate to the diversity of the students and communities in the state; and
Standard Four defines the inter-relationship of teacher education programs/universities and schools/districts in taking responsibility for children’s learning.

In other words, the State Department of Education requires teacher preparation programs to ensure that their graduates meet practice-based teaching standards, that they are provided with coursework and practical experiences that embody these standards, that they embrace diversity as an institution and provide graduates with diversity training, and finally, that they collaborate with local schools and districts to improve K-12 student achievement.

We find little to disagree with here in terms of the desired components of a teacher education program. But the newly defined accreditation system, like the accountability requirements of NCLB, which the state also enforces, is tantamount to a mandate for school reform that the state defines for all participants in the PK-12 education process. In defining the responsibility of TE programs to find and/or create ideal training-ground classrooms for their teacher candidates while pressing for a contextual diversity of learning and teaching experiences that include high standards in the use of technology for each candidate, the state is effectively requiring universities to contribute, in quite specific ways, to solving the educational disparities that exist in public schooling all across the country—as an unfunded mandate. This is an ambitious agenda which sits uneasily in university administrations and teacher education programs that have generally enjoyed academic freedom to educate their students as they see best, without much interference from the state.

In Rhode Island, the problems with this state-imposed responsibility to improve PK-12 education systemically, although fundamentally different, are felt by large public universities and small private ones alike. The ripples of the effects of the long arm of this tiny state into a university’s policies and practices regarding even more than teacher education courses and practice-teaching experiences are disquieting when not outright alarming. If implemented as designed, the state can require universities to offer arts and science courses that demonstrate compatibility with K-12 curriculum standards in specific subject areas; redefine the responsibilities of faculty in the university to include direct support in PK-12 schools; allocate resources to support
the state’s emphasis on diversity in admissions, hiring practices, and discourse within the university; and promote an aggressive technology agenda.

If we look at the Brown context, in particular, we see the state PK-12 educational bureaucracy requiring a private, Ivy League, liberal arts institution to comply with its requirements well beyond the confines of the small scale Teacher Education program. In a university that is not invested in professional degrees, as a matter of principle, the Teacher Education Program is anomalous. If we create more problems than we’re “worth,” in terms of collateral changes required of the wider university community, we have little hope of garnering the financial support we need to provide excellent teacher preparation experiences for a diverse group of candidates. What we need to survive and excel as a preservice teacher education program is a flexibility that we have so far negotiated with both the state and university administration because of our small size and unique position within the college. As federal guidelines for teacher preparation emerge within the current climate of strict accountability, which is to be outcome-determined and quantitatively measured, the room for flexibility to adapt to the unique contexts of the universities that prepare teachers is threatened. The more specifically the preparation of future teachers gets encoded in national legislation that, then, falls to the states to enforce, the less likely unusual programs like Brown’s or those in institutions similar to ours will survive, given they cannot easily leverage universitywide policies and resources in support of teacher education.

The irony of this situation—that small, personalized programs may find it difficult to meet state-level program accreditation standards—surfaces when we consider that alternative routes to teacher certification are being developed in every state with federal encouragement. Alternative routes will allow individuals to petition that their unique paths of experience and education can earn them a teaching credential. They will also allow various private interest groups to establish pathways leading to a teaching credential, skirting the requirements imposed upon universities, their credentialing programs, and a matriculated student in a state-accredited teacher education program. Many of the private interest groups, whether entrepreneurial such as Teach for America or supported by business interests as are the growing number of large city Teaching Fellows programs, are designed
to attract college graduates with liberal arts degrees with an “easy”
entree to a teaching credential by combining minimal coursework with
immersion into a challenging teaching situation in a hard-to-staff school.
An analysis of these alternatives and their ability to train and maintain
a talented teaching pool is the topic of another article, but my overall
assessment is that they do not serve either aspiring teachers or needy
school districts and their students well. The irony resides in the fact
that these fast-track programs are allowed to skirt the scrutiny that an
accredited teacher education program must undergo; and the programs
that are most likely to deviate from the regulations—thus risking losing
either their credentialing status or their university support—are those
that offer small, ancillary programs within a college or university that
is focused on providing a quality liberal arts education to its
academically talented students. As a case in point, if the success of a
teacher education program is to be measured in terms of how graduates
affect the learning of their charges in PK-12 classrooms, teacher
education programs will need to engage in extensive data collection
and analysis.12 The increased burden on small, relatively unsupported,
nonresearch-oriented teacher education faculty and programs that reside
in small liberal arts institutions might very well crush them.

Conclusion

Through this presentation of Brown’s implementation of a
practice-based/standards-based TE program within the context of a state
mandated standards-based program accreditation process, we have
presented the benefits and dilemmas that a rigorous implementation
of standards-based teacher education can produce. Important learnings
have emerged for us, confirming our belief that a small, personalized,
iclinically-based program prepares excellent novice teachers. At Brown
we have benefited from state-sanctioned flexibility in demonstrating
how our candidates meet standards required for licensure—including
the flexibility to define our own practice-based standards for beginning
teachers, which reflects our philosophy of a good PK-12 education.

No one template of requirements will suit the variety of
institutions that exist to train new teachers. Teacher education programs
need to be able to identify their philosophies of what constitutes quality
teaching and create experiences that engender them. Flexibility also
ensures continual assessment and revision of program elements to meet the new challenges that surely will be many in the years to come. Federal and state policies governing the preparation of teachers need to account for the varieties of university contexts that support teacher preparation programs and remain flexible in their accountability demands. How far they can “force” a university’s compliance has not been tested yet, but uniform mandates from the government upon institutions of higher learning would undoubtedly create a hornet’s nest of problems.

Additionally, the demands for documentation that may be required to support the accountability mandates are costly in terms of time, personnel, and funds. They are particularly onerous to small faculties that already manage multiple roles in the preparation of teachers—as is the case at Brown. We don’t wish to see the systems-management aspect of standards-based teacher preparation overwhelm and undermine the personalized work of the faculty with their students, which we are convinced is needed to prepare highly qualified teachers.

Finally, the deregulation of avenues leading to licensure needs the same scrutiny that a careful articulation and assessment of standards for accredited teacher preparation require. It is illogical to require state approved university-based TE programs to fit a standards mold, with all the indicators specified and the documentation necessary to demonstrate meeting them, and at the same time allow alternate routes to certification the extreme flexibility to create their own rationale and process for credentialing educators. What is to prevent a candidate who does not meet standards in a state-accredited program from entering an alternative route program to avoid intense scrutiny? We need ways for career changers to enter the teaching profession without repeating years in college to accumulate required courses, but a six-week introduction to the “essentials” of teaching before being placed in a challenging classroom that even the most seasoned teacher would struggle in is not likely to produce a new generation of highly qualified teachers who will stem the tide of teacher shortages. Without serious mentoring programs, that so far few states or school districts have created because of the funding required to support them, fast-track, entrepreneurial teacher preparation programs have little hope of meeting high standards for preparing beginning teachers. The large scale exodus from teaching within the first three years that is associated with programs like Teach for America, while explained away in the intentions
of its mission, is also a result of burn-out experienced by poorly prepared idealists who experience failure day after day in their classrooms.

Fundamentally, teaching quality is a result of what prepared professionals know, value, and do in the classroom to support students’ learning. Relying on performance-based standards to determine a teacher’s quality is complicated. We need to find reliable ways to document evidence of meeting standards in a teacher’s practice, and we need to determine how good is good enough to enter the profession as a first year teacher. These qualitative assessments are more difficult to render in a strict system of accountability, but that should not prevent us from searching for answers that reflect the complex activity that is teaching itself. Relying on teacher or student test scores or the number of courses taken in a discipline to determine quality teaching avoids asking and answering the questions that will permit us to prepare well-qualified teachers. In an accountability climate, turning to a standardized, measurable criteria to demonstrate that the mark has been met is desirable for ease of implementation, but in the case of determining what quality teaching looks like in practice, single scores fail to tell us much of anything about a teacher’s craft.

Determining quality in a teaching practice comes from being close to the source—the act of teaching, not from mandates. We need to understand more about the preservice preparation experiences that produce quality teachers. Critical policies that will shape the future of teacher preparation should rely on research that investigates quality outcomes in terms of teaching practice and the conditions that promote them. They need to encompass preservice experiences as well as induction into the profession in the first three to five years of a teacher’s career. This means investigating ways in which the state, school districts, higher education programs, and non-profit teacher preparation enterprises can jointly assume responsibility for seeing teachers through their preparation experiences. Backwards engineering to establish the core of standards, along with flexibility in demonstrating how they are being met within the various contexts of higher education institutions and professional pathways, should guide the legislation of excellence in teacher preparation.
References


Endnotes

1 See the following commentaries and reports to get a general idea of the issues surrounding these curriculum wars and the passionate ideologies that fuel them: K. Anderson, “The Reading Wars: Understanding The Debate Over How Best To Teach Children To Read,” *LA Times*, June 18, 2000, and the National Right To Read Foundation; D. Klein et al., *The State of State Math Standards 2005*, Thomas Fordham Institute, 2005.

2 A full articulation of all seven BPBS is in the Appendix.

3 In reality, this criteria is difficult to guarantee in all cases given the particular contexts of schools, particularly the urban schools we work with. We teach teacher candidates constructivist methods of teaching, and not all school contexts support this kind of instruction, particularly many urban secondary schools. Additionally, it is fair to say that we, as faculty, see a more seamless integration of university coursework and classroom practice than our students do while in the program. A recent graduate characterized his MAT experience for new applicants to the program like this, “If any teacher education program can prepare you...
for your first year of teaching—which they can’t—this [Brown] program comes as close as you can get.”

4 The plan for Brown’s future development continues its undergraduate tradition while expanding graduate studies and promoting interdisciplinary centers of research excellence.

5 There are many similarities between the elementary and secondary programs, but an important distinction is that the secondary candidates have an academic semester, in which they take content courses in their subject area of certification and do not teach in a school, while the elementary program has a teaching component embedded in all three semesters. Content area subject matter is a prerequisite to entering the MAT program in elementary education.

6 I am basing this value judgment on the number of graduates who are hired and have choices among desirable job offerings, the career trajectories of many graduates (many have won national awards, have created their own schools, and are actively involved in faculty-driven charter schools across the county), and the first year references and comments from principals who have hired Brown TE graduates.

7 All of the villagers become both teachers and learners in our best experiences, but that is another article.

8 RIBTS (standards and indicators for beginning teachers) as well as Standards for Program Approval are posted on the RIDE website at http://www.ridoe.net

9 All of the denied programs have petitioned the state and have been allowed to continue credentialing new teachers pending major modifications in program design that will be applied to all newly matriculated students.

10 Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards (RIBTS), have been aligned with the Brown Practice-Based Standards (BPBS), which predated RIBTS and are regularly updated to incorporate new additions to teacher quality indices. The state of Rhode Island has approved the Brown Practice-Based Standards, in their articulation, as equivalent to RIBTS.

11 Brown is an original member of CETE (Consortium of Excellence in Teacher Education) which was created in the 1980s to bring together teacher education programs available in small, elite liberal arts colleges that did not, as a rule, have a large scale commitment to the field of education. (Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania are exceptions among the members since they both have a well established graduate school of education, but all other members of CETE rely on a relatively small education faculty to educate liberal arts undergraduates or a small number of masters candidates who seek a credential to teach.)
A case in point: The state of Washington mandates that candidates for teacher certification demonstrate “positive impact on student learning.” The term “positive impact” begs for definition and too easily leads towards a simplistic pre-test/post-test criteria. But in the short time that a student teacher is in full charge of a classroom of learners, how can any impact be reliably attributed to an individual teacher candidate? A more sensitive alternative to demonstrating positive impact on student learning would be to keep copious samples of classroom work and documents of student participation, with and without the student teacher’s involvement, and assess the differences between the conditions, if any, in a systematic way. This assessment, while more authentic than a comparison of test scores, would overwhelm both large and small TE programs by the sheer volume of data that would need to be collected and assessed to determine a candidate’s eligibility for licensure.

Part of the appeal that Teach for America engenders among new college graduates is the steep learning curve it offers to talented, idealistic young people so that they can teach for a few years and “save needy children” in classrooms before moving on to their more permanent professions.

Lack of adequate support and preparation for challenging situations is most often cited as the reason teachers leave the profession within the first few years of practice. But there are other factors leading to early exits from the teaching profession. The more we view the preparation of teachers in terms of rigorous professional standards, the more likely preservice teacher preparation programs are going to ready their graduates to get the many jobs that will need filling. But, will they stay in teaching if the conditions in schools are so regulated by current accountability mandates that they feel little professional autonomy to create a learning environment that can meet their students’ needs? In an accountability climate that is driving teaching and learning to be measured by multiple and frequent tests that meet scientifically defined reliability and validity criteria, teachers are finding less room to make professional judgments about curriculum content and instructional strategies with the result that they end up feeling that they are incapable of making a difference in their students’ achievement. Will highly qualified teachers feel as effective as they could be in classrooms that are becoming increasingly controlled by district, state, and federal mandates?
Appendix

Brown Practice-Based Standards*

STANDARD ONE: ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

A. Relationship with Students

In what ways does the student teacher:

• create a safe and secure learning environment for students?
• encourage learners to become independent, responsible citizens in the classroom who demonstrate self discipline while carrying out assigned tasks?
• organize resources, materials, and the physical space allocated and organized to support active engagement of students?
• discern and address stereotypical references to gender, race, class, age, culture, disability, or sexual orientation?
• exhibit a consciousness of classroom community dynamics and climate?

B. Expectations of Students

In what ways does the student teacher:

• establish and maintain an orderly and cooperative classroom?
• enforce, fairly and consistently, classroom rules and deadlines?
• demand high expectations for all students? Are students expected to take responsibility for their own learning?
• create an active learning environment characterized by mutual respect and intellectual risk-taking?

C. Relationships with Colleagues and the School Community

In what ways does the student teacher:

• fulfill classroom and school responsibilities?
• work with fellow teachers?
• interact professionally, fairly, and equitably with students, colleagues, parents, and others?
• work collaboratively with agencies in the larger community (when necessary and appropriate)?
• follow school policy and procedures, respecting the boundaries of his/her professional responsibilities when working with students, colleagues, and families?

* Indicators are phrased to reflect the elementary classroom. Minor modifications appear in the secondary BPBSs.
follow school policy and procedures, respecting the boundaries of his/her professional responsibilities when working with students, colleagues, and families?
• make use of codes of professional conduct adopted by his/her professional organizations?
• understand local, state, and federal laws and regulations related to students’ rights and teacher responsibilities?

Teachers maintain professional standards guided by social, legal, and ethical principles. (RIBTS #11)

Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation. (RIBTS #6)

Teachers foster collaborative relationships with colleagues, families, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning. (RIBTS #7)

Meeting Standard One at the End of Summer

The teacher candidate manages to establish a routine which students understand and respect. Activities reflect careful thought, and take into account differences in students’ cultural background, home language, developmental levels, and learning styles. The teacher candidate is learning to create situations in which students construct knowledge. The teacher candidate exhibits respect and consideration toward colleagues, particularly in team situations; supports colleagues’ work; and contributes an equal share to team efforts. The teacher candidate encourages and elicits interaction with parents and community and makes him/herself available to those constituencies when and where appropriate. (S)he clearly demonstrates leadership in the classroom, guiding and directing activities and interaction in ways that contribute to a positive and safe learning environment. The standard is met if the student teacher consistently models appropriate decorum and exercises control without intimidation or domination, promoting a genuine democratically-based classroom towards the end of the clinical experience.
Meeting Standard One at the End of Fall Practicum and Seminar:

The teacher candidate manages to maintain the routine of the host classroom, which students understand and respect. Carrying out of activities reflects careful thought, and takes into account differences in students’ cultural background, home language, developmental levels, and learning styles. The teacher candidate is continuing to learn to create situations in which students construct knowledge. The teacher candidate exhibits respect and consideration toward colleagues, particularly in team situations; supports colleagues’ work; and contributes an equal share to team efforts. The teacher candidate encourages and elicits interaction with parents and community and makes him/herself available to those constituencies when and where appropriate. (S)he clearly demonstrates leadership in the classroom, guiding and directing activities and interaction in ways that contribute to a positive and safe learning environment. The standard is met if the student teacher consistently models appropriate decorum and exercises control without intimidation or domination, promoting a genuine democratically-based classroom throughout the clinical experience.

Meeting Standard One:

The teacher candidate can establish and maintain a classroom atmosphere that students understand and respect and organizes them for instruction. Carrying out of classroom activities reflects careful thought, and takes into account differences in students’ cultural background, home language, developmental levels, and learning styles. The teacher candidate is adept at creating situations in which students construct knowledge. The teacher candidate exhibits respect and consideration toward colleagues, particularly in team situations; supports colleagues’ work; and contributes an equal share to team efforts. The teacher candidate encourages and elicits interaction with parents and community and makes him/herself available to those constituencies when and where appropriate. (S)he clearly demonstrates leadership in the classroom, guiding and directing activities and interaction in ways that contribute to a positive and safe learning environment. The standard is met if the student teacher consistently models appropriate decorum and exercises control without intimidation or domination, promoting a genuine democratically-based classroom in which high expectations for student engagement and learning are consistently demonstrated.
STANDARD TWO: STUDENT AS LEARNER

In what ways does the student teacher:

• seek information about the learner’s background and culture?
• seek information about the learner’s life experiences, achievements, and interests?
• seek information about and observe the learner’s strengths and weaknesses, developmental levels, and learning styles?
• seek information about and observe the learner’s patterns of language use?
• seek information about and observe the learner’s interests and talents?
• seek information about and observe the learner’s organizational skills?
• use efficient and effective ways to document student characteristics and progress?
• listen carefully and respectfully to students?
• check in with students about inferences and assumptions s/he makes about them?
• develop an understanding and awareness of students as individuals without overgeneralizing or stereotyping?
• help learners develop conceptual understanding?
• challenge learners to develop higher level cognitive skills?

(RIBTS Standards: 2.4, 2.6, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 8.4, 9.3, & 10.1)

Meeting Standard Two at the End of SummerPrep:

The teacher candidate demonstrates an awareness of, and concern for, the individual learners in his/her classroom. S/he begins to understand the variables of diverse backgrounds, strengths, and developmental stages and how they create a diverse group of learners. S/he works hard to “understand their understandings” and uses this knowledge to further individual student learning. S/he holds high expectations for all learners and helps them accomplish the SummerPrep curriculum by focusing on students’ developing thinking skills and conceptual understanding in a variety of areas.

Meeting Standard Two at the End of Fall Practicum and Seminar:

The teacher candidate demonstrates an awareness of, and concern for, the diverse backgrounds, strengths, and needs of learners in his/her
classroom. Focusing on individual learners, the teacher candidate does his/her best to observe, document, and learn about his/her students. S/he works hard to “understand their understandings” and uses this knowledge to further individual student learning. S/he holds high expectations for all learners and helps them accomplish the curriculum standards of the host classroom by focusing on students’ developing thinking skills and conceptual understanding in a variety of areas.

Meeting Standard Two:

The teacher candidate demonstrates an awareness of, and concern for, the diverse backgrounds, strengths, and needs of learners in his/her classroom. Focusing on individual learners, the teacher candidate observes, documents, and learns about his/her students. S/he works hard to “understand their understandings” and uses this knowledge to further individual student learning. S/he holds high expectations for all learners and helps them accomplish the curriculum standards of the host classroom by focusing on students’ developing thinking skills and conceptual understanding in all areas of the curriculum. The teacher candidate demonstrates a heightened competency in all of these areas, particularly in those targeted during the self-assessment conference at the end of the fall semester.

STANDARD THREE: PLANNING

In what ways does the student teacher:

• convert ideas and materials into teachable lessons? Into larger units—or an entire course? Are there clearly linked patterns and themes?
• prepare focused, thorough, sequenced lesson plans? Does the lesson help students to see connections with previous material and their prior knowledge?
• prepare a variety of learning activities chosen in order to accommodate different backgrounds, levels of prior knowledge, and learning styles?
• make her plans clear to the students? Does the teacher use metalanguage to aid students in understanding the purpose of activities? Does the teacher relate individual lessons to the larger curriculum?
• use written plans? Are these usually an accurate guide to what actually happens in class?
• encourage learners to see, question, analyze, and interpret concepts from multiple perspectives?
• prepare for active engagement of students throughout the lesson?
• consciously determine how s/he will know if students are on task/on target with the lesson?
• prepare a variety of communication strategies (questioning, counter-examples, etc.) in his/her planning?
• incorporate technology, where appropriate, in his/her planning?
• design lessons to accommodate individual differences (developmental, language, cultural background, learning style, or disability)? Does the student teacher use resource personnel to help with this planning?
• design lesson plans that reflect an understanding of how students learn—how students construct knowledge, acquire skills, develop habits of mind, etc.?

Teachers use effective communication as the vehicle through which students explore, conjecture, discuss, and investigate new ideas. (RIBTS #8)

Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of learners and an understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning. (RIBTS #4)

Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop. (RIBTS #3)

Meeting Standard Three at the End of Summer Prep:

The teacher candidate’s lesson plans are carefully written and detailed, noting content and skills objectives linked to appropriate Standards for the content area, and describing materials, advance preparation, and step-by-step classroom procedures for activities in detail. The teacher candidate begins noting modifications for diverse or special learning needs where appropriate. Lessons exhibit clearly focused, sensible connections from one to the next and are designed to promote students’ active construction of knowledge—student as worker, not teacher as teller. The teacher candidate takes time to explain lesson objectives to students and, using a variety of strategies including demonstration and modeling, checks that students are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it.
Meeting Standard Three at the End of Fall Practicum and Semester Coursework:

The teacher candidate’s lesson plans are carefully written and detailed, noting content and skills objectives linked to appropriate Standards for the content area, and describing materials, advance preparation, and step-by-step classroom procedures for all activities. The teacher candidate begins making modifications for diverse or special learning needs where appropriate. Lessons exhibit clearly focused, sensible connections from one to the next and are designed to promote students’ active construction of knowledge—student as worker, not teacher as teller. This is well established in the candidate’s practice by the end of the Fall Practicum. The teacher candidate takes time to explain lesson objectives to students and, using a variety of strategies including demonstration and modeling, checks that students are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Meeting Standard Three:

The teacher candidate’s lesson plans are carefully written and detailed, noting content and skills objectives linked to appropriate Standards for the content area, and describing materials, advance preparation, and step-by-step classroom procedures for all activities. The teacher candidate begins with an assessment or activation of students’ prior knowledge and makes modifications for diverse or special learning needs where appropriate. Lessons exhibit a clear focus, with sensible connections from one to the next, and are designed to promote students’ active construction of knowledge—student as worker, not teacher as teller. The teacher candidate takes time to explain lesson objectives to students and, using a variety of strategies including demonstration and modeling, checks that students are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Standard Four: Classroom Practice

A. Teacher Presentations

In what ways does the student teacher:

• inform students of the purpose of the lesson?
• plan presentations that are structured with the diverse learning needs of the students in mind?
• demonstrate a good sense of which objectives are best accomplished using direct teacher presentations?
• use different modes of presentation (for example: oral, written, visual, tactile) and a variety of materials as integral parts of direct teacher presentations?
• build “comprehension checks” and evaluation criteria into lessons?
• demonstrate sensitivity to the pacing of the lesson, making sure all students are engaged and following?

B. Collaborative Activities
In what ways does the student teacher:
• create learning groups in which the students learn to work collaboratively and independently?
• emphasize oral and written communication through instructional use of discussion, listening, and responding to the ideas of others and group interaction?
• firmly structure a variety of group activities (e.g., role plays; simulations; debates; and collaborative, small group work) with adequate directions, clear goals, time limits, and criteria for evaluation clearly stated?
• provide all students with the materials and information they need to succeed at their tasks?
• preteach the group process skills necessary for students to complete the assignment successfully?
• hold each student responsible both as an individual and as a group member? How is that accomplished?
• have a good sense of which objectives are best accomplished using collaborative activities?

C. Questioning/Discussion
In what ways does the student teacher:
• use questions to determine if students understand and can perform the purpose of the lesson?
• use different types and levels of questions, depending on the lesson’s objectives?
• use questioning and nominating techniques, such as wait-time, probing, rephrasing, connecting responses to previous contributions, etc., effectively?
• use strategies that demonstrate awareness of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, gender preferences in student participation? How does the student teacher gauge the effectiveness of these strategies?
• include key questions and “script” an arc of questions in the lesson plan teacher?
• employ a variety of strategies (restating ideas, offering counter-examples, etc.) to engage students in discussion and learning?
• ask questions eliciting a variety of discourse modalities (e.g., summarizing, analyzing, synthesizing, comparing, etc.)?

D. Development of Student Skills

In what ways does the student teacher:
• design thoughtful, sequenced assignments that break complex undertakings into manageable steps?
• engage learners in generating knowledge, testing hypotheses, and exploring methods of inquiry and standards of evidence?
• use tasks that engage learners in exploration, discovery, and hands-on activities?
• instruct students how to read for understanding and enjoyment, how to use a variety of reading strategies to retrieve relevant information from texts, how to write more clearly and coherently?
• provide models or exemplars to guide student work?
• instruct students in developmentally appropriate concepts of numeracy? Are students instructed in mathematical problem-solving using a variety of techniques including manipulatives, mental math, estimation, and written communication of problem solving strategies and understandings? Are students instructed in basic computation as well as underlying mathematical concepts?
• instruct students in oral presentation and listening skills? Does the student teacher make criteria for excellence in these skills available to students?
• instruct in multiple forms (artistic, literary, historical, scientific, mathematical) of expression (orally, in writing, through reading, via visual modalities, manipulatives, and technology)?
• closely monitor skill attainment and provide students with timely feedback?
• encourage students to extend themselves beyond their range of comfort in carrying out a variety of classroom tasks and activities?
• use technology as a learning tool?
• design lessons which extend beyond factual recall and challenge students to develop higher level cognitive skills?
Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills. (RIBTS #5)

Meeting Standard Four at the End of Summer Prep:

The teacher candidate exhibits an emerging control over a variety of approaches to classroom pedagogy. In direct presentations, s/he demonstrates sensitivity to pacing, timing, amount and sequencing of material, and form of presentations, as well as inviting student contributions and interactions. The teacher candidate learns to apportion instructional time, reducing teacher talk and increasing student doing and discussion. Questioning strategies are thoughtful, aware of the need for a range and arc of questions which develop logically from simple to complex and help scaffold knowledge construction. Group work is used regularly and appropriately and students are coached on the purpose and strategies for collaboration. Work required of students reinforces basic skills (reading, writing, math, oral presentation, listening) and builds toward higher level cognitive demands in a variety of subject areas.

Meeting Standard Four at the End of Fall Practicum and Seminar:

The teacher candidate exhibits an increasing control over a variety of approaches to classroom pedagogy. In direct presentations, s/he demonstrates sensitivity to pacing, timing, amount and sequencing of material, and form of presentations, as well as inviting student contributions and interactions. The teacher candidate demonstrates the ability to apportion instructional time, reducing teacher-talk and increasing student doing and discussion. Questioning strategies are thoughtful, demonstrate an awareness of the need for a range and arc of questions from simple to complex and help scaffold knowledge construction. Group work is used regularly and appropriately and students are coached on the purpose and strategies for collaboration. Work required of students reinforces basic skills (reading, writing, math, oral presentation, listening) and builds toward higher level cognitive demands in a variety of subject areas.

Meeting Standard Four:

The teacher candidate exhibits control over a variety of approaches to classroom pedagogy. In direct presentations, s/he demonstrates sensitivity to pacing, timing, amount and sequencing of material, and...
form of presentations, as well as frequently, appropriately, and democratically inviting student contributions and interactions. The teacher candidate demonstrates the ability to apportion instructional time appropriately, reducing teacher talk and increasing student doing and discussion. Questioning strategies are thoughtful, aware of the need for a range and arc of questions, and help scaffold knowledge construction. Group work is used regularly and appropriately and students are coached on the purpose and strategies for collaboration. The teacher candidate monitors group work and sets outcomes for accountability purposes. Work required of students reinforces basic skills (reading, writing, math, oral presentation, listening) and builds toward higher level cognitive demands in subject areas.

**STANDARD FIVE: ASSESSMENT**

In what ways does the student teacher:
- exhibit a varied repertoire of evaluation methods? How does the student teacher decide which particular method of evaluation to choose? Are students included in the process?
- base his/her instruction on standards that are measurable via the assessment instruments employed?
- provide students with rubrics or task descriptions which clearly indicate successful and exemplary performance standards?
- use a variety of assessment measures as data that uncovers individual needs of students as well as drives subsequent instruction?
- employ evaluations which are not graded but are used for comprehension check and student feedback?
- use performance-based activities which teach as much as they assess? To what extent are such projects a part of the class’s ongoing work?
- use grades in the classroom? To what extent are they used as a motivator? To what extent are students involved in the process of developing criteria for excellence?
- encourage learners to evaluate their own work and use the results of self-assessment to establish individual goals for learning and improved performance?
- use information from assessments to reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching—and modify instruction accordingly?
- demonstrate awareness of and redress the potential cultural and linguistic biases embedded in assessment tools and practices?
Teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies to support the continuous development of the learner. (RIBTS #9)

Meeting Standard Five at the End of SummerPrep:

Proficiency in this standard at this phase of the program is minimal. Teacher candidates are expected to have acquired a vocabulary concerning assessment and to have tried a variety of strategies over the course of SummerPrep. They should set increased experience and proficiency in this standard as a major goal for future clinical experiences. To meet the standard at the end of SummerPrep, the student teacher has rudimentary knowledge of a variety of approaches to assessment and evaluation. Assessment is understood as integral to the instructional process and is conducted via a variety of informal methods—anecdotal records, reviewing of classwork, and observations of discussion. Teacher candidates begin to understand the importance of keeping records of these assessments but are not yet proficient at it. Assessments for lessons taught are designed as performances and exhibitions which allow students to demonstrate what they know in a variety of media. Students are given various opportunities to self-monitor progress, and their classroom work is often guided by displayed rubrics—known criteria developed by the teacher candidate with the class (or with the class’s knowledge). Teacher candidates begin to explore what they can notice about student achievement and growth over time by examining student work. They begin to get a feel for the range of capabilities and what one can expect of the grade being taught.

Meeting Standard Five at the End of Fall Practicum and Seminar:

Teacher candidates are expected to have acquired a vocabulary concerning assessment and to have tried a variety of strategies over the course of the fall semester and practicum. They should noticeably demonstrate increased experience and proficiency in this standard. At the end of the fall practicum, the student teacher has rudimentary knowledge and experience of a variety of approaches to assessment and evaluation—pre-assessments, during instruction, and post-instruction. Assessment is understood as integral to the instructional process and is conducted via a variety of informal methods (anecdotal records, reviewing of classwork, and observations of discussion) as well as more traditional pencil and paper methods. Teacher candidates begin to understand the importance of keeping records of these
assessments but are not yet proficient at it. Students are given various opportunities to self-monitor progress, and their classroom work is guided by displayed rubrics—known criteria developed by the teacher candidate with the class (or with the class’s knowledge). Teacher candidates determine what they can notice about student achievement and growth over time by examining student work. They understand the range of capabilities and what one can expect of the grade being taught.

**Meeting Standard Five:**

Teacher candidates are expected to have acquired a vocabulary concerning assessment and to have tried a variety of assessment strategies and kept records for each child. At the end of student teaching, the teacher candidate has general knowledge and experience of a variety of approaches to assessment and evaluation—pre-assessments, during instruction, and post-instruction—as well as protocols for examining student work with peers. Assessment is understood as integral to the instructional process and is conducted via a variety of informal methods (anecdotal records, reviewing of classwork, and observations of discussion) as well as more traditional pencil and paper or product methods. Teacher candidates understand the importance of keeping records of these assessments and have kept and analyzed assessment records for all students. Students are given various opportunities to self-monitor progress and their classroom work is guided by displayed rubrics—known criteria developed by the teacher candidate with the class (or with the class’s knowledge). Teacher candidates determine what they can notice about student achievement and growth over time by examining examples of student work. They understand the range of capabilities and what one can expect of the grade being taught.

**Standard Six: Professional Knowledge & Growth**

In what ways does the student teacher:

- reflect thoughtfully on his/her teaching experience? How, and from whom (colleagues, administrators, students, families), does s/he solicit feedback and accept criticism? How effectively is the reflection and/or criticism used in improving performance?
- use learning theory to inform his/her practice? Does s/he regularly apply new ideas presented in coursework, professional publications, and journals which discuss current trends and effective practices in education?
• make an effort to learn about and value the backgrounds and cultures of the students that may be different from his/her own?
• explore new instructional strategies? Is s/he willing to take risks in trying new teaching approaches? Is s/he open to critically appraising the results of teaching methods employed?
• develop basic technological literacy (use of computers, video and audio equipment, knowledge of the Web, the Internet, use of search engines) for professional purposes as well as classroom applications?
• take responsibility for his/her own professional growth by participating in workshops, courses, and other educational activities that support plans for continued development as a teacher?

Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking opportunities to learn and grow as professionals. (RIBTS #10)

Meeting Standard Six at the End of SummerPrep:

In face-to-face debriefings, journal writing, peer reflective practices, and formal self-analyses, the student teacher demonstrates positive acceptance of feedback and makes a thoughtful response to it. Growth in planning and implementation of curriculum and instruction demonstrates that the teacher candidate has internalized and is making use of instruction in MAT coursework and mentor and supervisor feedback. Beyond the classroom, the teacher candidate avails him/herself of professional publications, including web resources to improve his/her practice and to develop the habits necessary for continued professional growth.

Meeting Standard Six at the End of the Fall Practicum and Seminar:

In face-to-face debriefings, e-mail communication, journal writing, peer reflective practices, and formal self-analyses, the student teacher demonstrates positive acceptance of feedback and makes a thoughtful response to it. Growth in planning and implementation of curriculum and instruction demonstrates that the teacher candidate has internalized and is making use of feedback. Beyond the classroom, the teacher candidate avails him/herself of professional publications, including web resources to improve his/her practice, and develops the habits necessary for continued professional growth. The teacher candidate takes responsibility for sharing new learning with peers and with school-site colleagues.
Meeting Standard Six:

In face-to-face debriefings, e-mail communication, journal writing, peer reflective practices, and formal self-analyses, the student teacher demonstrates positive acceptance of feedback and makes a thoughtful response to it. Growth in planning and implementation of curriculum and instruction demonstrates that the teacher candidate has internalized and is making use of feedback. Beyond the classroom, the teacher candidate avails him/herself of professional publications, including web resources to improve his/her practice, and develops the habits necessary for continued professional growth. The teacher candidate takes responsibility for sharing new learning with peers and with school-site colleagues.

Standard Seven: Engagement with Elementary Subject Matter

In what ways does the student teacher:

- demonstrate understanding and enthusiasm for the elementary disciplines—literature, reading, writing, math, problem-solving, science, social studies, art, technology, health, physical education?
- understand how knowledge in each discipline is created, organized, and linked to others?
- use subject-knowledge to carefully select instructional materials and resources based on their comprehensiveness, accuracy, and usefulness?
- use precise and appropriate language to convey content accurately and understandable?
- demonstrate an awareness of the various disciplines as means of explanation and multiple representations of concepts (including analogies, metaphors, experiments, demonstrations, illustrations) that help students develop conceptual understanding?
- demonstrate an awareness of differing viewpoints, theories, and methods of inquiry in the disciplines and show evidence of that understanding when teaching concepts?
- design lesson plans which reflect a variety of academic, social, and cultural experiences?
- demonstrate a broad knowledge base which could be used to create interdisciplinary learning experiences?
- mediate the tension between content and skills demands in the subject areas?
- demonstrate an ability to present subject matter in culturally responsive ways, which assumes a knowledge of cultures and backgrounds present in the classroom?
Teachers create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the world in which we live. (RIBTS #1)

Teachers create learning experiences that reflect an understanding of central concepts, structures, and tools of inquiry of the disciplines they teach. (RIBTS #2)

Meeting Standard Seven at the End of SummerPrep:

The teacher candidate demonstrates a broad knowledge and initial mastery of the skills and knowledge bases central to the elementary disciplines. Interest in and energy for these disciplines are demonstrated through the finding of information and materials and creation of lessons which present students with challenging activities and projects; engage them in culturally responsive ways; and encourage them to solve problems, raise questions, and interact in ways that contribute to a positive learning environment.

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The Dance: Standardization and Small Liberal Arts Colleges

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While often not recognized, dancing is a form of communication as well as trust. When partners accept an invitation to dance, each agrees to a role and each trusts that the other both understands and agrees to carry out the role. For teacher education programs, particularly for liberal arts programs, communication with various partners as it relates to standardization takes on a different meaning, almost the reverse of dance. Unlike the trust and acceptance of roles of dance partners, these programs recognize the roles of standards, but their trust and understanding are quite different from larger universities.

Because of the very nature of liberal arts colleges, standardization when narrowly defined can be in opposition to or incongruent with these institutions’ intended outcomes of producing graduates who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Using ballroom dance as a metaphor, this research examines the following areas related to the impact of standards and the standardization process on liberal arts colleges: (a) standardization and its meaning; (b) quick, quick, slow: the standardization movement—ups and downs of standardization; (c) side steps: current status of standardization at liberal arts colleges—discussions, dialogues, and debates; (d) backward steps: benefits, costs, and limitations of standardization; and (e) the swing: alternative discussions to the standardization debate.

The Frame: Standardization and Its Meaning

The frame is the beginning of communication in ballroom dancing. It reveals the level of experience of the dancer, the understanding and accepting of the roles of the partners, and the preparation and/or readiness to begin the dance. In the standardization movement, the frame as a metaphor is instructive because discussions of standardization often do not begin with a proper frame (i.e., with a definition as a foundation and understanding of the roles of the various
entities such as states, accrediting agencies, and/or schools/programs of education).

Yet, ironically, when discussions of standardization begin, there is the assumption that there is an agreed upon meaning. The next thing that happens in these discussions is the tendency for researchers and practitioners alike to somehow attempt to decouple standardization from standards. With such assumptions and tendencies, there is bound to be miscommunication between research, policy, and practice. In dance, such miscommunication is what happens when partners step on each other’s feet.

What is the frame related to standardization (i.e., what is standardization)? Is it possible to have a shared meaning between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in order to avoid stepping on each other’s feet? Without a proper frame, the dance will inevitably be bumpy.

There are several assumptions that can be made about the definition of standardization. First, there is no shared meaning of standardization. Yet, policymakers and researchers (Bullough, Clark, & Patterson, 2003; Baines, Carpenter, & Stanley, 2000) write about standardization as though there is. Next, based on the basic dictionary definition of standardization, it is not possible to decouple standardization from standards. Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary defines standardization as follows: to compare with a standard; to bring into conformity with a standard. That being the case, it is important to define standards. Finally, in order to appropriately discuss the impact of standardization on programs of education (i.e., small liberal arts colleges), at a minimum we must begin with a definition, if for no other reason than to determine points of agreement or departure. In this paper, then, standardization is defined as a basis of comparison and measure of conformity (expected and/or prescribed competencies and outcomes) to a set of standards/outcomes, whether shared or agreed upon. For example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2006) states the following about their measurement of standards:

The standards measure an institution’s effectiveness according to the profession’s expectations for high quality teacher preparation as America enters the 21st century. The profession of
teaching has developed and articulated standards for the preparation of those who enter its ranks. (pp. 7-8)

However, what must be taken into account is that standardization is not new. Therefore, it is important to have an appropriate context for the standardization movement. In dance lingo, the standardization movement could be defined as quick, quick, slow because it appears to be a continuous moving cycle, sometimes quick, sometimes slow.

**Quick, Quick, Slow: The Standardization Movement—Ups and Downs of Standardization**

Although according to Bullough, Clark, and Patterson (2003) the standardization movement had its origin in the 1980s with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983), Kraft (2001) indicated that standardization in teacher education has had a long history. The standardization movement has been in existence at least as long as the 1920s when, in 1927, the American Association of Teachers Colleges was established to “develop standards and procedures for accrediting teacher education programs that guaranteed graduates of accredited programs would competently perform services for which they were specifically prepared” (Bullough et al., 2003, p. 3).

After that start, the next movement came about 25 years later, in 1954, with the establishment of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE’s primary mission was then, as it is now, the development of standards for assessing/evaluating the outcomes of teacher preparation programs. Each of these quick periods of urgency, which include the founding of various agencies to address standards of teacher education programs, has been followed by a slower or longer period in between.

Nearly twenty years after the founding of NCATE in 1954, the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* set the standardization movement into quick steps. As such, according to Kraft (2001),

The end result of that report was the unprecedented standards-setting movement in the late 1980s, first with content standards in the disciplines beginning with mathematics in 1989,
and then with student performance standards legislated by the federal government in two pieces of legislation, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. (p. 3)

The outcome of this report created near hysteria around the quality of schooling in America, as indicated by Bullough, Clark, and Patterson (2003), “Americans are demanding new levels of teacher accountability and supporting development and implementation of set and measurable standards of performance that enable comparison across programs, schools, and states” (p. 36).

The next quick step around the standardization movement occurred in 1994 with the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, comprised of a panel of public officials, business and community leaders, and educators. This panel was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The findings from this panel indicated that there was dire need for higher student achievement in K-12 and that in order for that to occur there would be a need to restructure the foundation of teacher education. Although accountability of teacher education programs began anew following the recommendations from this report, the standardization movement shifted into its quickest step with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

With this act, accountability has become confused with standards, creating one-size-fits-all models of teacher preparation. Hargreaves (2004), in a speech at the World Bank, best captures what has happened: “Excessive zeal for standards, however, has destroyed high-quality learning at many institutions.” This has particularly been the case for small liberal arts colleges.

**Side Steps: Current Status of Standardization at Liberal Arts Colleges—Discussions, Dialogues, and Debates**

The driving discussions, dialogues, and debates at liberal arts colleges about standardization are that there must be multiple pathways to reach the desired teacher preparation outcomes. As Bullough, Clark, and Patterson (2003) indicated, “What counts as evidence and how evidence is marshaled to make a case for quality have become crucial questions” (p. 39). This process of the homogenization and
standardization of teacher preparation, as Baines, Carpenter, and Stanley (2000) referred to it, is problematic for and unacceptable to liberal arts colleges.

As is currently being debated, standardization makes sweeping assumptions and sidesteps the important differences in teacher education programs. The first assumption, as previously stated, is that there is an agreed upon definition of standards. That assumption is followed by the notion that there is one best format for teacher preparation. Next, it is assumed that standardization has been an inclusive process (i.e., that all institutional types have had equal voice in setting and agreeing on the standards). Kraft (2001) captured more succinctly assumptions about standardization and teacher education programs:

First of all an assumption is made that all Schools of Education endorse the standards, understand what they mean, and how to go about incorporating them into their education programs. But there are multiple meanings surrounding some of the key phrases that are couched in the standards. (p.17)

These assumptions lead to important questions. How can the standardization movement capture a wider range of voices on best practices, including liberal arts colleges? How can a process be developed to define and understand multiple pathways of teacher preparation (i.e., better capturing best practices across institution types)? Given their expertise in educating students who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers, what lessons can other institutional types learn from liberal arts colleges?

These questions would, in fact, tend to make a strong case for the role of liberal arts colleges taking a more active lead in defining standards for teacher education preparation. Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) indicates that inquiry-based classroom teachers who are adept at problem-solving are also most effective at classroom management. Yet, liberal arts colleges have felt left out of the standards’ debate and have been in agreement with Baines, Carpenter, and Stanley’s (2000) assessment, “The assembly-line approach to teacher preparation will only yield teacher clones who act, think, and teach in prescribed ways. The complex, dynamic, and highly stressful work place of the public school would seem to invite a more sophisticated, more humane response” (p. 39).
What most often is sidestepped in the discussions and debates on standardization and liberal arts colleges is the important roles that liberal arts colleges play in teacher education (i.e., what other institution types can learn from liberal arts colleges). Allen Berger (2003), one of the few persons to write specifically about liberal arts education and teacher preparation, summarized lessons for other institutions to learn:

While institutions of this type [liberal arts colleges] typically provide an education that is personalized and mentored, they also tend to value demanding coursework, coherent curricula, and meaningful participation in a campus community. Most importantly, they tend to recognize that content knowledge and technical skills by themselves are inadequate, especially if undergraduate education is to prepare students to lead personally meaningful lives and engaged lives as citizens and leaders. To achieve these goals, education must also develop habits of analysis, criticism, curiosity, intercultural sensitivity, and civic participation. (p. 3)

What Berger’s assessment demonstrates is that liberal arts colleges suffer from their own silence. Rarely have scholars at liberal arts colleges researched or written about their value in teacher preparation that could benefit the wider community. Consequently, the importance of the role of these institutions in teacher preparation is woefully overlooked and not captured in the standards that define what new teachers need to know and be able to do.

Although Scannell (1999) indicated “there is no one best format for teacher education programs” (p. 12), liberal arts colleges have not had an active voice in the standardization process, of defining some of the important outcomes of best practices of teacher education preparation. Even though these institutions have been sidestepped in these discussions, dialogues, and debates, the costs to their institutions have been and continue to be high.

**Backward Steps: Benefits, Costs, and Limitations of Standardization**

No one would argue the value of standards for assessing the outcomes of teacher education programs. In any field, having standards
to define professionalism, provide a sense of direction, and provide priorities upon which to place energy, resources, and effort is not only highly important, but necessary (Kraft, 2001). However, everyone would agree that standardization, as it is currently construed, has severe limitations and enormous costs for institutions, especially liberal arts colleges. For liberal arts colleges, there are institutional costs, programmatic costs, and human costs.

**Institutional Costs**

The institutional cost for the standardization process on liberal arts colleges can be captured in at least two ways: (a) the impact on their institutional identity; and (b) the financial obligations.

**Institutional Identity.** Institutional identity refers to the purpose, history, and culture of an institution. Berger (2003) indicated that liberal arts colleges, by virtue of their primary focus on teaching, their size, and their residential nature, are the best places to prepare teachers. However, because standards are typically based on the majority and the institutions that are the largest preparers of teachers, standardization requires liberal arts colleges to subordinate the purpose, history, and culture of their institutions to a single path of teacher preparation. This process certainly has institutional costs because it requires liberal arts colleges to fit into a mold of all teacher education programs, thereby diluting the character and purpose of these institutions.

Rather than benefit from liberal arts education, then, the standardization process for teacher preparation often overlooks the purpose, history, and culture of these institutions. Although this is often the process, it flies in the face of the findings of Baines, Carpenter, and Stanley (2000) who stated, “The teacher must be a perennialist one minute and a social reconstructionist the next ...The teacher might have to be a reading diagnostician one period, and a Shakespearean scholar the next” (p. 39). This is an example of how liberal arts colleges prepare their students. Yet, liberal arts colleges incur a cost to their institutional identity in preparing teachers. Aside from the institutional cost of lost identity and absent history, institutions also incur tremendous financial costs in the standardization process.
Financial Obligations. The financial costs of standardization to an institution are extremely high. They are particularly high for small liberal arts colleges. In many states (i.e., the State of Louisiana), institutions have no choice but to pay the expenses associated with standardization. One means of determining whether an institution meets standards is an assessment by accreditation agencies such as NCATE. For a small liberal arts college, the cost of such accreditation can border on exorbitant. For example, the application and membership fees alone run into thousands of dollars. When those costs are assessed per capita, the financial costs of standardization for small colleges far exceed the costs for larger teacher education programs that produce more graduates. In other words, the return on investment for small liberal arts colleges to demonstrate their ability to meet standards is minimal given the contributions that these institutions have made programmatically for the production of knowledge to teacher education. Yet, interestingly, although liberal arts colleges have endured costs to their programs, rarely are they included in the decision-making regarding standards.

Programmatic Costs

While often not considered, standardization has had tremendous costs programmatically for liberal arts colleges. When standards confine teacher education programs to a particular model, they narrow the curriculum and learning outcomes that run counter to the purpose of these institutions. As such, standards can restrict the course and direction of the curriculum and knowledge. Interestingly, such restriction of knowledge of graduates is incongruent with necessary knowledge in technological and global societies.

As Hutton (1992) described, “Liberal arts colleges work to ensure that students gain a solid general foundation of knowledge as well as communication and analytical skills that can serve them in whatever career they choose” (p. 2). This very purpose of liberal arts colleges supports the belief of those who suggest that “all that is needed to be a teacher is a good liberal education” (Baines, Carpenter, & Stanley, 2000, citing Hutchins, p. 36).

Although there is no right “cookie cutter” formula for being a successful teacher according to researchers such as Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005), they agree that beginning teachers “need to have a command of critical ideas and skills and, equally important,
the capacity to reflect on, evaluate, and learn from their teaching so that it continually improves” (p. 5). Instead of a more restricted curriculum and knowledge that are particularly intrusive and costly to liberal arts colleges, the characteristics of these institutions are important in the preparation of teachers “because the characteristics of a liberal arts college experiences that are related to high-quality teacher preparation may be at least partially replicable in other settings” (Berger, 2003, p. 1). In addition to programmatic costs of standardization on liberal arts colleges, there have also been human costs.

**Human Costs**

Scannell (1999) indicated that higher education policies regarding faculty load and reward systems have an impact on the quality of teacher preparation programs. This is particularly intense for liberal arts colleges that are more often smaller in size and have fewer faculty. Yet, faculty at these institutions are assessed by the same standards as the largest producers of teachers. The work of faculty at liberal arts colleges is all the more demanding because, at these institutions, content courses are taught by faculty in the arts and sciences. Therefore, in addition to working with students with the development of their pedagogical knowledge and skills, faculty must work with faculty across campuses and also coordinate and monitor students’ growth and development in their pedagogical content knowledge.

Aside from the tremendous stretch on faculty productivity at liberal arts colleges to fit into a standardization mold, such single-minded models can hamper faculty creativity. Arey (2002), in *Education Week*, described a teacher who feels she is being held in a straightjacket of outcomes. Arey further stated that we have taken standards and the idea of rigorous education and turned them into a rigid formula. Although Arey was describing practicing classroom teachers, the same can be said for faculty, particularly at liberal arts colleges. As Berger (2003) indicated, “These institutions are most likely to produce teachers who value and recognize the importance of their dualistic role—as engineers of social reproduction and as agents of needed social change” (p. 5). No one would argue that it requires faculty who are creative, who constantly challenge themselves to present ideas in new and inventive ways, and who marry the boundaries between theory and
practice to prepare teachers who are adept at working with children from multiple backgrounds. This would be in keeping with the recommendations of Shulman (2002) who, in discussing the importance of marrying theory and practice, suggested, “the development of an identity that integrates one’s capacities and dispositions to create a more generalized orientation to practice” (p. 38). Yet standardization, by design, stifles faculty creativity, which leads to the underutilization of human potential, which is a high cost for liberal arts colleges that generally already have so few faculty.

The Swing: Alternative Discussions to the Standardization Debate

Other institutions of higher education can learn important lessons from liberal arts colleges. That is, there are alternatives to the current discussions of standardization. First, there has to be a broader, more inclusive definition of standards. For example, if as defined in this paper, standardization is a basis of comparison and measure of conformity (expected and/or prescribed competencies and outcomes) to a set of standards/outcomes, whether shared or agreed upon, policymakers and researchers alike would agree that there has never been an agreement of any one best way to prepare a teacher, particularly teachers who are able to teach to diverse students. Even though researchers such as Ladson-Billings (1994) and Irvine (1990) have consistently discussed in their work the importance of teacher expectation and culturally relevant pedagogy, nowhere are these captured in the standards. Further, research has not captured what liberal arts colleges can add to their graduates’ knowledge and skills in this area that might advance the field.

Another step that is sorely missing from the current standardization process is the appropriate evaluative measures. That is, without an agreed upon best approach for preparing new teachers, it really is difficult to devise a training process for evaluators of teacher education programs. Scannell (1999) indicated, “There is no one best format for teacher education programs. Conversely, programs regarded to be outstanding vary in structural and conceptual formats” (p. 12). As such, it is difficult to advance the field if appropriate measures for the standards of preparing teachers are unclear or ill-defined. If
appropriate measures cannot be defined, then it is difficult to train evaluators. Consequently, it is understandable that all programs have been evaluated based on conformity regardless of their size and their contributions because evaluators are trained to look for the same things regardless of the institution type.

Finally, the question must be asked, “What, if any, value do standards have in advancing the field?” Put differently, are teacher education programs better off given the current state of standardization? Kraft (2001) responded in this way: “(a) a one size fits all mentality seems to exit concerning standards; and (b) standards often become ends in and of themselves, rather than the means to achieve the ends” (p. 17). Since, as indicated, standardization has existed since the 1920s, standards are not likely to go away.

However, in order to advance the field’s understanding and preparation of teachers, policymakers and researchers have to “swing” to a new beat. That is, if as Scannell (1999) indicated, “increasing standards will have an effect on teacher supply” (p. 13), then all teacher education programs need to address such a shortage. As such, the field has to include multiple institution types and voices in both the development and evaluation of standards of teacher education programs, because there are lessons from all institution types and multiple ways to prepare the necessary new teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no question that standardization has had an impact on all teacher education preparation programs, almost to the point of hysteria. As Baines, Carpenter, and Stanley (2000) indicated, “One problem with becoming fanatical about standards is that everything tends to get standardized. Standardization is for widgets, not human beings” (p. 6). What has not been understood is the impact of standardization on different programs. This research suggests, however, that there is tremendous cost to and on liberal arts colleges, which tend to be smaller and provide a more general foundation of knowledge and analytical thought (Hutton, 1992).

These findings are not suggesting the lack of importance of guidelines for preparing teachers who are effective in teaching all children. Rather, this research suggests that there are multiple pathways
to preparing teachers. Arey (2002) stated, “Effective teachers are creative problem-solvers, analytical thinkers, strong communicators, people capable of nurturing those same qualities in their students” (p. 33). These findings also are supported by Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2004) in their latest book on what new teachers need to know and be able to do.

Another outcome of this research suggests that the preparation process of liberal arts colleges has been greatly undervalued, underestimated, and under-researched. In the process, at a time when there is the greatest need for the preparation of larger numbers of teachers, the cost to liberal arts colleges has challenged these institutions to produce new teachers.

Finally, this research calls for a national study on liberal arts colleges and teacher preparation. As this research demonstrates, there is little research on teacher preparation at liberal arts colleges. Such a study will greatly address the gap in the literature and provide a better understanding of multiple pathways to teacher preparation. As Berger (2003) indicated, the liberal arts college “is the ideal place to prepare future teachers who will find meaning in their work, who will see their work as a piece of a larger communal endeavor, and who will have the habits and commitments to sustain them and keep them fresh over the long haul” (p. 12). However, without such a national study, such assumptions cannot be tested.

References


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