



RESEARCH REPORT | Center for 1776 and Center for Education Opportunity

# TEACHER EDUCATION PREPARATION: HOW NATIONAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS INFLUENCE TEACHING

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## TOPLINE POINTS

- ★ There is a need to reform teacher preparation programs and the accreditation process that governs them. States should review accreditation standards and policies that govern teacher preparation to ensure they are free of bias and aligned with the state's vision for education.
- ★ In 2019, student scores in 4th-grade and 8th-grade reading and math were either flat or declined, according to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics. It is critical to consider all components that provide education for students in public and private school systems, including teacher preparation programs.
- ★ There are extremely limited options for teacher preparation programs. There are primarily two accrediting institutions for teacher preparation programs in the United States, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and the smaller Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation.
- ★ For teacher preparation programs, **accreditation is non-negotiable—it is required. For the university to receive federal funding, accreditation is needed.**
- ★ The cumbersome and expensive process of engaging in a 3-year bureaucratic system to satisfy the demands of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation results in states conforming to what they define as “quality education.” Education programs seeking accreditation must rewrite their institutions' curriculum and methodology and develop assessments using the Council's education terminology.
  - Through this process, educators begin to adopt a similar philosophy to gain accreditation status, which in turn influences how teachers think about education, teaching, and practices and how they teach students. The bottom line is that accreditation shapes educational practices.

*Our Nation's teachers have the unique privilege and responsibility to form the hearts and minds of future generations. How exactly do they obtain that privilege, and who gets to decide whether they are qualified for the task?*

The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the value of face-to-face instruction as well as the need for increased transparency and accountability. It also increased awareness that serious reforms are needed in the public education system ([An, Mongillo, Sung, & Fuentes, 2022](#)). After years of applying an antiquated one-size-fits-all public education system, a consensus now exists among parents and many policymakers that meaningful education reforms must be made to K-12 education to improve the outcomes of students. Moreover, parents and policymakers are now, more than ever, interested in increased visibility into what is being taught in our classrooms.

National Accreditation Standards directly affect what is being taught in teacher education preparation programs across the Nation. States should review the standards and policies that govern teacher preparation programs and ensure that future teachers are receiving training to help them be effective classroom practitioners.

As we emerge from the pandemic, teacher quality has never been more critical—or more challenged. Teacher quality is considered one of the most important in-school factors that contribute to a child's academic success. A supply of well-trained teachers is essential for public, private, and charter schools. The COVID-19 pandemic also heightened tensions surrounding the teaching of social issues, with national attention now focused on curriculum, school boards, and education policy. It is essential to consider all components that make up a quality education for a student, including the foundational effect accreditation plays in teacher preparation.

### **Teacher Preparation Programs in the United States**

Today, approximately 3.2 million teachers in the United States teach 49.4 million students in public elementary and secondary schools ([NCES, 2021](#)). Approximately 4.7 million students attend private schools taught by half a million teachers ([NCES, 2021](#)). A teacher preparation program is defined as a program within a university or college setting that leads to a specific state teaching credential in a specific field. Prospective teachers may enroll in one of three types of teacher preparation programs: traditional, alternative based at an institution of higher education (alternative IHE), or

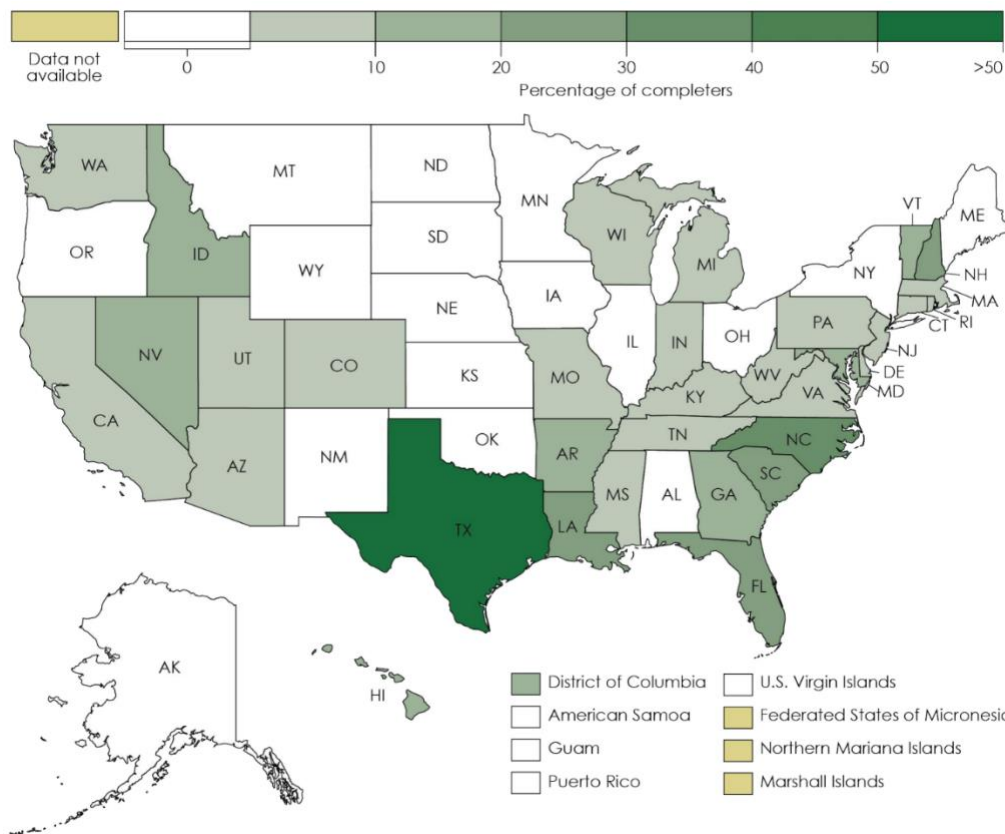


alternative not based at an institution of higher education (alternative non-IHE). Generally, traditional teacher preparation programs are based at institutions of higher education and lead to a bachelor’s or master’s degree (National Research Council, 2010). However, traditional programs can be housed outside of institutions of higher education, and institutions of higher education can also house alternative programs (Dibner, 2020). Compared with alternative programs, traditional programs typically require more coursework

in teaching methods and are more likely to require student-teaching placements (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The percentage of teacher preparation students enrolled in alternative non-IHE programs varies widely among states (Figure 1). In 2018–19, for example, 21 states and jurisdictions had no students in alternative non-IHE programs, whereas, in Texas, more than half of teacher preparation students were enrolled in these programs.

**Figure 1:** *Percent of Teacher Preparation Program Students enrolled in Alternative Non-IHE Programs by State 2018-2109*



Education is regulated at the state level, but national program accreditation guidelines drive the coursework and design for teacher education programs. The overarching goal of program accreditation is for teacher preparation programs to demonstrate, through a variety of measures, that they are producing strong teachers who are well

equipped to lead their classrooms. For IHE programs, accreditation is not optional—it is required. For the university to be eligible to receive federal funding or financial aid, it must be accredited. Federal and state governments rely on such accreditation agencies to guarantee the quality of educational institutions since the government provides federal funds for student aid (Eaton, 2006). States use a variety of measures to assess the performance of teacher preparation programs. From 2018 to 2019, the largest number of states (45) used accreditation or a state review rating to measure

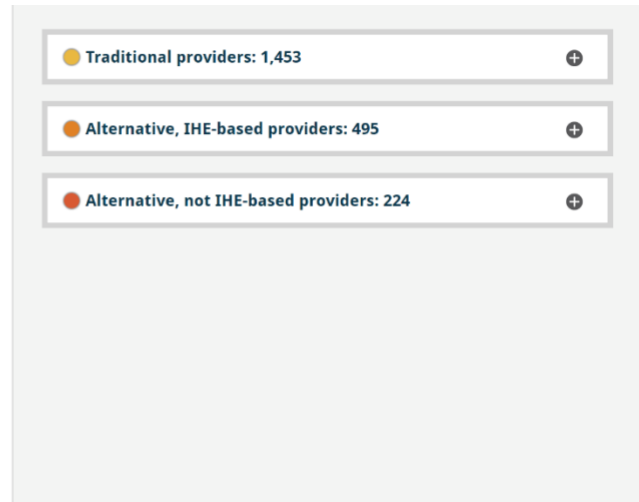
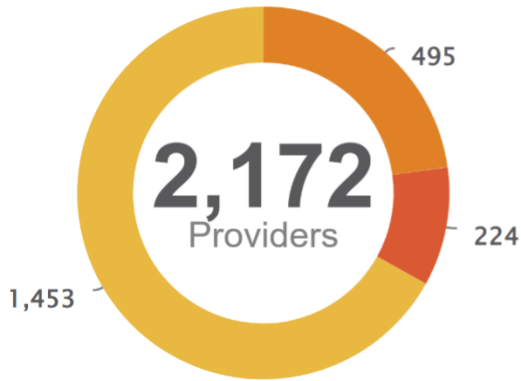
program performance, and the second largest number of states (30) used pass rates on the state assessments required for a teaching credential (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Fewer than 10 states used improvements in K–12 student academic achievement or professional development opportunities for current teachers to measure teacher preparation program performance.

Title II of the Higher Education Act requires the Department of Education to collect and publish data each academic year disclosing the number of teacher preparation providers in states. In the most recent data available, the 2018-2019 academic year, it was reported that there were 2,172 teacher preparation programs, most of which hosted traditional programs. There were 719 alternate teacher preparation providers in the United States. Of those alternative programs, 495 were at institutions of higher education, and 224 were non-university affiliated programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).



**Figure 2:** Title II, Higher Education Act 2018-2019 academic year, number of teacher preparation providers by type of program.

Academic Year 2018-19



Alternative pathways vary by state, but in general, they do not require going through a professional teacher education preparation program. The alternative route helps those who are changing career paths and those who have pursued options like Teach for America. This pathway is growing. Alternative certification programs are typically provided for people who already have a bachelor’s degree. This alternative certification route allows them to become certified as teachers without having to get another degree. In 2002, Texas became the first state to authorize for-profit providers in non-university settings that offer alternative teacher preparation programs (Baumhardt, 2021). One-third of teachers in Texas public schools from 2020-2021 came from an alternative certification program. [Teachers of Tomorrow](#),

which started in Texas, is the largest educator preparation program in the state.

It is important to recognize that there are for-profit postsecondary institutions that grant degrees and certificates. There are some for-profit postsecondary institutions that grant both degrees and certificates, which are required to obtain accreditation in order to participate in federal student financial aid programs. There are other for-profit institutions that grant teacher certification but do not grant degrees and cannot participate in federal financial aid programs. Individual states make the decisions about whether or authorize these programs (Jang & Horn, 2017).

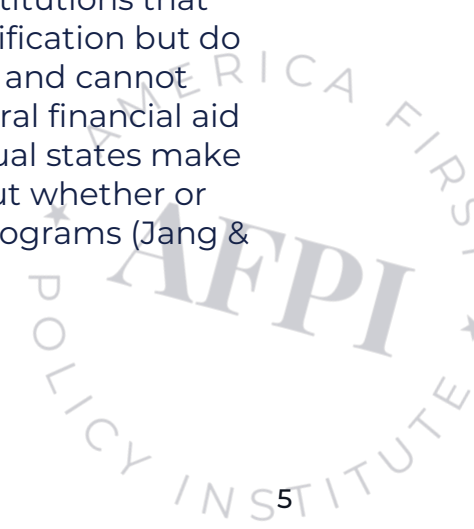


Figure 3 below provides an overview of how the process works to become a teacher in the United States. Every state is different, but all require prospective teachers to attend an approved program in required order to become certified.

States. Every state is different, but all require prospective teachers to

**Figure 3:** *Process for Teacher Certification*

**Teacher Certification**

**1 What are the main requirements for teacher certification?**  
 Each state has its own set of rules and requirements but most require:

- A bachelor degree from a regionally accredited school
- A passing score on a state teacher exam
- Completion of an "approved teacher training program." [i]

**2 Do all teachers need to be certified?**  
 In some states, substitute teachers and teacher aides do not need to be certified. Most private school teachers are not required to hold a teaching license. However, all full-time teachers in public schools need to earn a teaching license from the state where you will be teaching. [ii]

**3 What is an approved teacher training program?**  
 -An educational program that has been approved by the state in which it is based. It might also be called an approved educator preparation program, or ATP.  
 -Involve a supervised period of teaching experience, usually known as a "practicum" or "student teaching."

**4 What kinds of teaching licenses are there?**  
 -Early childhood education or secondary education, technical education, fine arts education, special education, school psychologist, school administrator, etc. All these different types of degrees involve different sets of certification requirements.

**5 What is an initial or provisional teacher certification?**  
 This certification is a temporary license granted to many new teachers. It entitles a teacher to work in a state school system, for a limited amount of time, even if they haven't completed an ATP, or passed the state's standardized exams. They can become professionally certified later, once the necessary criteria have been met.

**6 What is a professional or standard teacher certification?**  
 This certification is earned after a teacher completes several years of successful employment under an initial or provisional license. Before earning professional certification, teachers must complete any outstanding requirements (e.g. passing scores on standardized tests).

Sources:  
 [i] <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/cert/teachcert/teachers/employmentissues.html>  
 [ii] <https://www.teach.org/teaching-certification>

eLearners.com

**Accreditation Agencies**

The first accreditation agency for higher education was formed in 1857 as a way for colleges and

universities to identify and distinguish themselves for the purposes of student credit transfer and degree recognition. Over time,



accreditation became a voluntary process of self-study and external peer review of an institution or program's education quality using a set of agreed-upon standards. In 1952, Cloyd Marvin, the longest-serving president of George Washington University, published an article in the *Phi Delta Kappan* titled The Problems of Accreditation. He stated:

We believe that our institutions cannot function as trusted, free institutions of higher learning unless they are kept free from the interference of outside organizations that try to tell us what we must teach and how we must conduct our institutions. Accreditation associations have proliferated to the point where they now threaten freedom of faculty action, displace channels of administrative authority, and serve to effect disloyalty to the college or university in the name of a more significant—usually alleged professional connection—loyalty.

His discontent with accreditation systems is further explained by the notion that using common standards in higher education institutions is the same as “a straight-jacket” promoting uniformity. His insight continued when he shared the excessive financial burden it takes to maintain the accreditation process. These

concerns from 1952 are also expressed today by many contemporary scholars. Research shows that the administrative duties required for accreditation take time away from scholarship and teaching. In addition, accreditation is a costly process, and it is reported that U.S. institutions spend \$3 billion annually on regional accreditation (Whellan & Elgart, 2015). To put that into perspective, the average tuition for a 4-year university in the United States is \$141,324, meaning one could fully pay for more than 21,200 student degrees with the money spent on accreditation.

### Accreditation Process

Accreditation is a system of external quality review, ensuring that higher education institutions satisfy specific standards (Eaton, 2006). The U.S. has two types of accreditations: institutional and program accreditation. There are many accrediting agencies for colleges and universities, such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, among others (Colleges and Degrees, n.d.). Program accreditation is a specialized type of accreditation that grants accreditation to university programs (Sywelem & Witte, 2009). For example, program accreditation applies to professional programs such as teacher education,



engineering, and business. Program accreditation evaluates the program's effectiveness in preparing students to meet specific professional standards and assesses teaching, funding, learning facilities, and faculty qualifications, among other aspects of the institution's unit (Colleges & Degrees, n.d; Mutereko, 2018). For teacher education, accreditation agencies are non-governmental, voluntary, and non-profit organizations widely accepted as adequate quality assurance (Eaton, 2012; Harvey & Stensaker, 2008; Hawkins, 2010). So, most universities will be recognized by institutional and various program accrediting agencies depending on the professional programs offered at the institution. According to the most recent data, there are 779 SACSCOC accredited institutions, with 473 being public colleges, 297 being private non-profit institutions, and 14 being for-profit private colleges (SACSOC, 2022).

In 2013, after the two existing accrediting entities merged. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) became the sole accrediting institution for U.S. teacher preparation programs. In 2019, the smaller Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) also began offering accreditation for Colleges of Education (AAQEP, 2021). CAEP overwhelmingly dominates teacher

preparation program accreditation, although AAQEP has begun disrupting the market. As of July 2022, AAQEP has accredited 70 teacher-preparation providers (AAQEP, 2022), while CAEP has accredited 471 providers (CAEP, 2022).

The CAEP and the AAQEP provide standards and competency-based assessments for teacher education providers and promote themselves as confidence-builders and reliable authorities on the quality of colleges of education. The CAEP, for instance, seeks "excellence in educator preparation accreditation" (CAEP, n.d.) with a mission to "advance equity and excellence...through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning" (CAEP, n.d.). The CAEP also contends that "states partnering with CAEP establish and enhance the public's confidence that future teachers and educational leaders from teacher preparation programs meet challenging standards and are prepared to lead K-12 schools and classrooms successfully" (CAEP, 2017). Five standards guide the CAEP's accreditation process (see Table 1). These standards define and assess the quality of an organization's performance and serve as the foundation for accreditation reviews and decisions (CAEP, 2015). There are 22 sub-standards.





**Table 1** CAEP Standards and Principles for Program Review Measures

CAEP standards	CAEP principles for accreditation process measures
1. Content and pedagogical knowledge	1. Validity and reliability
2. Clinical partnerships and practice	2. Relevance
3. Candidate Quality, recruitment, and selectivity	3. Verifiability
4. Program impact	4. Representativeness
5. Provider quality, continuous improvement, and capacity	5. Cumulativeness
	6. Fairness
	7. Stakeholder interest
	8. Benchmarks
	9. Vulnerability to manipulation
	10. Actionability

The AAQEP claims that its “standards-based accreditation represents both a public evaluation of the programmatic quality and a professional commitment to ongoing improvement and innovation” (AAQEP, 2020). The AAQEP centers on quality assurance, formative peer reviews, continuous improvement, and innovation of teacher education programs to accomplish its vision. The AAQEP “designs and implements accreditation processes, in cooperation with states and institutions, that respect the diversity and autonomy of institutions and providers” (AAQEP,

2020). The AAQEP considers accreditation as “a profession’s conversation with internal and external stakeholders about quality—how it is defined, how it can be measured, how it can be increased, and how it can be redefined through innovation” (AAQEP, 2020). The AAQEP uses four standards to guide program review (see Table 2). These standards include 24 sub-standards designed to provide the expectations for program quality and set an agenda for improvement and innovation (AAQEP, 2020).



**Table 2** AAQEP Standards for Program Review

AAQEP Standards	AAQEP Design Principles
1. Completer performance	1. Collaboration among preparation providers
2. Completer professional competence and growth	2. Improvement-focused, innovation-friendly protocols
3. Quality program practices	3. Partnership among institutions, state agencies, and the AAQEP
4. Program engagement in system improvement	4. Comprehensive standards that address all types of providers
	5. Respect for context and mission
	6. Consistency and calibration of all reviews and decisions
	7. Efficiency and frugality in operations

As provided, the two accreditors have different approaches to determining the quality of teacher education. CAEP requires multiple measures of data to prove programs’ selectivity and effectiveness. AAQEP’s standards do not include any requirements for specific benchmarks, and evidence is evaluated holistically. Scholars have documented that teacher education accreditation significantly impacts the work of faculty, requiring hundreds of hours of faculty and staff time (Gillen, 2020).

McMurtrie (1999) states that accreditation “has been called cumbersome, expensive, secretive, and outdated—sometimes by the accrediting agencies themselves” (cited in Gillen, 2020). Furthermore, it is costly for institutions to fulfill the accreditation requirements (Neal & Alacbay, 2018; Wheelan & Elgart, 2015). Gillen et al. (2010) contend that accreditation-imposed requirements impinge on

institutional autonomy. Many faculty say that the accreditation process reduces educational work to a bureaucratic recordkeeping system (Pinar, 2004). Faculty members have reported dealing with significant accreditation duties requiring that they spend hours on accreditation tasks, taking necessary time from other requirements like scholarship and teaching (Lewis, 2016). Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, & Ness (2005) report that professors work on accreditation in NCATE-accredited schools on several levels, including modifying course syllabi, aligning courses to a conceptual framework and standards, checking and tracking student assessment data, plugging in keys and codes into a variety of standards and conceptual frameworks, recording minutes at all meetings, and devoting a significant amount of time to the development of frequent and detailed reports. The time required to complete accreditation tasks



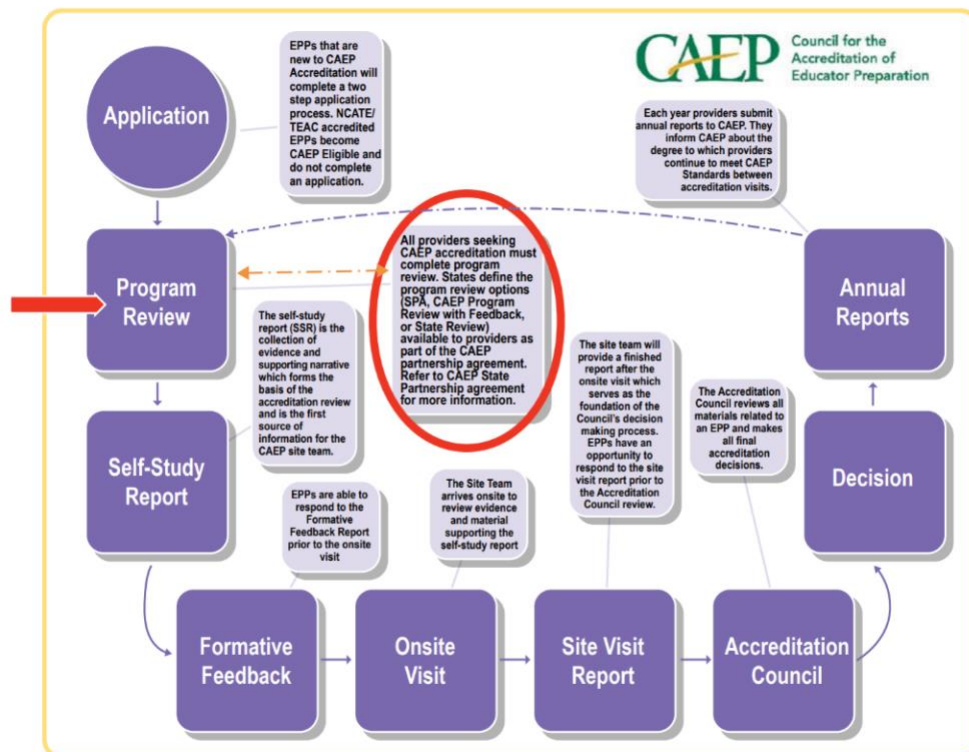
often results in neglecting the needs of students.

CAEP regulates the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions required in teacher education programs, which undermines the university's role in program design. CAEP's centralized control over teacher education programs supersedes educators' control over programs and content and, in some sense, their role as professors. Graves (2021) reported that faculty thought CAEP accreditation imposed too much external expectation to conform. Course content is required to be "aligned"

and "mapped" to standards, and courses follow a predetermined organization of selected content that represents efficient and effective instruction (Romanowski & Alkhatib, 2020). The fundamental concern here is that when accreditation requirements are so prescriptive, they apply a one-size-fits-all model to standardize the teaching profession across states.

Figure 4 below depicts the lengthy process of CAEP accreditation for teacher preparation programs. The application is due three years prior to the on-site CAEP accreditation visit.

Figure 4 CAEP Application Process (3 years)



The influence of the accreditation process is shaping the educational discourse of teacher education programs (Romanowski & Alkhateeb, 2020). A key component of obtaining final approval for accreditation is that teacher preparation students must master the concepts and jargon defined by the accrediting body. For example, education programs seeking accreditation must rewrite their institutions' curriculum and methodology and develop assessments using CAEP's education terminology. Through this process, teacher educators begin to adopt the standardized philosophy to gain accreditation status. This influence of CAEP ultimately changes how teachers teach students as well as how they think about education, teaching, and best teaching practices.

The accrediting bodies greatly influence higher education and are shaping teacher education programs throughout the Nation. The arduous process of gaining accreditation through CAEP might lead some to assume that CAEP offers the ideal educational system for teachers. By this same logic, institutions that dare to stray from this ideal may be considered incompetent and weak. In effect, the CAEP model works to enforce a one-size-fits-all approach to teacher education. In 2020, researchers Romanowski and Alkhateeb compared this

accreditation model to a fast-food restaurant, McDonald's. At McDonald's, workers follow strict procedures, food preparation protocol, and service guidelines. There is an assumption that standardization improves efficiency. For example, CAEP requires educator preparation programs to collect data measuring the satisfaction of program completers and employers with preparation. Romanowski and Alkhateeb compare this to the "satisfaction regarding the Big Mac as an indicator of quality." The authors conclude that CAEP accreditation has a major influence over teacher education and should be reformed to accommodate students' individual needs. Accreditation does not need to be a one-size-fits-all process. For example, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) provides accreditation to universities that award degrees in public administration, public affairs, non-profit and related fields. In this process, the university provides information on how it plans to measure the outcomes of its program and track the success of its graduates. The faculty plan their own improvements and meet with NASPAA personnel who fully understand the mission of the university. When states have authority over how they teach and what objectives they will aim to meet, it creates space for



differences in priorities across programs. The current CAEP process applies mandatory standards for all teacher preparation programs, but an ideal accreditation system would support individual program differences.

### Politics Meets Teacher Preparation

The near monopoly that CAEP has on accreditation manifests itself in several ways. In the education program space, there is a near-universal need to impress the CAEP, forcing every program to bend backward to satisfy its demands. This process results in teacher preparation programs across the country conforming to what CAEP defines as a “quality education.” Unfortunately, CAEP’s definition of quality has flaws. On their [website](#), one of the stated strategic goals of CAEP is ensuring the “consistent application of the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the evaluation of providers.” The concept of equity directly contradicts the core American principle of equality. CAEP’s mission statement promotes the flawed objective of “advancing equity” rather than equality. Merriam-Webster defines equality as “the quality or state of being equal,” with equal being described as “like in quality, nature, or status” (Merriam-Webster, 2021a). By contrast, Merriam-Webster defines equity as “fairness

or justice in the way people are treated” (Merriam-Webster, 2021b). At surface value, these definitions may suggest little reason for concern and appear to be noble aspirations. However, the Milken Institute of Public Health at George Washington University provides alternative definitions that are closer to reality as played out in policy: “Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity...allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome” (Milken Institute). In short, equality refers to sameness in opportunities; equity refers to sameness in outcomes enforced by an outside entity—in this case, the government—regardless of individual choices.

Recently, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed [Senate Bill 7044](#), which requires all Florida public educational institutions to change their accreditor every 5 years. The new law is intended to help institutions stay in line with the priorities of Florida parents. The legislation also allows the Florida Board of Governors, the governing body for the State University System of Florida, to enact a post-tenure review process every 5 years, which would take into consideration faculty research and teaching assignments, performance metrics, compensation, and accomplishments. According to



reports, the bill was drafted after SACS leadership raised concerns about state public higher education officials. The power of the accrediting agency to shape universities was the impetus behind this bill. Accreditation systems significantly influence what is being taught to future teachers of America.

In American colleges and universities, the dominance of liberal ideology is clearly apparent. For example, the Higher Education Research Institute's two surveys on how college faculty identified across the political spectrum, in 1989-1990 and 2016-2017, showed that the liberal-to-conservative ratio more than doubled over 27 years, from 2.3:1 to 5:1 ([Abrams & Khalid, 2020](#)). Similar ratios measuring partisan imbalance are worse, according to the National Association of Scholars, whose research revealed that Democratic professors outnumber Republican professors 8.5 to 1 ([Langbert & Stevens, 2020](#)). Even more astounding, a 2017 survey found that the Democrat to Republican ratio for college administrators is 12:1 ([Abrams, 2018](#)). The consequences of these imbalances are evident: the institution risks being an echo chamber for the ideologically-dominant majority and making those with contrary views—students and staff alike—

too intimidated to express their beliefs.

Another survey from 2017 found that two-thirds of conservative professors avoided sharing their personal opinions, fearing the backlash from students and colleagues on campus, compared to only one-third of liberal professors ([Abrams & Khalid, 2020](#)). Similarly, in Heterodox Academy's Fall 2019 Campus Expression Survey, over 1,500 students were asked how comfortable they were sharing their views on six topics: politics, race, religion, sexuality, gender, and noncontroversial issues ([Stikma, 2020](#)). For all topics besides religion, Republican students reported being more reluctant than Democrats and Independents.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) commissioned a study in Illinois about trends in K-12 and higher education. Researchers posed two views: "K-12 teachers should work to expose students to a variety of perspectives about the country's founding and history, and to equip them to think critically about its successes and failures," and "K-12 teachers should embrace progressive viewpoints and perspectives when teaching U.S. history, to encourage students to advocate for social justice causes." Illinoisans who



participated in the study overwhelmingly chose the first viewpoint by a margin of 62 percent to 23 percent. With teacher preparation programs throughout the United States pumping out progressive educators, it is little wonder that divisive ideologies such as Critical Race Theory and age-inappropriate teachings on sex and gender identity have been flooding our public school system. While this has caused an uproar amongst parents who demand curriculum transparency and choice on where to send their children to school, larger systemic problems in the public school system remain. Ultimately, there is a need to reform teacher preparation programs and the accreditation process that governs them.

### **Guiding Principles for State Leaders**

***Utilize state longitudinal data systems to measure teacher preparation program success.*** No compelling evidence suggests that program accreditation by NCATE or AAQEP leads to positive academic outcomes for students. As previously stated, the national accreditors for teacher education do not use empirical data on teaching and learning outcomes to make judgments about program quality. Nor is there any reason to

believe that teachers who complete an accredited preparation program are more likely to demonstrate high-quality classroom teaching performance than those trained elsewhere. States can transform education schools by focusing on student achievement as a primary measure of the teacher education program's success. A majority of states still do not connect student achievement data to teacher preparation programs, and only half of states publicly report any program performance information online. Preparation programs themselves typically do not get information from states regarding graduate performance in the classroom, and only about one in four traditional preparation programs gather information on the performance of their teacher candidates. Based on seven rounds of funding since 2005, 49 states and D.C., Puerto Rico, Virgin Island, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Island, and American Samoa, have all received funds to create an SLDS. Assessing and tracking students' academic progress provides information about student needs and teacher performance. This data can be used to assess teacher education programs that are effective in producing teachers who meet the needs of their students. Rather than allowing accredited programs



to be the only pathway to certification, an improved model would allow the use of data measuring outcome quality to replace the accreditation process. Businesses must respond to customer demand and use data to improve their products and services to thrive. We should not expect any less from where our teachers go to learn. By making meaningful performance information publicly available, states can equip both teacher-training providers and consumers to make the right choices. Delaware publishes report cards for preparation programs that include data such as pass rates on performance assessments, number of completers and non-completers, average teacher evaluation ratings, employer/supervisor satisfaction, and retention. Programs receive renewal status based on this data. Other states should consider this approach as well.

***Implement Teacher Apprenticeships.*** As states continue to grapple with teacher shortages, many are adopting strategies to increase access to and reduce the cost of teacher preparation. Tennessee's Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship program is the first K-12 teacher apprenticeship program registered with the Department of Labor, which means it has been vetted by

the department and has been determined to meet high standards for rigor and quality. While the program includes all components of a registered apprenticeship—apprentices in the program will complete 6,000 hours of paid, on-the-job training and 1,800 hours of classroom instruction, for example—the program is designed to culminate in a bachelor's degree. These degree apprenticeships are somewhat uncommon in the U.S. apprenticeship system but are a promising model for providing structured, low-cost training for associate and bachelor's degrees, which will open the door to a high number of in-demand positions in fields like education and healthcare. Additional innovation in teaching includes the passing of House Bill 2166 in Oregon in 2021. The bill provides \$3.5 million to fund the establishment of alternative licensure programs that can operate without national accreditation for 4 years after earning state program approval. Mississippi is running a pilot of a performance-based licensure system that links educator licensure to classroom effectiveness ratings, and teachers pursuing this route do not need to complete a teacher preparation program (Garcia & Muñiz, 2020; Jackson Public Schools, 2021). North Carolina is considering but has not





yet implemented a system of performance-based career steps for teachers, starting with apprentice roles that do not require TPP completion (Southern Regional Education Board, 2021).

***It is time to rethink accreditation.***

The need for reforms in education is evident. Decision-making about the process of accreditation must change and engage in a shared augmentation between policymakers and stakeholders instead of a top-down approach. Accrediting bodies should adapt and change policies to include local stakeholders in the decision-making process of what defines quality education in the states. While learning during COVID-19 has been challenging for both students and prospective teachers, this moment of disruption in the public education system has created the opportunity for rethinking and reinventing teacher preparation and schooling itself.

**Conclusions**

Understanding the process of teacher preparation and accreditation mandates provides important information for policymakers, education researchers, and leaders in educator preparation who seek to identify necessary legislation, regulations, or opportunities for

additional research. Effective teaching has long been an issue of national concern, but in recent years the focus on the effectiveness of programs in producing high-quality teachers has sharpened. Long-standing achievement gaps persist despite large-scale legislative changes at the federal and state levels, and American students continue to show poorer performance on international tests compared to peers in other developed nations.

College and university leadership should carefully evaluate their teacher preparation courses and ensure that our Nation's teachers are well-rounded and equipped to lead future generations. One approach to removing divisive and one-sided content from teacher preparation programs would be for states to ensure that no degree of higher education shall be approved as contributing toward certification as an educator if such degree or course includes advocating or compelling to adopt or express support for, bigotry or revisionist history of America's founding. Teachers' successes in educating children are critical to the foundation of the Nation's social and economic vitality. Now is the time for stakeholders in education to review the policies that govern teacher preparation programs and



help teachers become more effective in every classroom.



**ENDNOTES**

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