

EdPrep Insight | Summer 2026

Making Candidate Readiness Visible

How Delaware Tech is building a shared path from instructional expectations to candidate readiness

Day One Readiness Should Not Be a Mystery

Day one readiness should not be discovered, or even fully measured, at the end of preparation.

If teacher candidates are expected to enter classrooms ready to support student learning, educator preparation programs need more than a final assessment. They need a clear picture of what readiness requires, where candidates will develop those practices, how teacher educators will support their growth, and what evidence will show candidates are moving toward proficient practice over time.

A final measure can tell a program something about candidate readiness. It cannot, by itself, create the conditions that help candidates become ready.

As states and programs strengthen pedagogical performance measures, this creates an important design challenge. Performance measures can determine whether candidates are able to apply pedagogical skills, support student learning, and demonstrate the practices expected of beginning teachers. But they are strongest when they are connected to the full preparation experience: coursework, clinical practice, coaching, feedback, progress monitoring, candidate support, and teacher educator development.

A strong performance measure is not separate from preparation. It should reflect how the program develops candidates.

That is the work Delaware Technical Community College has been advancing through its Candidate Readiness Framework and aligned Pedagogical Performance Measure system. Across recent work with EdPrep Partners, Delaware Tech faculty, clinical supervisors, and leaders have focused on a candidate-centered design question:

What should candidates be ready to attempt, practice, and demonstrate, and by when?

That question shifts the work from final measurement to preparation design. It asks programs to define readiness clearly, build a developmental path toward it, and use candidate evidence to support growth before candidates enter classrooms as teachers of record.

Delaware's Statewide Focus on Candidate Readiness

In Delaware, this work sits within a broader statewide effort to strengthen how educator preparation programs assess and support candidate pedagogical readiness.

House Bill 207 charged the Delaware Department of Education with engaging stakeholders to make recommendations on how educator preparation programs should assess the pedagogical skills of teacher candidates. That work led to a statewide Community of Practice and a shared set of Pedagogical Performance Measure (PPM) criteria focused on observable teaching behaviors, student learning, variation in candidate performance, alignment to the Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System, reliability, and connection to P-12 student outcomes.

In 2025–26, the Delaware Department of Education, in partnership with EdPrep Partners, reintroduced and expanded those criteria to provide clearer expectations for implementation. The initiative included program self-assessments, Learning Walks, technical assistance, and implementation planning designed to help each educator preparation program strengthen its PPM system in ways that reflect both state expectations and each program's context.

The purpose is not simply to add another requirement. It is to support programs in building performance measures that are rigorous, reliable, connected to Delaware's instructional expectations, and useful for strengthening candidate development for P-12 instruction.

"Delaware's decision to allow educator preparation programs to develop their own Pedagogical Performance Measures recognizes that authentic assessment systems should reflect each of our EPPs unique curricula, culture, and instructional priorities. The result of these efforts will be beneficial to emerging educators and EPPs – performance evidence that is more meaningful and holistic for candidates, more useful for programs, and more closely connected to the realities of Delaware classrooms, all while meeting shared state expectations."

– Claire O'Neal, Education Associate, Delaware Department of Education

That statewide focus creates an important opportunity for programs: to make readiness visible before candidates become teachers of record, not only through final measures, but through the coursework, clinical experiences, feedback, support(s), and evidence systems that help candidates become ready.

Delaware Tech's work offers one example of how a program has taken up that opportunity.

Start With the Candidate, Not the Measure

Pedagogical performance measure work can quickly become technical. Programs must make decisions about rubrics, scoring, observation cycles, assignments, data systems, reporting, and implementation timelines. Those decisions are necessary. But when the work begins only with the measure, the candidate can become secondary to the tool.

Delaware Tech's work begins with candidate development.

The Delaware Tech Candidate Readiness Framework defines the instructional practices teacher candidates are expected to develop and demonstrate across the Associate of Arts in Teaching (Elementary Education) and Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education programs. It is grounded in Delaware's [Teacher Growth and Support System](#) (DTGSS), the state's system for supporting teacher growth and classroom instruction.

A central part of DTGSS is the [Delaware Teacher Classroom Observation Framework](#), which helps educators align on what high-quality teaching and learning looks like, collect evidence from classroom observations, and identify strengths and areas for growth. Delaware Tech's Candidate Readiness Framework applies those expectations to teacher preparation by translating them into pre-service candidate performance based "look fors" that can be taught, practiced, observed, coached, and assessed throughout preparation.

Practicing teachers and teacher candidates do not have the same developmental needs. Candidates need expectations that are rigorous and aligned to the profession, while still being appropriate for where they are in preparation. They need to know what strong instruction looks like, what to practice with support, and what evidence will show they are moving toward readiness.

The Candidate Readiness Framework gives Delaware Tech a shared language for that work. Faculty, clinical supervisors, and cooperating teachers can use it to align coursework, modeling, rehearsal, clinical support, observation, feedback, and assessment. Candidates can use it to understand expected instructional practices, reflect on feedback, and track their growth. District and school-based partners can use it to align mentoring and feedback with the instructional expectations candidates will encounter in Delaware classrooms.

"This work helped us realize a vision we have held for some time: a unified framework that brings together our expectations for candidates across coursework, residency, feedback, and assessment. It gives faculty, clinical supervisors, cooperating teachers, and candidates a shared language for what readiness looks like and how candidates build toward it over time."

– Holly Hermstedt, Collegewide Director, Bachelor of Science in Education Program, Delaware Technical Community College

The value of the framework is not that it creates another document. Its value is that it gives the program one shared approach to candidate development. Candidates encounter clear instructional expectations, practice those expectations with support, enact them in classrooms, receive aligned feedback, and demonstrate readiness through measures connected to the path they have traveled.

Readiness becomes more than an end point. It becomes something candidates build toward throughout preparation.

Translate In-Service Expectations Into Pre-Service Look Fors

One of Delaware Tech's most important moves was not simply choosing what to include in the Candidate Readiness Framework. It was building a shared understanding of how to translate Delaware's instructional expectations into language that could support teacher candidates.

DTGSS was developed for classroom instruction and educator growth. Its language describes the kinds of teaching and student learning Delaware wants to see in P-12 classrooms. That makes it a strong foundation for preparation, but Delaware Tech could not simply place DTGSS in front of candidates and expect it to function as a preparation tool. The team needed to ask what the framework means for a candidate who is still learning to teach.

Delaware Tech faculty, clinical supervisors, and leaders approached that shift through three core questions:

- 1. What is being measured?**
- 2. What actions would we need to see from the candidate and students?**
- 3. How should those actions be stated as observable "look fors"?**

Those questions helped move the conversation from broad instructional descriptors to the actual teaching moves candidates need to learn, practice, and demonstrate.

"The three questions gave the team a way to move from framework language to candidate practice. We were asking: What is the expectation really measuring? What would we need to see from the candidate and students? And how do we state that clearly enough that faculty, supervisors, and candidates can use it?"

– Andrew McDermott, Technical Assistance Partner, EdPrep Partners

For example, when a framework says students should understand what they are learning, participate in a productive learning environment, respond with evidence, or use academic language, the preparation task is to name the candidate moves that make those outcomes possible: communicating an aligned objective in student-friendly language, connecting tasks to

the purpose of the lesson, establishing and reinforcing routines, redirecting off-task behavior in ways that preserve learning time, preparing questions aligned to the lesson objective, providing wait time and scaffolds, modeling academic language, and giving students opportunities to explain, elaborate, and build on one another's thinking.

This is the shift from describing effective instruction to preparing candidates to enact it.

The “look fors” were not intended to turn teaching into a checklist. They were a translation tool. They helped Delaware Tech faculty, clinical supervisors, and leaders make the practices within DTGSS visible enough to teach, model, rehearse, observe, coach, and assess.

The collaborative process was essential. Faculty considered where candidates would first encounter and practice these expectations in coursework. Clinical supervisors considered what evidence they would need to see during observation and feedback. Program leaders considered how the same language could connect assignments, residency experiences, performance measures, and candidate supports.

By working through the three questions together, Delaware Tech began turning DTGSS from an in-service instructional framework into a pre-service candidate development tool. Candidates need more than a description of strong teaching. They need to understand the actions that make strong teaching possible and the evidence that shows their practice is growing.

Observable practice is the bridge between instructional expectations and candidate development.

Sequence What Candidates Attempt, Practice, and Demonstrate

Defining candidate expectations is necessary. It is not sufficient.

Candidates also need a developmental path.

Delaware Tech's work moved from naming core teaching practices to considering how those practices build over time. Faculty and staff identified how Candidate Readiness Framework criteria may develop from practices that establish the essential conditions for learning to practices that require candidates to integrate multiple instructional skills.

The point was not to decide that some practices matter and others do not. All criteria remain part of candidate readiness. The purpose was to determine what candidates should be expected to attempt, practice, and demonstrate at different points in preparation.

Delaware Tech organized this work through four developmental categories:

- **Most Foundational:** practices that create the essential conditions for teaching and learning.
- **Foundational:** practices that build from those conditions and establish core instructional structures.
- **Developing Complexity:** practices that require candidates to monitor, respond to, and support student learning with increasing independence.
- **Integrated Practice:** practices that require candidates to draw on multiple earlier skills at once.

This developmental lens changes how programs think about readiness. A candidate learning to facilitate evidence-based student discussion also needs to establish participation structures, pose aligned and scaffolded questions, support academic language, respond to student thinking, and create conditions for students to engage with one another. A candidate learning to differentiate and support rigorous application also needs to understand the learning objective, criteria for success, student needs, and evidence of student progress.

More complex teaching depends on earlier practices.

A candidate developmental trajectory helps programs decide what candidates should develop first, what those practices enable next, and where candidates should have opportunities to learn, practice, receive feedback, and demonstrate increasing proficiency.

Delaware Tech participants named this need directly in feedback after the May session. They identified opportunities to embed prioritized indicators into coursework, assignment directions, scoring rubrics, feedback comments, deliberate practice activities, observation assignments, residency supports, and clinical feedback. They also noted the need to avoid overwhelming candidates by introducing the framework in “bite-sized pieces” and building candidates’ understanding over time.

Programs cannot simply tell candidates what readiness looks like at the end. They have to build the experiences that help candidates get there.

For Delaware Tech, the Candidate Readiness Framework provides a way to organize those decisions. It names the practices candidates are expected to develop, begins to identify which practices are most foundational and which require greater integration, and creates a basis for aligning coursework, clinical experiences, observation, feedback, and performance measures to a clearer developmental path.

Align Measures to the Path Candidates Travel

Once candidate expectations are visible and developmentally sequenced, the next question is whether the program's measures reflect the path candidates travel.

Delaware Tech has moved from framework development into implementation planning.

During its June technical assistance session, Delaware Tech worked to integrate the newly adopted instructional framework into its PPM design priorities and key elements. The team refined decisions related to candidate assessment, observation structures, performance tasks, training, progress monitoring, and data collection. They also mapped the candidate experience, clarified pilot implementation structures for 2026–27, and prepared the Delaware Department of Education implementation memo.

One question guided the work:

Does our PPM measure what matters?

That question pushed the team beyond scoring and submission requirements. It required Delaware Tech to examine where each framework competency is introduced and practiced, when and how it is assessed, what evidence is collected, who evaluates candidate performance, and where gaps or action items remain.

"Our focus on candidate development truly advances equity by providing all candidates with opportunities to build and demonstrate effective teaching practices."

– Samanta Lopez, Education Department Chair, Delaware Technical Community College, Orlando J. George, Jr. Campus, Wilmington

The emerging Delaware Tech PPM system is designed to assess candidate readiness across the yearlong residency. It includes four formal observation cycles, written lesson plans, lesson implementation, pre- and post-conferences, Student Achievement Charts, professional practice ratings, documentation in Brightspace, scoring structures, calibration, and data collection. Each performance task is intended to provide evidence of candidate growth and support ongoing coaching, goal setting, and additional support(s) where needed.

The measure is not detached from candidate development. It is connected to the practices candidates are expected to build, the experiences through which they practice those skills, the feedback they receive, and the evidence the program can use to support candidates and improve preparation.

The PPM system also creates opportunities for progress monitoring. Delaware Tech's planning materials identify intentional checkpoints, growth goals, progress plans, additional observations with targeted feedback, additional training for cooperating teachers, and formal improvement

plans with actionable items and measurable outcomes. These structures allow the program to identify candidate needs while there is still time to respond.

This work also gives Delaware Tech a structure for content-specific preparation, including Delaware's Science of Reading priorities. Content-specific expectations can be embedded into coursework, clinical feedback, observation evidence, and candidate performance data through the same developmental system.

The larger lesson is clear: a performance measure is only as strong as the preparation path behind it.

When measures are connected to clear candidate expectations, sequenced practice, feedback cycles, progress monitoring, and teacher educator support, they do more than document readiness. They help programs see and support candidate growth while it is still developing.

Equip the People Who Make Readiness Visible

Candidate readiness becomes visible through the people that prepare candidates.

Frameworks, rubrics, and performance measures can clarify expectations. Faculty, clinical supervisors, cooperating teachers, and program leaders help candidates understand those expectations, practice them, receive feedback, and use evidence to improve.

Implementation cannot stop with a completed framework or an approved memo.

Delaware Tech's developing PPM system identifies distinct roles for teacher candidates, clinical supervisors, cooperating teachers, and Delaware Tech's Education Department leadership. Candidates complete performance tasks across the yearlong residency. Clinical supervisors evaluate candidate performance across instructional performance areas and provide support when candidates are not meeting benchmarks. Cooperating teachers contribute to evaluation of professional responsibilities and provide additional support. Program leadership provides training and calibration, supports validity and reliability of scoring, analyzes and shares PPM data, and initiates intervention strategies when needed.

"The Candidate Readiness Framework and PPM system give us a clearer way to see how candidates are developing, where they need support, and how we can respond before they become teachers of record. This helps us leverage evidence more effectively to better prepare and support our candidates."

– Beth Altemus, Education Department Chair, Delaware Technical Community College, Charles L. Terry, Jr. Campus, Dover

Those roles shape the candidate experience. A candidate may first encounter an instructional practice in coursework. They may analyze examples, rehearse with peers, apply the practice during residency, receive feedback from a clinical supervisor, reflect with a cooperating teacher, and then demonstrate growth through a performance task. If each person in that process uses different language or applies different expectations, the candidate's path becomes harder to navigate. If each person works from the Candidate Readiness Framework and understands how the practice develops over time, the candidate receives clearer support.

That requires training, tools, and calibration.

Delaware Tech's materials name these needs directly: training for clinical supervisors and cooperating teachers, scoring guides, reliability activities, shared language, learning management system documentation, data review routines, and communication with stakeholders. These are not finishing touches. They are part of the design.

"Having a shared framework helps us better track and support candidates. It gives clinical supervisors and cooperating teachers clearer evidence to look for, stronger language for feedback, and a more consistent way to help candidates understand where they are growing and what they need to work on next."

- Jennifer Leach, Instructional Coordinator and Clinical Supervisor, Delaware Technical Community College, Jack F. Owens Campus, Georgetown

This work aligns closely with the EdPrep Performance Framework and the 14 Levers for Quality Teacher Preparation. It reflects common frameworks for teacher educators and candidates, an explicit candidate developmental trajectory, intentional performance gateways, practice-based developmental experiences, formalized coaching and feedback structures, faculty and clinical supervisor development and calibration, and data-driven decision-making.

For Delaware Tech, the next stage of work is not only piloting a measure. It is supporting the people who will make the measure useful for candidates.

That is where preparation quality lives: in the design of the program, the clarity of expectations, the quality of feedback, and the shared work of the people helping candidates become ready.

A Roadmap for Making Readiness Visible

Delaware Tech's work offers a practical roadmap for educator preparation programs working to strengthen candidate readiness and performance measurement.

First, **define what candidates should be ready to do**. Programs need shared instructional expectations that are aligned to the realities candidates will encounter in classrooms and appropriate for candidates who are still developing.

Second, **translate expectations into observable practice**. Broad instructional descriptors become useful for preparation when programs name the candidate and student actions teacher educators can teach, model, rehearse, observe, coach, and assess.

Third, **sequence candidate development**. Programs need to determine what candidates should attempt, practice, and demonstrate over time, including which practices are foundational and which require candidates to integrate multiple skills.

Fourth, **align measures to the developmental path**. Performance measures should not be the first place candidates encounter the practices they are expected to demonstrate. They should be part of a connected path in which candidates have opportunities to learn, analyze, rehearse, enact, receive feedback, and improve.

Fifth, **equip the people who make readiness visible**. Faculty, clinical supervisors, cooperating teachers, and program leaders need shared language, clear tools, training, calibration, feedback routines, and data systems that help them support candidate growth.

That is the work EdPrep Partners supports alongside educator preparation programs and state partners. Grounded in the EdPrep Performance Framework and the 14 Levers for Quality Teacher Preparation, EdPrep Partners helps programs move from shared priorities into implementation by strengthening instructional expectations, candidate developmental trajectories, coursework and clinical connections, teacher educator practices, coaching and feedback structures, performance measures, and improvement routines.

Our work with Delaware Tech reflects this approach. EdPrep Partners supported Delaware Tech faculty, clinical supervisors, and leaders as they translated a state-aligned instructional framework into pre-service candidate expectations, organized those expectations developmentally, and began aligning the Candidate Readiness Framework to a PPM system that can support candidate growth, evidence collection, feedback, and program improvement.

Delaware Tech's continued work will determine how these expectations are refined, piloted, and embedded across the program. The direction is clear: readiness should be visible before day one.

Not as a single score.

Not as a final task.

But as a developmental path that candidates, teacher educators, supervisors, cooperating teachers, and program leaders can understand, support, and strengthen together.

Candidate readiness should not be a mystery at the end of preparation. It should be built, supported, observed, and strengthened throughout the candidate experience.

Every child deserves an excellent educator. Every teacher candidate deserves preparation that equips them to become one.

Let's make teacher preparation better together.

About EdPrep Partners

Elevating Teacher Preparation. Accelerating Change.

EdPrep Partners is a national non-profit technical assistance center. We deliver a coordinated, high-impact, hands-on technical assistance model that connects program diagnostics with the support to make the changes. Our approach moves beyond surface-level recommendations, embedding research-backed, scalable, and sustainable **practices that most dramatically improve the quality of educator preparation** – while equipping educator preparation programs, P-12 districts, state agencies with the tools and insights needed to drive lasting change.

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