



TRANSFORMING TEACHING:

What University Presidents and Deans of Colleges of Education Need to Know about Modernizing the K-12 Educator Workforce

KATHERINE CASEY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transforming K-12 education systems to meet the new economic, civic, and cultural demands of our global society requires a modern teacher workforce. Specifically, it requires a teacher workforce with the knowledge, skills, and systems of support to be successful in student-centered, competency-based, and diverse learning environments.

Higher education is an essential actor in the work of transforming teaching and learning because universities and colleges of education have unparalleled power to modernize the educator workforce. Around the globe, the nations whose students excel are the nations that invest continually in the quality and sustainability of their educator workforce. While this is not the job of higher education alone, the quality of the educator workforce begins with the quality of its preparation and is sustained by opportunities for ongoing learning and advancement, both of which higher education can provide. Specifically, institutes of higher education can:

- Diversify the new educator workforce;
- Modernize teacher preparation; and
- Promote continuous professional learning and development.

Advocates for innovation in K-12 education are coming to recognize that, as Einstein said, “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create them.” In other words, we need a fundamental reimagining of school to achieve fundamentally different outcomes. The same is true, we believe, in higher education: methods of preparing teachers that fit the demands of the 19th and 20th centuries no longer fit the demands of the 21st century. Dramatic change is needed.

Leaders who respond to the vision offered in this brief may find themselves in political, economic, and cultural landscapes that lend themselves to different levels of institutional readiness for change. Recognizing this, we offer the following ideas about points of entry that leaders can find, no matter their contexts.

- ▶ Leaders at the earliest stages of change readiness might start by initiating a call to action. They might use this paper to engage conversations with leaders and trustees, initiate a learning agenda to understand the experiences of program graduates, or simply find fellow innovators within their institutions.
- ▶ Leaders in change-ready institutions might engage their communities to chart a roadmap for innovation. Roadmaps can lay out change strategies and continuous improvement plans to ensure that preparation programs will produce not only adequate numbers of teachers but also teachers whose knowledge and skill reflect workforce needs. This may involve changing the number or variety of program types, and/or changing what is taught in preparation and continuous learning programs.
- ▶ Leaders whose institutions are already embarking on the path to transform teaching might seek opportunities to deepen and expand their work. They might identify ways to grow successful pilot efforts within their institutions, integrate small scale new practices across existing programs, and/or seek new platforms and channels to extend innovative program offerings to new communities and prospective teachers.

This brief is a call to action to higher education leaders to help to modernize the teacher workforce. While the path of change is complex, it is also achievable, as evidenced by the many organizations, institutions, and states that are already making positive strides forward. Innovation, we believe, is a complex but vital priority for any leader looking to advance educational excellence and evolve their own institutions at pace with a changing global society.



Introduction

In 2018, we published a report called ***Moving Toward Mastery: Growing, Developing, and Sustaining Educators for Competency-Based Education***. The report describes what it could look like to align teaching with the opportunities and demands of a 21st-century competency-based education system, re-imagining multiple aspects of the teaching profession from pre-service training through retirement. The report’s vision centers around three core concepts for the educator workforce to become equity-oriented, learning-centered, and lifelong. Specifically:

- **Equity-oriented:** The teaching profession will be designed at all levels to ensure that all students succeed and opportunity gaps close;
- **Learning-centered:** The teaching profession will be designed at all levels to ensure that educators continually improve in their practice;
- **Lifelong:** The teaching profession will be designed at all levels to ensure that teachers are supported, respected, and sustained over the course of their careers.

Creating a future-ready teacher workforce requires preparing teachers for student-centered, competency-based education systems. These new learning environments necessitate different knowledge on contemporary pedagogies, skills, and dispositions than teaching in traditional classrooms.

Moving Toward Mastery synthesizes a large body of academic and empirical research about evolving expectations for teachers. This can be found in Appendix A at the end of this brief. While the competencies are highly detailed, it is useful to summarize several themes.

- Teachers increasingly play roles as instructional designers; they design projects and units, often with peers, and they customize learning experiences for individual students. Personalization requires competency with the design of learning.
- Teachers “design for difference;” their instructional strategies are flexible to meet students where they are and accommodate a variety of learning needs and preferences.
- Teachers use assessment literacy—the ability to design assessments and use assessment data—to personalize learning and help all students advance.
- Teachers advance equity through deep understanding of their own identity and the identities of their students, through culturally responsive practice, and often through advocacy for students and families.

Moving Toward Mastery also synthesizes ample research about the benefits of diversifying the teacher workforce.

- Black students who have one Black teacher by 3rd grade are 13 percent more likely to enroll in college; those who have two Black teachers by 3rd grade are 32 percent more likely to enroll in college.¹
- Students of color who have teachers of color report higher rates of safety and belonging.² Belonging increases a child’s ability to learn.
- Students of color who have teachers of color have lower rates of disciplinary action.³ Reductions in suspensions and expulsions disrupt the school to prison pipeline.

A Representative Workforce

“While the families who attend America’s public schools are increasingly non-white, the vast majority of educators remain white. This gap is an ethical issue and a practical one; we believe that learners of color deserve the opportunity to learn with and from educators of color, and we know that they will do better in school and in life when they do.” (Casey, 2018, p. 26)

The future-ready teacher workforce is socially, racially, and culturally representative. Its educators demonstrate the skills to design authentic and engaging experiences for all kinds of learners, and they demonstrate the mindsets of continuous learning, collaboration, and inclusion.



Casey, K. (2018). *Moving Toward Mastery: Growing, Developing and Sustaining Educators for Competency-Based Education*. Vienna, VA: Aurora Institute.

Higher Education Is an Essential Actor in the Work of Transforming Teaching and Learning

Preparation programs can be a significant lever for scale and quality in competency-based education if they reimagine “preparation” to align with the broader set of competencies needed to support student learning and increase equity. Doing so will require re-imagining what is taught, how it is taught, and to whom it is accessible.

(Casey, 2018, p. 54)

Higher Education Can Diversify the New Educator Workforce

A diverse and representative teacher workforce is essential to the future of K-12 education. Diversity benefits all industries and organizations by increasing qualification levels, capacity for innovation and performance, and improving retention and sustainability.⁴ In education, in addition to these benefits, increased diversity and representation have profound impacts on belonging, engagement, and long-term educational outcomes for students of color. It is hard—if not impossible—to imagine closing persistent

opportunity and achievement gaps without changing the face of the teacher workforce nationally and in each and every community around the nation.

Universities and colleges of education have tremendous power to diversify the new educator workforce by proactively recruiting and supporting prospective teachers with diverse racial, cultural, and religious identities. There is no single roadmap for this work, but

higher education leaders can consider several creative strategies and levers for change.

Higher education leaders can initiate or broaden the call to action to diversify the teaching force. Increased awareness, urgency, and action are needed to mobilize change; higher education can be a powerful advocate for change across all sectors by affirming and championing the value of a representative teacher workforce. Opinion pieces, public statements, and most importantly, commitments to action can position higher education leaders at the forefront of this important movement.

Higher education leaders can convene and facilitate cross-sector collaboratives to identify regional recruitment goals and strategies, utilize creative and responsive marketing to reach new communities, and streamline the application and admissions processes for prospective educators. TEACH (teach.org) is a national nonprofit partnering with multiple regions around the nation to facilitate such streamlined and strategic processes and offers an exciting example of how recruitment efforts can be led at a regional level, with higher education holding a vitally important seat at the table.

Finally, higher education leaders can partner with local education authorities (LEAs) and other providers to diversify pathways into education, thereby increasing opportunities for individuals of color, low-income individuals, individuals living in rural areas, and others who might be unlikely to enter teaching without new, responsive opportunities. These opportunities could take multiple forms, including:

- Postsecondary pathways into teaching that begin in high school and lead into the teaching profession. K-12 postsecondary pathways would allow students in high school to begin taking college-level courses for credit as part of a pathway into teaching, taking advantage of federal and state funding available for concurrent enrollment and early college high school models.
- Alternative pathways into teaching, such as those that allow para-professional teachers, substitute teachers, and other support roles to participate in teacher preparation coursework while still employed in their current positions. Such pathways are advantageous because they target positions that are often more reflective of student bodies than teachers and school leaders. They are also advantageous because they build sustainable local pipelines into teaching and because they allow prospective teachers to continue earning a salary while earning a credential, thereby making the pathway into teaching more accessible. There are many examples of such programs around the country, including the Academy for Rising Educators in Seattle, Washington.

Wherever the starting point, higher education leaders can act as significant changemakers in the effort to ensure that the future teacher workforce is a diverse and representative one.

Higher Education Can Modernize Teacher Preparation

Universities and colleges of education can be leaders in the effort to modernize preparation, as they have direct control over the design of preparation programs. A key step toward modernizing teacher preparation across all pathways, traditional and alternative, is creating learning experiences that allow new teachers to experience and develop the competencies that will be expected of them in modern classrooms. The higher education system can modernize systems by:

- Developing 21st-century teacher competencies; and
- Piloting and testing innovative approaches.

Innovations in higher education programs should be broad enough to unleash discovery, and they should also encourage innovations that align with purpose, outcomes, and learning approaches of learner-centered, competency-based education. These include:

- ▶ Prioritizing innovations that **build teacher knowledge and skill in areas that align to learner-centered learning and 21st-century student outcomes**. These might include: student-centered learning and teaching; Universal Design for Learning (UDL); instructional design; design for difference, including special education and language acquisition; assessment literacy; culturally competent teaching; Improvement and innovation practice; and specializations like science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM); and others;
- ▶ Prioritizing innovations that **integrate adult learning aligned to research and the learning sciences**. These might include personalized learning, residencies with clinical practice, problem and project-based learning, mentorship and induction supports, and performance assessments.
- ▶ Prioritizing innovations that **diversify professional pathways**. These might include offering continuing learning and education, high-quality digital learning, offering specialized credentials, working with local education agencies to develop systems of micro-credentials, and developing advanced certificates and degrees to develop school and systems leaders for learner-centered, personalized, competency-based education.

Developing and sustaining teachers for competency-based education requires a continuous investment in professional learning, development, and advancement. This is particularly true in student-centered, competency-based environments that continually

evolve to meet student needs, adapt to new findings in the learning sciences, and continuously improve.

Higher Education Can Promote Continuous Educator Learning and Development

While traditional thinking may assume that higher education's responsibility ends when students graduate and enter the workforce, higher education is, in fact, positioned for and served by a more extensive role. Higher education houses the expertise and capacity to support professional learning beyond the college classroom. Higher education is well served by this more extensive role because it provides opportunities for new partnerships.

Specifically, higher education can:

1. Work with state education agencies to develop multi-tiered systems of licensure and credentialing;
2. Offer opportunities for ongoing learning and micro-credentialing; and
3. Diversify programs to develop distributed leaders.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Licensure and Credentialing. Student-centered, competency-based systems would aim to establish clear expectations for what teachers need to know and be able to do at different stages of development, including but not limited to initial licensure. Ideally, these expectations would not be time-based but would be based on teachers' demonstration of competency. Such approaches to licensure and certification could help teachers deepen mastery and specialize in areas of interest as they advance.

When designed thoughtfully and strategically, teacher licensure and credentialing can be more than routine milestones in a teacher's career; they can be keystones in a professional system that supports ongoing learning and meaningful advancement. Specifically, they can articulate future-ready teacher competencies that align to student-centered, competency-based learning; articulate what these competencies look like at different levels of mastery; use measures of performance to show when teachers have reached new levels of mastery; and provide opportunities for teachers to advance and specialize in their careers.

We envision a future where state policymakers, professional standards boards, and community leaders would take the following actions to modernize and redesign licensure and credentialing:

- ▶ **Align licensure and credentialing requirements to the knowledge and skill required in learner-centered, competency-based education;**
- ▶ **Define multi-tiered licensure frameworks** that articulate increasing levels of teacher knowledge and skill;

- ▶ **Define what it means to demonstrate competency at all levels;**

- ▶ **Require meaningful demonstrations of competency for teachers to attain licensure.** Performance tasks required for licensure could include demonstrations of competency in clinical practice, student teaching, and/or other forms of work-based learning for initial licensure and entry into the teaching profession.

Ongoing Learning and Micro-Credentialing. Teachers cannot learn all they need to know about teaching in pre-service training programs. Becoming a skilled practitioner requires ongoing learning, coaching, and development in any context, and especially in contexts like student-centered, competency-based schools that continuously evolve to meet their students' needs.

Often, higher education's role in teacher development is thought to end when a graduate receives a credential and enters the workforce. However, this view is too narrow and shortsighted. Colleges, universities, and preparation programs can partner with states, local education agencies, communities, and schools to promote continued learning and development. Specifically:

- ▶ **Support induction and orientation.** Strong induction improves teacher effectiveness and retention.⁵ Strong approaches to induction include multiple elements, such as mentorship, principal support, reduced teaching load, co-teaching, and ongoing coursework.⁶ Institutions of higher education (IHEs) can partner with local education agencies to provide induction and ease the transition between pre-service training and the classroom.

- ▶ **Provide opportunities for teachers to earn credentials for increasing specialization** in areas that align to teacher competencies in student-centered, competency-based environments, visions for student learning (e.g., STEM), and workforce demands (e.g., dual-language certification).

- ▶ **Leverage micro-credentials to redesign professional learning and advancement.** Micro-credentials are evidence and performance-based validations of knowledge and skill. They ground learning in demonstration rather than seat time, validate learning with opportunities for revision and reflection, allow educators to show their learning in a peer-based network, and allow teachers to advance along personalized pathways. In partnership with local schools and districts, IHEs can design, review, validate, and even offer graduate credit for micro-credentials. Such partnerships help districts and schools ease the implementation burden and offer IHEs new opportunities for enrollment and revenue.

Develop Distributed Leaders. Distributed leadership is a hallmark of schools and systems that are learning-centered, student-

centered, and competency-based. This is both a pragmatic and values-based characteristic. Pragmatically, distributed leadership makes it possible for teachers and leaders to manage the complexity that comes not only with the shift to competency-based learning but also with the ongoing complexity of sustaining truly student-centered, continuously improving classrooms and schools. Furthermore, distributing leadership creates new opportunities for professional specialization and advancement and can help keep talented teachers in the teaching profession.⁷ From a values standpoint, a distributed leadership represents a step away from hierarchy and compliance and toward a culture where everyone—including teachers and students—are empowered to own their learning and their practice.

Higher education can support the shift toward distributed leadership by offering opportunities for teachers to grow into leadership roles. Credentialing and micro-credentialing programs offer two opportunities for leadership development. Beyond this, IHEs and preparation programs can provide advanced degrees that formally articulate leadership pathways. Specifically, they can:

- **Design master’s and other leadership degrees in specializations such as student-centered, culturally relevant, competency-based, and personalized learning.**
- 2Revolutions and Southern New Hampshire University are currently piloting a master’s degree in competency-based education (see Case Studies in the next section).



Southern New Hampshire University & 2Revolutions

2Revolutions, an education design lab, and Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) launched a master’s (M.Ed.) in Learning and Leading in a Competency-Based Environment in 2018. The impetus for the program was a frustration born out of New Hampshire’s effort to scale competency-based education statewide. Leaders realized pre-service and in-service training were barriers to scaling competency-based education, and they needed to become enablers. Adam Rubin, Founder and Partner at 2Revolutions, explains the urgency and the rationale for the new model:

“As the demand to transform schools increases, there is a growing need for training opportunities that can build real capacity of a cohort within a district context. Learning is inherently social, yet we so often get our training, particularly credentialing opportunities, disconnected from our peers and the context in which we work. Also, we think there is an important opportunity at this time to reshape credentialing. Seat-time is a vestige of a different era.”

2Revolutions and New Hampshire’s state leadership aligned around this urgency for innovation (see [2015 NHD OE Vision 2.0](#) for more information), and SNHU was a natural collaborator. SNHU leadership shared the urgency for change, and as a private entity, they had autonomy to innovate more nimbly. Furthermore, SNHU’s reputation as a leader in higher education made them a trusted partner and would help elevate the program as a national proof point.

Through this partnership, 2Revolutions and SNHU have collaborated around a shared vision: *To develop a capacity-building program for educator leaders (teachers and those who support teachers) to support districts as they transform toward a competency-based learning system.*

That led to honing in on clear outcomes for the program: *By completing this master’s program, you will know and be able to apply the core components of a CBE model within instruction, assessment, and leadership (regardless of role), be able to identify*

the requirements of a system that supports CBE, and create a plan and continue to support transforming your practice toward a CBE model.

Through an iterative process, the 2Revolutions and SNHU design team and a technical advisory group of national leaders and practitioners built out a competency framework and generated an overall program design. These design processes were anchored in a few core beliefs:

- 1. Competency-Based Learning.** The program is designed to deepen the capacities of educators and leaders to be competency-based practitioners. This means that content is aligned to three sets of competencies: A) educator skills and dispositions, B) teaching and learning competencies, and C) leadership competencies, and that learners experience competency-based education in their own learning process. These competencies are intentionally bundled and sequenced across two stackable blocks. The first block frontloads skills and dispositions, operating from the belief that competency-based practice cannot be developed without grounding ways of thinking and acting.

Specifically, program designers share the vital importance of developing a learning orientation, a belief in engendering agency as core to learning, and a commitment to educational equity. The first block also builds foundational knowledge in all four teaching and learning competencies:

- leveraging competencies,
- competency-based instruction,
- competency-based assessment, and
- fostering learner agency.

The second block deepens learning and teaching competencies through applied problems of practice and emphasizes leadership competencies focused on change leadership and developing sustainable structures for competency-based education. The program values learning, not seat time. Learners will advance along personalized learning paths based on demonstration of mastery. Multiple types of assessments are used as and for learning: diagnostic, formative, summative, and performance-based. Additionally, evidence of learning is the coin of the realm in all performance tasks instead of more traditional articulation of knowledge. The experience culminates in an integrative portfolio defense.

- 2. Collaborative.** Learning is both an individual and a social experience. As a cohort, there is an expectation that learning is, in part, collaborative between the participants of a district team and between other district teams. Because competency-based education emphasizes collaborative practice rather than hierarchical structure, teams will be asked to engage in embedded problems of practice in “flat” learning structures, and each participant will bring their expertise to the table. This design is intended to achieve two outcomes: grounding learning in practice and building capacity for collaborative leadership across the system. They intentionally chose a cohort from a district instead of a random assortment of individuals because of the strong belief in the power of bringing together learners with different roles to work on things together, as well as bringing together different districts because of the value of reflecting on same/different challenges in different contexts within the same state policy environment. Learning blends asynchronous (80%) and synchronous (20%) modalities. This flipped model increases accessibility and prioritizes collaboration in face-to-face learning.

- 3. Relevant and Authentic Learning.** The program is designed for teams interested in anchoring their learning to the context of their classrooms, schools, and districts, rather than something strictly theoretical. The learner needs to contextualize the content to the places they work, and all formative and summative tasks build from their real-world context and the problems of practice with which they are wrestling. Success for a participant is the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills and move the work forward in measurable ways in their building and district

- 4. Learner-Driven.** Intentionally cultivate learner autonomy through ongoing formative, reflective processes that foster metacognition, increased self-direction, creative confidence, and the ability to self-assess and self-advocate. Overall program design, as well as instruction and assessment, incorporates opportunities for the learner to make meaningful choices about their learning. Additionally, each learner has a learner profile through which they are setting goals, making choices, and building a portfolio of evidence to support their work and use in their culminating defense of learning.

The master’s launched with a first cohort in New Hampshire in winter of 2018; subsequent cohorts are to launch in winter and spring 2020 nationally. So far, the results have been promising:

92.5% of learners said the courses have given them ideas, skills, or techniques they can apply in their classroom; 84.2% said the tasks have allowed them to engage in meaningful work, which has had a direct impact on their classroom practice/leadership. Instructors have observed deep evidence of application of learning in the artifacts learners have submitted.

When the work began a year ago, some learning goals were articulated. Rubin describes those as “learning in front of the field.” The team will be studying big questions in the work: how to balance time and mastery, how to balance learning theory with problems of practice, what it means to be “ready” for this type of learning experience, and how to build collaborative practice in hybrid teams.

The partnership has generated many lessons. They’ve seen how 8-10 week terms are challenging for learners to complete the rigorous tasks, so they’re adjusting to using 16-week terms for the next cohort. They’ve seen that the competency frameworks are possibly too ambitious for a master’s program and are revisiting those currently with a team of expert advisors.

By learning publicly, the team hopes to contribute to the field and support future innovators. Success also means pressuring the system. Specifically, convincing more schools of education to launch similar programs and convincing states’ professional standards boards to create new credentials for competency-based education. The 2Revolutions team has begun to partner with Hamline University in Minnesota to create a smaller certificate program in Culturally Relevant Student Centered Learning, and they are in conversations with a number of other Higher Ed institutions about jointly managing an array of other programs focused on future of learning pedagogy and leadership.

Program leaders aspire to be part of the larger effort to scale competency-based practice. By creating cross-functional leadership teams with the knowledge, skill, and dispositions for competency-based education, designers hope to contribute to tipping points across the country.

Virginia Department of Education & William & Mary

Several years into a statewide transformation, the Commonwealth of Virginia is taking compelling new strides to increase educator

and leader capacity for personalized, deeper learning models. In 2016 the state passed House Bill 895 and Senate Bill 336, which led to the development of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate. The “Profile” updates Virginia’s statewide graduation requirements, opening the way for competency-based and personalized learning. These shifts accelerated previous innovation efforts, including high school program innovation and performance-based assessments. Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national leader in student-centered

learning, is providing Virginia leaders with ongoing support as they implement these initiatives. Stephanie Krauss, director of special projects at JFF, describes early stages of the work this way, “All the changes were happening, but there was an opportunity to have them be better aligned and mutually advancing. We have had the privilege of partnering with the state as they look to link the various pieces together comprehensively.”

“The team will be studying big questions in the work: how to balance time and mastery, how to balance learning theory with problems of practice, what it means to be “ready” for this type of learning experience, and how to build collaborative practice in hybrid teams.

This birds-eye view led Krauss and state leaders to an important realization: “We were talking about what students needed, and we realized that it would be unfair to retool graduation requirements and hold teachers and principals accountable, without providing them with additional support and training. State leaders are starting to think differently about pre-service preparation and in-service supports, accreditation, and professional standards.”

This realization kickstarted a multi-stage, statewide effort that aligns all aspects of educators’ and leaders’ professional experience with changes to the student experience. This design process, still underway, has thus far entailed four major phases of collaboration between educators, school leaders, district leaders, state and nonprofit leaders, as well as post-secondary schools of education.

In Phase 1, JFF provided support to the Virginia Department of Education and William & Mary’s School-University Research Network (“SURN”) to convene local educators, school leaders, and district leaders in central Virginia. Participants engaged in an open and generative dialogue. Educators and leaders studied the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and generated a comprehensive list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that educators and leaders would need to develop those competencies in students. They then looked at this list against current standards for certification and effectiveness, asking key questions. Where is there alignment? Misalignment? Looking at existing standards against our list, which standards are nice to have? Which are a need to have? Which are outdated? Which are missing?

Next, the comprehensive lists of educator and leader competencies generated in phase one were brought to a second convening of state and local leaders in Richmond. In this second phase, representatives culled and sorted the list of educator and leader competencies, looking for alignment with student outcomes and learning in a personalized, competency-based system. They also focused intently on alignment with state policy, including professional standards for certification and accreditation. As Krauss explained, participants asked, “How are state requirements and district requirements supporting what we want for educators and leaders? Are there places where the requirements may hinder progress?” At the end of this second phase of work, the Virginia team was ready to articulate their “beta” version of professional standards for educators and leaders and create recommendations for preparation, certification, and accreditation.

The next step was to engage higher education as a partner. JFF and state leaders identified the College of William & Mary as a lead partner. William & Mary’s “SURN” had already played a leadership role, and the College has a statewide reputation as a higher education leader, including a track record of innovation. William & Mary agreed to host the Phase 3 meeting, which was a convening of higher education leaders. Higher education leaders reviewed the beta “Profile of a Virginia Education Leader” and “Profile of a Virginia Educator” and ultimately asked the following questions: “How do these frameworks reflect the way we prepare educators and leaders?” And, “can we commit to making changes that align with this new vision?”

George Mason University stepped up to lead the development of the Profile of a Virginia Educator, while VASCD (Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) convened stakeholders to identify the components of the Profile of a Virginia Classroom, aka the Pedagogy Project. The VaSCL (Virginia School Consortium for Learning) leveraged these resources as it created a three-year plan to build a collaborative network of approximately 30 school divisions per year working to operationalize the Profile of a Virginia Graduate in their communities. VASS (Virginia Association of School Superintendents) is currently developing an inaugural superintendent leadership academy to launch in 2020, focusing on the competencies and skillsets identified in the Profile of a Virginia Leader. The Virginia State Board of Education endorsed this work,

and these documents will remain dynamic and inform future initiatives, such as the teacher and administrator evaluation process and professional development requirements for educators—not only the content but the “how.”

In the coming year, JFF and state leaders will distribute small capacity grants to help advance this redesign work in a higher education–K-12 collaborative redesign.

Krauss reflects on what it took to get so many different stakeholders behind a common vision. Engaging higher education required finding a higher education leader to engage peer

institutions and vetting new ideas before taking them to the entire higher education collaborative. “Before we brought anything to higher education, we had to know that there was enough support and alignment between what we were proposing and people’s lived experiences.” More generally, she attributes the early success of the initiative to the holistic, alignment-oriented approach. “It all started with recognizing that the world is changing, and we need to change with it. Then recognizing that we had to design

“I am always struck by the power of the network of state leaders in Virginia and their involvement in work on the ground. These people do life together. The long-standing work that these leaders have done together on multiple levels is compelling, and I think it is a condition that enabled us to move change so rapidly.

- Stephanie Krauss, director of special projects at JFF

all the way to the bottom. “What does the kid need? Then, what does the adult need? How about ‘little p’ district policy? State policy? Higher education and pre-service? Accreditation and funding for those programs?”

Finally, Krauss reflects on two critical conditions for challenging change work: relationships and trust. “I am always struck by the power of the network of state leaders in Virginia and their involvement in work on the ground. These people do life together. The long-standing work that these leaders have done together on multiple levels is compelling, and I think it is a condition that enabled us to move change so rapidly.”

Dallas Independent School District

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) launched the Innovation in Teaching Fellowship as part of its effort to scale personalized learning. Now in its fourth year, the fellowship aims to build educators’ capacity to innovate in their classrooms and support the spread of innovation in their schools. While the fellowship is very much focused on developing educators to lead and scale personalized learning, district staff felt it critical to do this

through the lens of innovation. Specifically, they felt it important to organize the fellowship around the principles and skills of design thinking, a process to stimulate innovation combining methods from engineering, social sciences, and arts. Kristen Watkins, director of personalized learning for Dallas ISD, explained it this way:

“Why design thinking? For us, it’s about building habits that will allow educators to continue to evolve even after the fellowship is over. Design thinking is a great, robust process. Even after the fellowship, educators can use their design thinking skill set to continue to gain insight and prototype and test new ideas. Often teachers think they have to have it all planned out before they start, but design thinking encourages them to start small and pushes them to fail forward.”

The fellowship kicks off in the summer with a Design Sprint. During this three-day workshop, fellows learn the fundamentals of design thinking and select a personalized learning focus pathway, such as project-based learning or blended learning. Design thinking provides the meta-structure for the fellowship. Over the course of the year, fellows continuously work through design cycles related to their personalized learning focus; they identify problems in their classrooms, identify possible solutions within the domain of personalized learning and iteratively test some number of those ideas in practice. Fellows meet in-person four times during the year. In-person sessions help deepen knowledge about personalized learning and allow fellows time to work with their peers on personal problems of practice related to their design cycles. Between sessions, fellows access online learning pathways asynchronously. By getting the majority of core personalized learning content on their own time, collaborative sessions can focus on active and collaborative learning. Fellows also receive individual coaching from the fellowship coach and engage in school visits to observe

personalized learning practice. The fellowship concludes with a showcase, where fellows share their learning over the course of the year.

Educators in the fellowship come from schools across the district and are not usually representatives of schools that are piloting personalized learning. As a result, these educators are often the first people in their buildings to experiment with personalized learning. While some might worry that this would isolate them or limit the spread of effective practices, district staff see it very differently. Again, Watkins explains:

“If it can start with one educator, it can grow from the ground up. The principal gets on board because they see it working in their school. Personalized learning bubbles up and starts to expand campus-wide. It has been powerful to see how personalized learning can start so small and spread in a matter of months to other classrooms. When colleagues see other folks on their campus trying these things, they ask ‘what are you doing? I need to be doing what you’re doing.’”

The fellowship has been a success in its first year, with 100% of alumni saying they would do the fellowship again. District staff members are considering launching a year two fellowship for alumni. In the meantime, fellowship alumni offer leadership and mentorship to current fellows, running personalized learning sessions during convenings and providing other coaching supports. District staff members believe that the most important part of the fellowship is the opportunity for educators to experience the types of learning they can then provide for students. “We have learned that educators and leaders cannot create something different for students if they don’t experience it. This is how we try to work: we model personalization in all aspects of learning and support.”



Conclusion

In a learning-centered profession, all aspects of professional practice focus on growing and developing learners along personalized pathways. Just as systems are in place to support and develop student learners over the course of their educations, systems are in place to support and develop educators over the course of their professional careers. Development is a process, not a destination. Learning spans the course of a lifetime, and professional development spans the course of an educator's career as they try, test, and extend new practices that help them improve student learning and advance equity.

Recommendations

To conclude, significant policy changes will need to accompany programmatic changes to synchronize modern professional learning with licensure and credentialing frameworks. This will require:

- ▶ **Developing performance-based requirements for initial teacher licensure that align with new expectations for teacher competency.** Requirements for initial licensure will require competency in a core set of knowledge and skills. It will be most effective when integrated into a multi-tiered licensure system.
- ▶ **Defining graduate outcomes** and requirements for teacher candidates to graduate from preparation programs **that align with new expectations of teacher quality and new definitions of success for students in K-12 systems;**
- ▶ **Developing performance-based assessments that allow prospective teachers to demonstrate competencies;**
- ▶ **Assessing how current courses and learning experiences do or do not promote the development of these competencies;**
- ▶ **Redesigning core elements of program design—course offerings, core curricula, learning experiences, pedagogy, and others—to promote the development of modern teacher competencies;** and
- ▶ **Allowing, funding, and/or providing technical support for innovative pilots at IHEs and programs** and/or between IHEs and K-12 systems/local education agencies (LEAs).

Endnotes

1. Gershenson, S., Hart, C. M. D., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C. A., & Papageorge, N. W. (2019) *The long-run impacts of same-race teachers*. NBER Working Paper 25254. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25254.pdf>
2. Dilworth, M. E., & Coleman, M. J. (2014). *Time for a change: Diversity in teaching revisited*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. Retrieved from [https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Time_for_a_Change_Diversity_in_Teaching_Revisited_\(web\).pdf](https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Time_for_a_Change_Diversity_in_Teaching_Revisited_(web).pdf)
3. Wright, A. C. (2015). *Teachers' perceptions of students' disruptive behavior: The effect of racial congruence and consequences for school suspension*. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Santa Barbara. Retrieved from <https://aefpweb.org/sites/default/files/webform/41/Race%20Match,%20Disruptive%20Behavior,%20and%20School%20Suspension.pdf>
4. Kerby, S., & Burns, C. (2012). The top 10 economic facts of diversity in the workplace. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2012/07/12/11900/the-top-10-economic-facts-of-diversity-in-the-workplace/>
5. Espinoza, D., Saunders, R., Kini, T., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). *Taking the long view: State efforts to solve teacher shortages by strengthening the profession*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
6. Ingersoll, R. M. (2012). Beginning teacher induction What the data tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(8), 47–51.
7. Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2008). *Who leaves? Teacher attrition and student achievement* (NBER Working Paper No. 14022). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research

What are the competencies that educators need to be successful in competency-based environments?

The following is adapted from: Jobs for the Future & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2015). *Educator competencies for personalized, learner-centered teaching*. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

KNOWLEDGE - An educator's body of knowledge that is used to inform instruction.

1. Knowledge of self

- 1.1 Identities, values, and beliefs;
- 1.2 Mental models;
- 1.3 Learning preferences;
- 1.4 Interests, strengths and growth areas; and
- 1.5 Personal biases and strategies to address bias.

2. Knowledge of learners

- 2.1 Learner development;
- 2.2 Brain development and developmental stages;
- 2.3 Developmental differences;
- 2.4 Strategies for supporting students with learning differences;
- 2.5 Strategies for supporting language learners;
- 2.6 Trauma-informed strategies; and
- 2.7 Learner background, interests, preferences, and strengths.

3. Knowledge of learning

- 3.1 Learning sciences
 - Cognitive;
 - Metacognitive; and
 - Social-Emotional.

4. Knowledge of content

- 4.1 Competencies and the standards upon which they are based;
- 4.2 Common, moderated understanding of what demonstrating mastery looks like;
- 4.3 Awareness of common student misconceptions and challenges in content;
- 4.4 Central concepts and structures within content area(s); and content progressions across multiple bands.

5. Knowledge of pedagogy

- 5.1 Learning theory and pedagogical practice aligned to district and school expectations;
- 5.2 Personalization;
- 5.3 Strategies for supporting:
 - Higher order thinking;
 - Agency;
 - Self-regulation;
 - Metacognition;
 - Social and emotional development; and
 - Positive academic and personal mindsets.

KNOWLEDGE - An educator's body of knowledge that is used to inform instruction.

5. Design for mastery

- 5.1 Design and/or utilize transparent, standards-aligned learning progressions;
- 5.2 Design and/or customize multiple learning pathways with opportunities for differentiation based on learner need;
- 5.3 Moderate to common understanding of proficiency;
- 5.4 Design learning units, projects, and experiences; and
- 5.5 Design experiences that are suited to different learning preferences and needs.

6. Universal design and cultural competency

- 6.1 Create learning environments and experiences that are inclusive for neurodiversity;
- 6.2 Create learning environments and experiences that support language learners; and
- 6.3 Facilitate culturally relevant instruction that honors learner backgrounds;

7. Assessment literacy

- 7.1 Design and/or use formative assessment as and for learning;
- 7.2 Design and/or use reliable performance-based and summative assessments;
- 7.3 Utilize multiple measures (aligned to expanded definition of student success) to support continuous improvement and to adjust instruction; and
- 7.4 Promote learner voice and choice in selecting forms of assessment and demonstration.

8. Learner engagement and ownership

- 8.1 Build authentic and meaningful relationships with learners;
- 8.2 Design and facilitate learning experiences based on learner interest;
- 8.3 Engage learner voice and choice;
- 8.4 Support positive social and emotional development;
- 8.5 Develop self-regulation and self-management skills; and
- 8.6 Guide learners to independent mastery.

9. Flexible resource allocation

- 9.1 Utilize technology as a learning tool;
- 9.2 Utilize space as a learning tool;
- 9.3 Utilize time as a learning tool; and
- 9.4 Utilize community partners as learning tools.

10. Personalization

- 10.1 Support multiple learning pathways based on learner needs, interests and strengths;
- 10.2 Provide appropriate level of challenge for each learner, leading to stretch;
- 10.3 Utilize differentiation and scaffolding to support each learner's progress;
- 10.4 Provide timely and differentiated supports; and
- 10.5 Provide rich feedback to support learner reflection, revision, and extension.

11. Relevance and connection

- 11.1 Promote authentic collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and cooperation;
- 11.2 Facilitate real-world, connected learning;
- 11.3 Support anywhere, anytime learning; and
- 11.4 Manage online and blended learning.

INTRAPERSONAL - An educator's internal mindsets, mental models and orientations that inform their actions and behaviors.

1. Commitment to educational equity

- 1.1** Seek to understand and value learner identity and culture as assets for learning;
- 1.2** Publicly model belief in every learner's ability to learn at high levels;
- 1.3** Practice learner-centered decision-making;
- 1.4** Identify, name and address historical and institutional barriers to equity; and
- 1.5** Self-reflect to investigate personal power, privilege, and bias.

2. Growth mindset

- 2.1** Publicly model commitment to learning through challenge;
- 2.2** Publicly model belief that performance and intelligence grow through effort; and
- 2.3** Persist through challenges.

3. Learning and improvement

- 3.1** Prioritize lifelong professional learning;
- 3.2** Utilize established improvement practices;
- 3.3** Reflect on personal growth and development; and
- 3.4** Seek feedback from learners, peers, and leaders to support growth and development.

4. Innovation and change orientation

- 4.1** Communicate and model commitment to new visions for learning and teaching;
- 4.2** Explore, try and test new practices;
- 4.3** Utilize established innovation practices to evaluate new ideas; and
- 4.4** Take smart risks to innovate.

5. Critical thinking

- 5.1** Practice effective reasoning and analysis;
- 5.2** Practice systems thinking;
- 5.3** Practice creative thinking and problem-solving; and
- 5.4** Demonstrate sound decision-making.

6. Leadership

- 6.1** Seek appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning; and
- 6.2** Take necessary action to ensure learner growth, support peers and contribute to school improvement.

INTERPERSONAL - An educator's social and relational skills that shape learning environments and inform collaborative practice.

1. Relationships

- 1.1 Build culturally fluent relationships with learners;
- 1.2 Build culturally fluent relationships with the adults in learners' lives; and
- 1.3 Build culturally fluent relationships with peers and colleagues.

2. Learning environments

- 2.1 Design inclusive learning environments;
- 2.2 Design learning environments that promote peer-to-peer learning
- 2.3 Create a positive, collaborative culture of learning.

3. Partnerships

- 3.1 Identify and facilitate partnerships that promote connected and real-world learning;
- 3.2 Connect learners with supportive adults in the community to support learning and development; and
- 3.3 Collaborate with families as partners in learning.

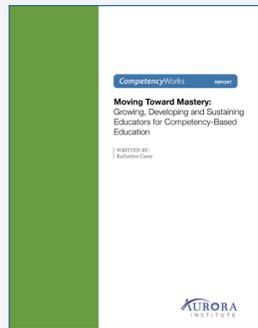
4. Collaboration and teaming

- 4.1 Partner with peers in key roles, including instructional planning, teaching, reflection, and inquiry;
- 4.2 Seek and provide feedback and support to peers;
- 4.3 Collaboration: contribute to peers' professional learning and practice through shared learning;
- 4.4 Distribute leadership roles on a team; and
- 4.5 Contribute to team learning and growth.

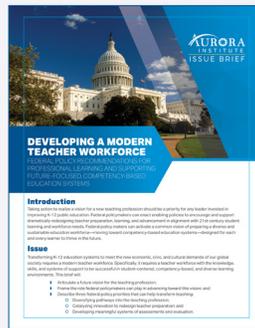
Additional Resources

- *Educator Competencies for Personalized, Student Centered Teaching*
https://www.ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/EducatorCompetencies_081015.pdf
- *D51 Teaching and Learning Framework*
<http://competencyworks.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/121411554/Teaching%20Learning%20Framework%20v%208%20April%2027%202017.pdf>
- *Building 21 Educator Competencies*
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hcuPxWrZqdtV78cdFm6TmzslSoDLUaBJESP8ahICO_s/edit
- *Big Picture Learning: Met Advisor Competencies*
<http://studentsatthecenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/BP-Advisor-Competencies-and-Skills-2014.pdf>
- *iNACOL Blended Learning Teacher Competency Framework*
<https://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/iNACOL-Blended-Learning-Teacher-Competency-Framework.pdf>

Learn More



[Moving Toward Mastery: Growing, Developing and Sustaining Educators for Competency-Based Education](#)



[Developing a Modern Teacher Workforce: Federal Policy Recommendations for Professional Learning and Supporting Future-Focused, Competency-Based Education Systems](#)



[Modernizing the Teaching Workforce for Learner-Centered, Competency-Based, Equity-Oriented Education: State Policy Recommendations](#)

Suggested Citation

Please refer to this issue brief as Casey, K. (2019). *Transforming teaching: What university presidents and deans of colleges of education need to know about modernizing the K-12 educator workforce*. Vienna, VA: Aurora Institute.

Content in this issue brief is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.



About the Author

Katherine Casey is Founder and Principal of Katherine Casey Consulting, an independent organization focused on innovation, personalized and competency-based school design and research and development. Katherine was a founding Director of the Imaginarium Innovation Lab in Denver Public Schools, supporting a portfolio of almost 30 schools across Denver and spearheading the Lab's research and development activity. Katherine was a founding design team member at the Denver School of Innovation and Sustainable Design, Denver's first competency-based high school. Prior to her time in Denver, Katherine worked in leadership development, philanthropy, public affairs and higher education. She received her BA from Stanford University and her Doctorate in Education Leadership from Harvard University. Her dissertation, titled "Innovation and Inclusion by Design; Re-imagining Learning, Remembering Brown," explored the intersection of school design and integration in Denver.

Contact

For more information or technical assistance, contact the staff at the Aurora Institute Center for Policy Advocacy:

Susan Patrick

President & CEO, Aurora Institute and Co-Founder, *CompetencyWorks*:

spatrick@inacol.org

Maria Worthen

Vice President for Federal and State Policy

mworthen@inacol.org

Natalie Truong

Policy Director

ntruong@inacol.org

Alexis Chambers

Policy Associate

achambers@inacol.org





A New Dawn for
Every Learner

The mission of the AURORA INSTITUTE is to drive the transformation of education systems and accelerate the advancement of breakthrough policies and practices to ensure high-quality learning for all.

1934 Old Gallows Road, Suite 350
Vienna, VA 22182 -4040

ph. 703.752.6216 | fx. 703.752.6201



www.inacol.org