

EdPrep Insight **SUMMER 2025**

Refocusing on What Works

A Call for a Systems Response to the Learning Crisis, Teacher Readiness, Instructional Quality, and What We Collectively Need to Do Next

A National Challenge That Demands Local Action

Every Child Deserves an Excellent Educator. Let's Give Them One.

In a recent *New York Times* article, [“Has America Given Up on Children's Learning?”](#) journalist Dana Goldstein describes a stark picture: academic learning has drifted from the center of our national education agenda. While political debates over curriculum, culture, and governance continue, instructional quality and student learning outcomes—once considered the foundation of our education system—are no longer prioritized. Is this true? That depends on the lens you're using, the data you're referencing, and the people you're asking

This is clear though: Far too many students—and the teachers who serve them—remain underprepared. Across the country, teacher candidates are entering classrooms without the depth of preparation required to help students thrive (or reach proficiency). In many states, **first-year novice teachers now make up more than 10% of the total P-12 teaching workforce¹²**—a figure that continues to grow. We've long known that novice teachers—those just entering the profession—are the least likely to accelerate student learning, often struggling to navigate the steep learning curve of effective instruction.³ That's why preparation matters. That's why preparation matters. As the share of inexperienced educators continues to rise, the consequences of weak preparation grow more urgent—not just for P-12 students, but for families, communities, and the nation. The stakes are not abstract: student achievement, instructional quality, and teacher retention are all directly tied to how well teachers are prepared before stepping into their own classrooms.

¹ Title II Data.

² National Center for Education Statistics

³ Kini, T., & Podolsky, A. (2016). *Does teaching experience increase teacher effectiveness? A review of the research*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

At EdPrep Partners, we do not view this moment with despair—but with clarity and urgency. This is not a call to return to antiquated systems, models, or slogans. It's a call to **refocus on what we know works**: high-quality teaching at every level—including the instruction provided by teacher educators at educator preparation programs—grounded in evidence-based preparation, driven by meaningful practice, and centered on candidate development and P-12 student learning.

For us and many of my colleagues across the nation, **this is about dramatically improving the quality of teacher preparation**. Dramatic doesn't always mean changing *everything*. Sometimes it's small, intentional shifts—if and how faculty label & model instructional practices, if and how feedback is delivered, if and how coursework aligns with clinical experiences—that create lasting impact. Sometimes it's major shifts. We use the word *dramatically* deliberately: because we know the stakes, and because we've seen what's possible. Across the country, some educator preparation programs are already pushing toward these shifts—what's needed now is the support to help them go further, faster, and sustain what works.

When the profession of teaching is separated from the science of how people learn, and change, we all lose. It's time to move beyond rhetoric and toward action that strengthens the systems that produce excellent educators—because nothing matters more for P-12 students than the teacher in the classroom.

What We're Doing Differently

We agree: the national conversation has drifted away from what matters most—the quality of preparation and its impact on student learning.

Even within teacher preparation, the focus too often centers on staffing models, licensure flexibilities and/or needs, and placement practices. But these conversations frequently skip the most urgent question: **Are teacher candidates prepared to lead learning with P-12 students?**

At EdPrep Partners, we believe the answer must be yes—and we exist to help make that true everywhere. We know that *access* and *scale* do not have to come at the expense of readiness (no matter the pathway). We work alongside educator preparation programs, districts, and state agencies to ensure their efforts are anchored in what research shows works: structured, practice-based preparation led by skilled teacher educators and grounded in the instructional needs of P-12 students.

We don't debate whether preparation matters. We build the systems that ensure it does—through research-backed preparation models, practice-based development, and a relentless focus on candidate readiness and student outcomes.

Our Approach: Turning Barriers Into Breakthroughs

Across the field, the challenges facing educator preparation are well known—and increasingly urgent. But they are not insurmountable. The issues highlighted in the *New York Times* article cited above—drifting national priorities, inconsistent instructional quality, and underdeveloped preparation systems—mirror what we see daily on the ground.

With the right structures and support, programs can overcome these barriers and build the conditions that lead to stronger preparation and better outcomes for teacher candidates and P–12 students. We must not respond with surface-level fixes, general advocacy, or staffing re-structuring alone, but with systems and educator preparation program-level solutions designed to ensure every teacher candidate enters the classroom ready to lead learning on day one.

Our work is grounded in three foundational components:

- **EdPrep Performance Framework** – Defines the essential structures, practices, and indicators of quality across four performance areas: *Program Leadership & Continuous Improvement, Candidate Preparation & Development, Teacher Educator Practices, and District & Program Partnerships.*
- **14 Levers of Quality Teacher Preparation** – Clear, actionable strategies that programs implement to strengthen coursework, clinical experiences, feedback systems, and data practices.
- **Embedded Technical Assistance** – On-the-ground, sustained support that moves programs from planning to implementation—focused on what’s within their control.

Some of the most salient challenges in educator preparation are our collective responsibility:

The Challenge	How We All Can Help
Coursework and clinical experiences lack alignment.	We can support programs in aligning coursework and clinical expectations, ensuring structured developmental trajectories that reflect what is developmentally appropriate for candidates—balancing shelter and challenge. This includes guiding candidates through a purposeful sequence: from analysis, to approximation and rehearsal, to full enactment of research-based instructional methods and content-pedagogies.
Candidate feedback is inconsistent and low-impact.	We can help programs strengthen the quality, consistency, and timeliness of feedback delivered across coursework and clinical settings. This includes building faculty and supervisor capacity to

The Challenge	How We All Can Help
	provide oral and written feedback that is specific, actionable, and grounded in clearly defined instructional expectations—ensuring candidates receive the support they need to improve in real time.
The teacher pipeline is shrinking.	We can support programs in expanding and strengthening high-quality pathways—residency, ACP, internship, and community-based models—that are designed to increase access without lowering standards, ensuring all candidates receive rigorous, practice-rich preparation.
Teacher educators are underdeveloped.	We can first model high-impact teacher educator practices—such as labeling & modeling, rehearsals, structured feedback, and quality coaching practices—then build each programs’ capacity to sustain them through targeted development, calibration, and implementation support.
Instructional quality varies across programs.	We can help programs implement performance frameworks, observation tools, and formative assessments that clarify expectations, promote instructional consistency, and strengthen candidate readiness across coursework and clinical practice.
Data use is limited and fragmented.	We can help programs embed efficient, actionable data protocols from the start, driving continuous improvement cycles that support timely, evidence-based decisions. Data systems don’t need to be complex—they need to be effective.

All pathways—traditional, residency, internship-based, and alternative—can be high quality when they reflect what research and real-world practice show to be both essential and effective. But program type alone doesn’t guarantee results. A “residency” may amount to little more than a yearlong placement without the supports needed to drive development, while an internship program with rigorous coaching, practice-based coursework, and strong on-site support can produce highly effective teachers. What matters is not the format, but the design and execution. Strong programs share four core features:

- **Research-based and instructionally aligned**

Coursework, clinical experiences, and feedback systems align to a shared vision of instructional excellence that gets implemented.

- **Practice-rich and feedback-driven**

Candidates receive structured opportunities to observe, rehearse, and enact instruction, paired with specific, actionable feedback.

- **Performance-based and competency-aligned**

Candidate progression is driven by demonstrated readiness—not seat time—through clear benchmarks and performance gateways that inform program adjustments and support continuous improvement.

- **Accessible, scalable, and sustainable**

Programs reduce barriers to entry without lowering the bar—investing in the systems, staffing, and teacher educator expectations & development needed to scale high-quality preparation effectively.

To meet the moment, we need more than isolated fixes—we need preparation models that are aligned, practice-based, performance-driven, and scalable. At EdPrep Partners, we help programs build and refine these models from the inside out, beginning with program leaders and teacher educators who shape the systems, instruction, and feedback that drive candidate readiness.

Let's Shift the Narrative Together: To Urgency and Preparedness

We agree with the article's core concern: learning must return to the center. But the solution is not a new slogan—it's local, technical, and within reach.

Yes, we need content and standards-based curricula.

Yes, we need structured literacy and cognitive science practices.

Yes, we need college- and career-ready pathways.

But none of these will reach their full potential without well-prepared teachers.

Across the country, states face a shared dilemma: ***How do we expand the teacher workforce without sacrificing preparation quality?*** The data shows us both the risk—and the opportunity.

Some systems are making intentional moves to prioritize preparation. Others are navigating fractured pipelines, where urgency overtakes long-term quality. The difference isn't just about policy. It's about **intentionality, investment, and systems**.

But knowing what works isn't enough. Now is the moment for bold action, strategic investment, and a shared sense of urgency—paired with the structures and support needed to scale what works and sustain it over time.

A Commitment to Solutions

Our work isn't about "sides." It's about strengthening preparation—together. We support and believe in educator preparation programs of all types—traditional and alternative, urban and rural, large and small—because we believe every candidate deserves access to high-quality preparation,

and every student deserves an excellent teacher from day one. In our field, it's time to reframe the conversation. This is no longer about *traditional vs. alternative* pathways to teaching. **It's about preparation vs. no preparation.**

Join Us

This is not the time to give up on children's learning. It's time to **refocus our systems, reinvest in preparation**, and work together to ensure the next generation of educators enters the classroom fully prepared to make a difference.

This is a pivotal moment for teacher preparation—one that demands more than slogans or short-term fixes. It requires clear priorities, sustained investment, and the belief that **instructional quality begins with preparation quality**.

If we act now—with clarity, urgency, and systems built to last—we can ensure that every P-12 student is taught by a well-prepared teacher.

Let's make teacher preparation better—together.

Calvin J. Stocker
Founder & CEO, EdPrep Partners

About EdPrep Partners

Elevating Teacher Preparation. Accelerating Change.

EdPrep partners is a national technical assistance center and non-profit. EdPrep Partners delivers a coordinated, high-impact, hands-on technical assistance model that connects diagnostic 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, districts, state agencies, and funders with the tools and insights needed to drive systemic, scaled, and lasting change.

Let's make teacher preparation better together.

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