



# ON DECK

Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers



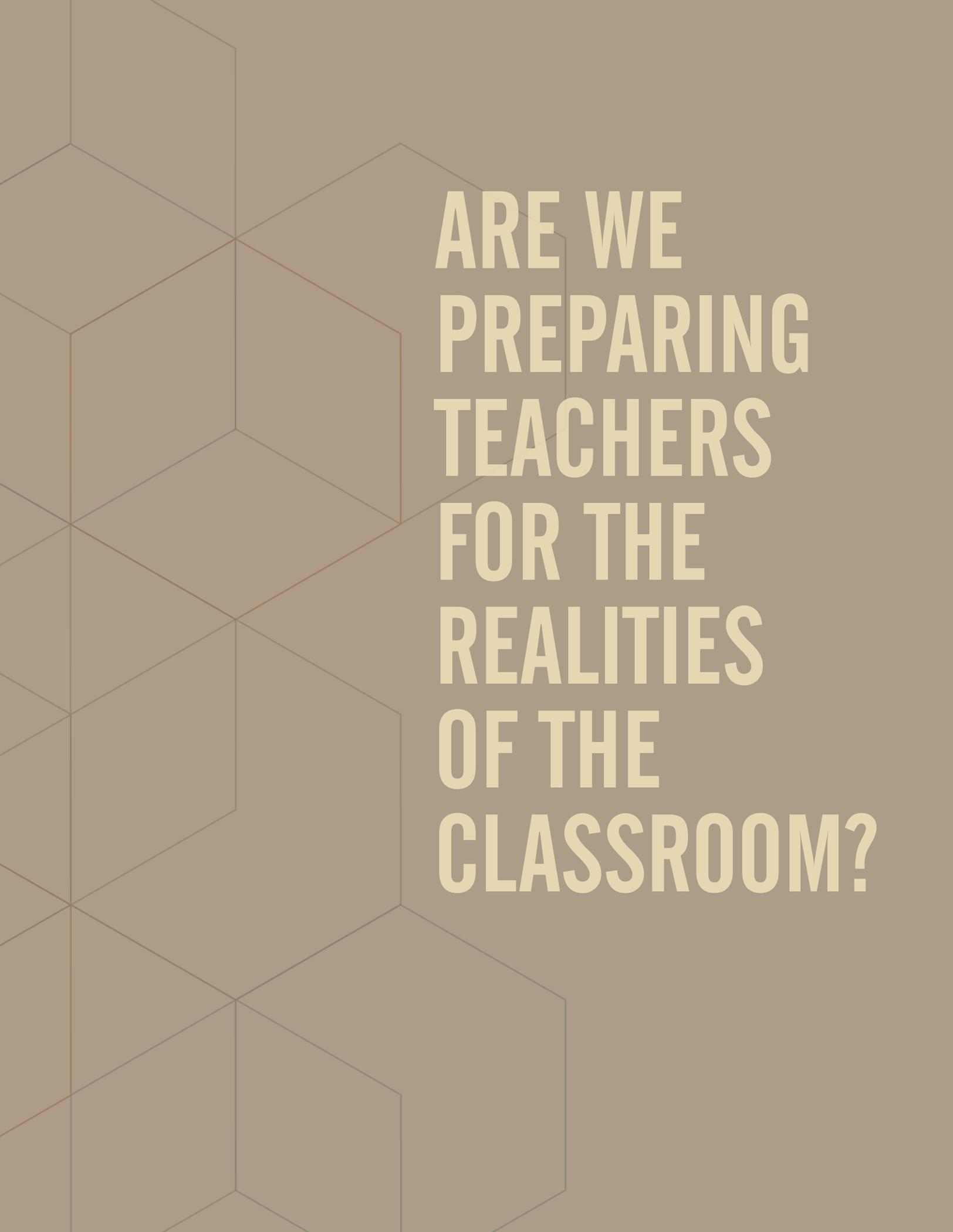
hope street group

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## Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers

Hope Street Group (HSG) National Teacher Fellows (NTFs) are fulltime classroom teachers who serve as local and national spokespersons, trained to explore their state's education policy efforts and engage their peers in solutions-based conversations. This year, our NTF cohort consisted of 18 teachers and instructional coaches representing 17 states. Together, they collected data the United States Department of Education (USDOE), the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), and state leaders can use to inform their policy decisions in order to improve teacher preparation for future educators.





**ARE WE  
PREPARING  
TEACHERS  
FOR THE  
REALITIES  
OF THE  
CLASSROOM?**

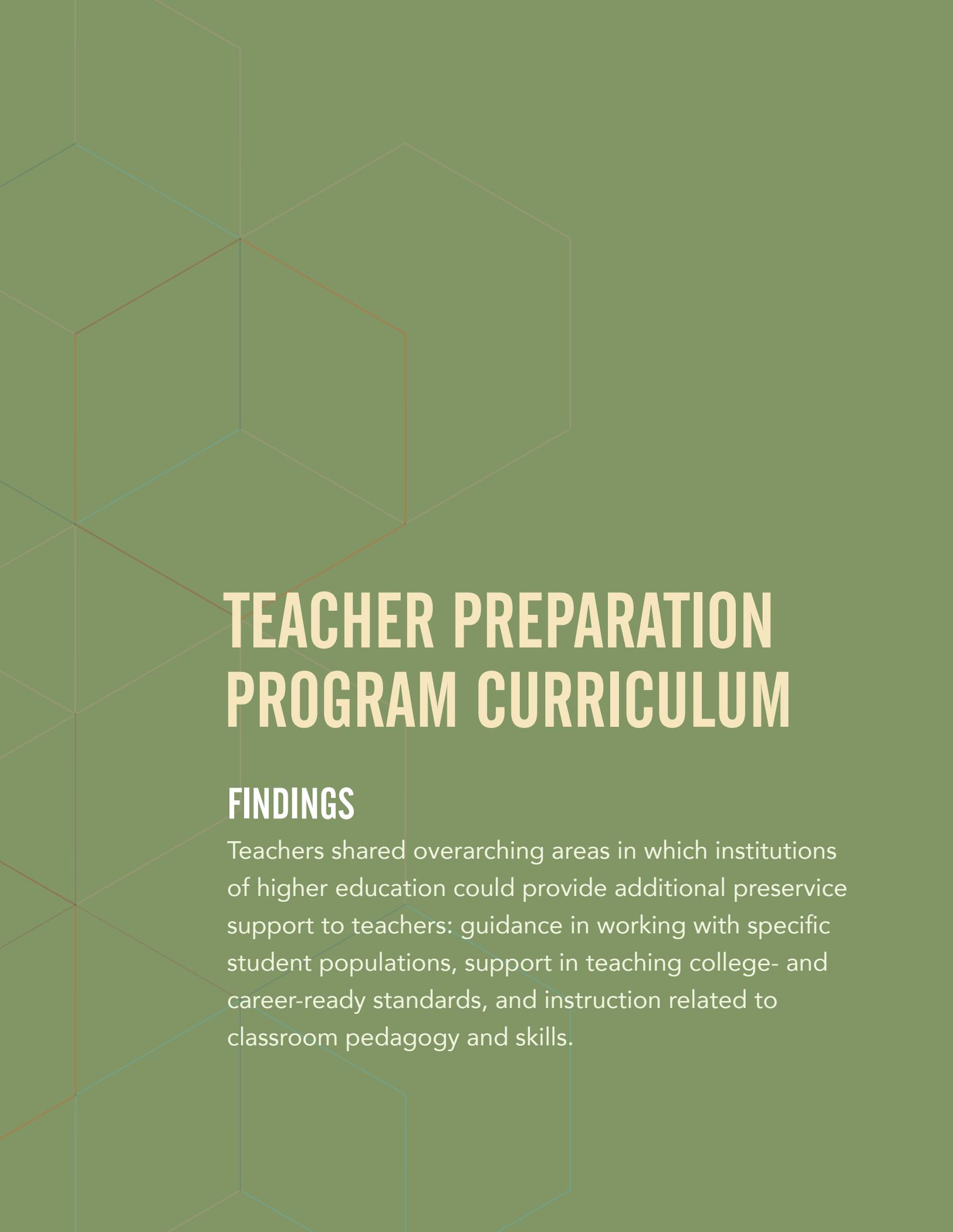
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hope Street Group (HSG) National Teacher Fellows (NTFs) serve as local and national spokespersons for teachers, trained to explore their state's education reform efforts and engage their peers in solutions-based conversations. This year, our NTF cohort consisted of 18 teachers and instructional coaches representing 17 states. Together, they collected data the United States Department of Education (USDOE) can use to inform its policy decisions regarding teacher preparation programs. This work is designed to inform the efforts of other national partners, such as the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), as well as state leaders in order to improve teacher preparation for future educators.

Engaging almost 2,000 American educators through combined in-person and virtual research over the course of six weeks in September and October of 2015, NTFs heard from teachers in urban, suburban and rural schools across the country. Focus group and survey participants included professionals with varied pathways to certification who reflected upon their teacher preparation experiences in terms of curriculum and potential evaluation measures. With the next generation of educators (and learners) in mind, current classroom teachers—ranging from one to 31 years of experience, across all grade levels and subjects—discussed how teacher preparation programs can build upon current offerings to graduate high-quality professionals poised to impact young people in their communities.

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The following is an overview of findings and recommendations, organized by topic area and intended audience for each recommendation. Because HSG collaborated with both USDOE and AACTE on the development of the research questions, some of the recommendations in this report are specific to action that could be taken by USDOE and some are specific to action that could be taken by AACTE and its members. HSG has identified which entity should take each recommendation into consideration.



# TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM CURRICULUM

## FINDINGS

Teachers shared overarching areas in which institutions of higher education could provide additional preservice support to teachers: guidance in working with specific student populations, support in teaching college- and career-ready standards, and instruction related to classroom pedagogy and skills.

## 1. SPECIFIC STUDENT POPULATIONS

**Over half of teachers reported that they did not receive any instruction in their preservice programs related to serving in areas of high-need/persistently low-achieving populations.**

When colleges did offer courses or experiences, they were typically in special education, social and cultural awareness, or student teaching and internships. These experiences are not enough. Teachers want additional support in meeting the needs of their diverse student populations and working with different cultures.

## 2. COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

**More teachers reported that they learned about new college- and career-ready standards through on-the-job experiences or in-service professional development rather than through their preservice program.**

However, standards are becoming an important part of teachers' classrooms, changing the instructional focus to cover material with more depth and less breadth and with a stronger emphasis on critical thinking and career skills. As a result, teachers shared that preservice training in this area would help the next generation of teachers enter the field better prepared to address the standards.

## 3. ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION

**When we asked teachers to share their suggestions for areas where they would like additional training, they highlighted:**



Classroom/behavior management



Hands-on experiences in classrooms



Courses on differentiated instruction



Content-based courses (i.e., reading, writing, math, science)



Child and adolescent development coursework

Teachers noted several potential improvements specifically related to the above preservice areas. Most teachers emphasized the value of providing earlier and more frequent opportunities for differing types of in-class and hands-on classroom experiences. Teachers also frequently emphasized the importance of support through mentors, coaches or veteran teachers; assistance in using different types of technology; and coursework specific to understanding the whole child (e.g., family engagement and home life, emotional/relational support).



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Adopt a Common Understanding of Preservice Curricula

Due to the variance in the types of classroom experiences and coursework offered to preservice teachers and given the real challenges of the profession articulated in this report—the rapid increase in service to high-need/persistently low-achieving populations, continued concern around classroom management, and a shift in focus on standards instruction—there is room for improvement in preservice curricula in order to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom. As such, teacher programs should develop and adopt common language regarding the core elements of teacher preparation programs.

To build this shared understanding, we recommend that AACTE continue to support that institutions of higher education review their preservice courses and consider modifying or revising curricula to reflect the current needs of American teachers. edTPA, a performance-based, portfolio assessment developed by the Stanford Center for Assessment Learning and Equity (SCALE), is a common measure for evaluation that aligns with the most important areas identified by teachers in this research including: differentiated instruction, basic work skills, communication and collaboration skills, child and adolescent development, diversity and multicultural awareness, and classroom management.

## 2. Promote Funding of Clinical Teaching Programs

Teachers emphasized the importance of hands-on classroom experiences, especially when serving high-need/persistently low-achieving populations. We recommend that USDOE acknowledge the costs associated with high-quality clinical teacher preparation and consider funding clinical teaching programs at institutions of higher education in collaboration with local high-needs school districts under the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program in Title II, Part A of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2015), a recommendation supported by AACTE and the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP).

# EVALUATING TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

## FINDINGS

Given future regulations from USDOE around evaluating preparation programs, we asked teachers what measurement criteria would be most important. The majority of teachers requested that evaluations examine teacher retention in their schools or in the teaching profession, specifically exploring why individuals stay in teaching or why they leave. Teachers recommended other criteria including: job placement, graduation rates from preservice programs, educator effectiveness, college preservice coursework, and in-class and hands-on teaching opportunities in preservice. They also shared that it would be helpful to incorporate feedback on their preservice experiences into evaluations of teacher preparation programs.

## RECOMMENDATION

### 1. Honor Teacher Retention and Job Placement in Accountability Systems

Based on teacher suggestions for evaluating teacher preparation programs, the needs of next-generation teachers, and pending legislation, we recommend that USDOE consider teacher retention and job placement as two important indicators that should be included as additional comments on proposed regulations for the teacher preparation accountability system under Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. We also recommend that State Education Agencies (SEAs) look to these recommended criteria as they create and refine their Institutional and Program Report Cards.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

If we intend to send more high-quality teachers into schools, the next generation of teachers needs to be trained with robust preservice curriculum that includes instruction on how to serve areas of high-need/persistently low-achieving populations, a rich understanding of college- and career-ready standards, and coursework that is directly connected to real classroom experience. Investments in—and evaluation of—such teacher preparation programs will best prepare individuals for the unique challenges they will face in the classroom as new, and hopefully lifelong, educators.

Teacher preparation programs play an integral part in what happens next in education, and their graduates are eager to contribute to that conversation. This research was conducted by current classroom teachers who led their peers in productive, professional dialogue in order to identify positive, solutions-focused recommendations for how educator pipelines might be improved. With the future of the profession in mind, they are now energized and are looking for opportunities to collaborate with state and national policymakers, teacher preparation program leaders, and their school districts to ensure that teacher voice aids in the refinement of preservice programs.



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Hope Street Group is a national organization that works to ensure every American will have access to tools and options leading to economic opportunity and prosperity.

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