

An Improvement Agenda for North Carolina's Educator Preparation System

In March 2019, Deans for Impact convened a group of North Carolina educator preparation programs to surface opportunities to improve the delivery of early learning and literacy instruction provided by our programs. As representatives of five diverse institutions participating in the North Carolina (NC) Early Learning & Literacy Impact Coalition, we believe policy can – and should – play an important role in supporting and accelerating that improvement. Changes to practice and policy must be grounded in our best scientific understanding of how young children learn.

We, the members of this Impact Coalition, believe any policy put forth to improve the delivery of literacy instruction specifically, and educator preparation broadly, should:

Set clear expectations that early childhood and elementary preparation programs ensure their candidates deeply understand and organize their teaching around the principles and practices identified in [The Science of Early Learning](#);

Supporting Recommendations:

- **The State Board of Education should approve common expectations for preparation in literacy that reflect the principles and practices identified in *The Science of Early Learning*.**
 - Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) should be required to align program requirements, including coursework and clinical experiences, to those standards and learning outcomes.
- **The State Board of Education should establish common learning outcomes related to those principles and practices that all early childhood and elementary candidates should be able to demonstrate upon program completion.**
 - To demonstrate learning outcomes, EPPs should implement candidate assessments grounded in the principles of learning science, including
 - an observation instrument of teacher instructional practice, and
 - an assessment of candidate knowledge and understanding of the principles of learning science.
- **The State Board of Education should require all programs to engage candidates in intentionally-sequenced clinical experiences that include opportunities to:**
 - observe teaching practices (e.g., faculty, university supervisors, mentors) that reflect the principles of learning science,
 - engage in early, deliberate and sustained practice opportunities during which candidates enact the practices (e.g., low-stakes practice with teacher educators and peers; authentic practice opportunities with children in early and elementary settings), and
 - receive substantive and actionable feedback on enacted teaching practice using an observation instrument focused on the principles of learning science, especially as it relates to teaching reading.
- **The State Board of Education should provide opportunities and incentives for teacher educators, including clinical faculty and mentors, to engage in professional learning opportunities to enhance their ability to support candidates enact practices grounded in learning science.**
 - The State Board of Education should convene a team of NC literacy experts to identify or develop online, self-paced and face-to-face training modules.

- Training modules should cover principles of learning science focused on reading and evidence-based methods (e.g. modeling, practice and feedback);
- Successful completion of the training modules and a common, online assessment should be available and accepted by the state as evidence that faculty teaching literacy courses, literacy coaches, and mentor teachers possess the identified knowledge and skills; and
- Successful completion of the assessment should lead to a literacy credential for teacher educators.
 - Individuals who achieve the credential should be allowed to facilitate future state-supported professional learning for other teacher educators and receive appropriate compensation.

Partner with state, district, and community stakeholders to better align pre-service educator preparation of early childhood and elementary candidates with in-service expectations.

Supporting Recommendations:

- **The General Assembly should provide funds for the Department of Public Instruction to collect, refine, and provide high-quality, actionable provider – and program-level – data** related to improving the design and effectiveness of EPPs. The General Assembly should:
 - Extend and improve access to program-level (e.g. elementary education) outcomes data, including teacher evaluation data (e.g., EVAAS data, observation data at the indicator level if available) and employment by location.
 - Direct the Department of Public Instruction to develop a statewide MOU to facilitate IHE and district data sharing.
 - Develop additional literacy-specific opportunities to collect data to support evidence-based continuous improvement.
- **The Department of Public Instruction and the General Assembly should identify and distribute funds to support networks of programs and their P-12 partners to develop and implement redesigned programs.** Improvement activities should include:
 - Design or refinement of coursework grounded in principles and practices of learning science;
 - Alignment of high-quality clinical experiences and coursework that increase in complexity over time;
 - Development of meaningful and common assessment(s) of candidate learning.

The **North Carolina Early Learning & Literacy Impact Coalition** is comprised of program teams from the following institutions: Elon University, University of North Carolina Charlotte, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Western Carolina University, and Winston Salem State University. The Impact Coalition is facilitated by Deans for Impact with the generous support and guidance of our partners the Belk Foundation, SAS, and the University of North Carolina System.

Deans for Impact is a national non-profit dedicated to ensuring that every child is taught by a well-prepared teacher. Since 2015, Deans for Impact has worked closely with leaders from educator-preparation programs in over 30 states to transform how they prepare future teachers. In designing network experiences, Deans for Impact aims to create inclusive and collaborative spaces that address participants’ real problems of practice, and provide concrete examples while recognizing the importance of local context.

