



Teaching our teachers: a better way

Developing partnerships to improve teacher preparation

Paper 2 in a series on improving initial teacher education
drawing on the work of a global Community of Practice

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Danielle Toon & Ben Jensen

Learning First is a global organization of researchers, consultants, policy advisors and teachers. We work closely with education leaders in Australia and around the world to tie policy reform at the highest level of government to deep change in the classroom. For more information, please visit www.learningfirst.com.

Learning First conducted the analysis presented in this report. The interpretations of how these systems operate are the authors', and do not necessarily represent the views or official positions of governments or officials in the systems analyzed.

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Series preface

In September 2015, Learning First formed a Community of Practice (CoP) to tackle the obstacles that undermine reform of initial teacher education (ITE). The CoP brought together teams of providers and system leaders from Brazil, Finland, Australia, and the United States, including the Florida and Tennessee Departments of Education, Relay Graduate School of Education, the National Center for Teacher Residencies, TNTP, and USPREP/Texas Tech University.

Over a two-year period, each team piloted an ITE reform and had access to international convenings, experts, research, and case studies to assist them. The pilots examined various aspects of teacher preparation and early career development, including induction and mentoring, program site reviews, building teacher content knowledge, use of data for program improvement, partnerships between districts and providers, and teacher educator pedagogies and professional development.

All teams focused on a specific element of teacher preparation that concerned their daily work. All believed that working in partnerships with stakeholders was the way to get the most improvement. No one believed they could do this alone. Partnerships are not easy, and the experiences of all teams in the CoP highlight that reform in teacher preparation is complex work. We have learned lessons that reflect the challenges of ITE reform around the world.

This set of papers both sets out what we have learned about creating partnerships to reform teacher preparation, and combines these lessons with global best practice and research on teacher development. An introductory paper, *Connecting teacher preparation and practice*, looks at how to form partnerships to improve the learning of beginning teachers. It recommends that partnerships develop:

1. A common language and approach that explicitly connects *how teachers learn* in initial teacher education, how they learn in

professional development, and what they do every day in classrooms;

2. A shared understanding of *what new teachers need to learn* that comes from K-12 curriculum

The second paper, *Developing partnerships to improve teacher preparation*, provides a continuum for the development of partnerships and the role districts and providers play in creating them. It explains that what we already know about good adult and teacher learning and K-12 curriculum provides a clearer starting point for productive collaboration than is often realized.

The third and fourth papers go further into the detail of developing partnerships to improve the learning of beginning teachers. *Using K-12 curriculum to improve teacher preparation* explores how K-12 curriculum can be used to deepen partnerships and improve beginning teacher learning. *Continuous improvement in teacher education* discusses how providers, partners, and systems can use data and improvement cycles to improve how they train prospective teachers. The papers include examples that describe the work, and lessons from each CoP team's pilot.

We hope these lessons will help others to improve initial teacher education in the United States and around the world. These papers are not blind to the barriers to reform, but they also highlight the great opportunities that now exist to produce lasting, beneficial change to relationships between teacher educators, districts and schools and, through these partnerships, to teacher development and student learning.

Overview

In complex school systems, top-down directives rarely improve beginning teacher learning. Instead, deeper partnerships between districts and ITE providers, ones that connect preparation to practice, are the engine for improving the learning journey of new teachers. System standards, incentives, and supports are all important in helping these partnerships to be deep, coherent, and continuously improving.

This paper outlines a way to build deeper, district-provider partnerships that improve beginning teacher learning in the United States, Australia, and other large and diverse education systems. It identifies the need for such partnerships and the challenges in creating them. It also offers a framework for describing different types of collaboration:

1. Basic partnerships, which involve regular discussions about operational issues;
2. Collaborative partnerships, in which partners hold structured meetings that involve sharing data and what they are working on;
3. Continuously improving partnerships, in which partners use an improvement cycle and collaborate on joint projects; and
4. Partners who jointly design, deliver, evaluate, and improve preparation and early career development.

Much has been written about the need for better partnerships, yet many district-provider partnerships still struggle to move from shallow, polite conversations to robust, equal relationships

that substantially improve teacher learning. Many partners continue to operate in silos and to use different approaches to train teachers. It's not surprising. Collaboration between stakeholders from different organizations with different cultures and priorities and no common language with which to talk about improvement is time-consuming and frustrating. Even partners who meet often struggle to move from problem identification to joint solutions.

Deeper partnerships require the development of a shared vision and framework for teacher learning. The partners must work together on concrete aspects of teacher training, jointly developing the capabilities of staff, and rewarding those who collaborate well. This journey of development takes time, effort, resources, and mutual understanding.

The paper discusses the role districts and providers play in creating deeper connections in each type of partnership. It examines how they might create a shared vision and framework, work together on concrete aspects of teacher training, and build and recognize the capabilities of their staff. It explains that what we know about good teacher professional development and K-12 curriculum provides a clear starting point for productive collaboration.

The paper concludes by outlining options for, and examples of, how systems can support the formation of deeper partnerships. These options include using accountability to encourage the quality not quantity of collaboration, and offering financial rewards and building capabilities for it to happen.

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1 Why we need better district-provider partnerships

High-performing systems around the world make sure their beginning teachers are equipped with a basic teaching repertoire. Candidates are familiarized with a small set of high-quality curriculum materials, they learn several general and subject-specific strategies for teaching, and they explore approaches to assessment that capture student understanding.¹ In these systems, preparation embodies what we know about effective adult and teacher learning, notably that courses, practicum, and induction are connected to daily teaching practice. They are focused on student learning, and they use subject-specific content, models of effective practice, expert feedback, and reflection with peers to develop skills and expertise.²

Across high-performing systems, forms of teacher preparation, development and practice differ, but they share two essential elements:

1. A common language and approach that explicitly connect *how teachers learn* in initial teacher education, how they learn in professional development, and what they do every day in classrooms;
2. A shared understanding of *what new teachers need to learn* that comes from K-12 curriculum.

This connected approach to preparation and practice works. The world's top-performing systems ensure that ITE is a connected learning journey, in which university coursework prepares candidates for their practice, and teacher induction and professional development (PD) complement and extend pre-service training.

In large and diverse education systems such as Australia and the United States, most preparation providers are situated within highly autonomous universities. Many districts, schools, and

individual teachers have a great deal of freedom over their professional learning and use of K-12 curriculum. In such systems, the autonomy and diversity of stakeholders, and their many complex relationships, make ITE reforms difficult – but not impossible.

To date policymakers in systems with high levels of autonomy have had little success in telling providers and districts and schools how to manage or reform beginning teacher learning. Many program accreditation approaches merely lead to more paperwork, and few consequences for programs that poorly prepare teachers.³ Many system leaders focus on comprehensive lists of general competencies for teachers while ignoring both *what* teachers need to teach (curriculum) and *how* teachers improve (good teacher professional learning).⁴ Many state policies do not hold districts and schools accountable for their responsibilities to help prepare teachers – by providing high-quality placements for student teachers, for example.

All too often, providers implement a 'checklist' approach to meet program accreditation standards and make minimal changes to the way candidate teachers learn in coursework and practical training. For example, a program can briefly cover the list of competencies in a course and send its candidates to practical training to have those competencies 'checked' by a mentor teacher. The provider claims to cover the full list of teaching competencies in coursework and practical training, but this type of approach is unlikely to improve how candidates learn or how a provider collaborates with schools.

Insights from the CoP show that improvement will come from districts and providers collaborating in a deeper way. These stakeholders are at the forefront of designing and delivering coursework, practical training, induction and early career PD. Their relationship is central to prospects for change.

¹ Feiman-Nemser, 2001

² Darling-Hammond, Hylter, & Gardner, 2017; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007

³ Aldeman, Carey, Dillon, Miller, & Silva, 2011; National Research Council, 2010

⁴ For example, the US Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards contains a list of 174 things that teachers need to be able to do.

Calls to strengthen such partnerships are not new.⁵ Formal partnerships between providers and the districts and schools where candidates have their practice are now common and take many forms: Professional Development Schools, clinical models, residencies, research-practice partnerships, networks, and so on.⁶ Usually, they involve institutions sharing knowledge with the aim of bridging theory and practice in order to better structure, organize, and improve beginning teacher learning.⁷ Most partnerships are university-led, with the provider assuming most of the initiative and offering most resources.⁸ Fewer partnerships are district or school-led.

Deep partnerships increase communication and share accountability among people responsible for training new teachers in ITE programs and in schools.⁹ Districts and schools should be able to give feedback to ITE programs on the strengths and weaknesses of candidates. In turn, teacher educators in ITE programs can support districts and schools in developing their new teachers over time.

The evidence on whether partnerships improve teacher preparation outcomes is inconclusive but growing.¹⁰ A small body of research suggests that deep school-university partnerships and collaborations such as professional development schools can reduce the gaps between theory and practice, and increase the coherence and benefits of preparation for beginning teachers.¹¹ Many stakeholders report the benefits of working together.¹² Both the research literature and the lessons of highly collaborative systems such as Finland provide numerous examples of successful partnerships between providers and districts and schools.¹³

While strong partnerships can be difficult to implement, as we discuss below, there is no better way to create qualified teaching professionals. As scholars have written, “neither schools nor universities can educate our nation’s teachers alone,”¹⁴ because “no single institution has the expertise, authority or financial resources to create the necessary structures and learning opportunities”¹⁵ to connect teacher preparation and early career development.

⁵ The idea of partnership in teacher education dates back to the mid-1980s. See Lillejord & Børte (2016) for a summary of the research.

⁶ Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1995; Maandag, Deinum, Hofman, & Buitink, 2007; Greany, Gu, Handscomb, & Varley, 2014

⁷ Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Furlong, 2000

⁸ Furlong, 2000

⁹ Greany et al., 2014; Lillejord & Børte, 2016

¹⁰ Greany et al., 2014; Lillejord & Børte, 2016

¹¹ See for example Clift & Brady, 2005, Grossman, Ronfeldt, & Cohen, 2011 and Canrinus, Klette, & Hammerness, (in press). Professional development schools are partnerships between

providers and K-12 schools that focus on the preparation of new teachers, faculty development, improvement of practice and enhanced student achievement. They are akin to teaching hospitals. More information on the defining characteristics of professional development schools can be found on the [NCATE website](#).

¹² J. M. Allen, Butler-Mader, & Smith, 2010; Greany et al., 2014

¹³ Greany et al., 2014. See our companion paper *Connecting teacher preparation and practice* for more information on collaboration in Finland’s teacher preparation system.

¹⁴ Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015, p.132

¹⁵ Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p.1037

2 Obstacles to improving district-provider partnerships

Partnerships between districts and providers take time, and consume resources. They can be frustrating.¹⁶ It is generally recognized that, in their current form, they are not living up to their potential. Yet as one United Kingdom stakeholder put it, each partner has “far more value to the other than has yet been realized – in particular on the research agenda, and on subjects and curricula.”¹⁷

The problems are long-standing. Most traditional providers are housed in tertiary education, whereas states, districts,¹⁸ and schools operate in the K-12 school system.¹⁹ Separate systems create different expectations, incentives, accountability structures, operating models, cultures and language. These are all significant obstacles to strong partnerships.²⁰

Typically, each side lacks an understanding of the everyday priorities of the other.²¹ Most districts and schools see teaching children as their core business and have neither the time or remit to train new teachers.²² Most teacher educators²³ are academics who have strong incentives to prioritize the publication of research over practical training of new teachers.²⁴ School-based teacher mentors, by contrast, prioritize strategies that they Alignment and improvement of the components of new teacher learning does not happen by chance.

know work in classrooms. As a result, providers may think they are giving candidates a good grounding in mathematical concepts and teaching philosophies, and that it is the school’s job to teach candidates how to apply it to the classroom. School leaders, however, may see these general theories as not practical to implement; they can see that the school’s new teachers lack the basics but do not have the time to teach them.²⁵

These differences make collaboration time-consuming and frustrating,²⁶ especially across multiple districts and schools (see Box 1). There are few frames of reference to help district-provider partners create a common vision, or to get into the details of teacher learning that could lead to real improvement.

As a result, conversations stay polite and general, and providers and districts return to their domains to train teachers the way they always have. Representatives from the school system have no real input into coursework, while most teacher educators are disconnected from K-12 school curriculum and professional development practices. Innovators get exasperated and focus on working around the system by creating alternative programs. Circumventing the system can lead to local benefits but not to reform at scale, and it does little to improve the situation for the 90 per cent of teachers who are prepared by traditional providers.²⁷

Partners need to talk frankly about what beginning teachers struggle to teach and how to improve

¹⁶ Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Greany et al., 2014

¹⁷ Greany et al., 2014, p.8

¹⁸ This paper uses districts to refer to clusters of schools, which might be referred to as regions or networks in some systems. States are referred to as the main system policymaker but this may be national education ministries in smaller countries without a federal system of government.

¹⁹ A number of researchers have documented the challenges of diverse stakeholders in ITE, see for example, Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Handscomb, Gu, & Varley, 2014; Greany et al., 2014; Grossman et al., 2011; Kosnik & Beck, 2009.

²⁰ J. M. Allen et al., 2010 Greany et al., 2014; Lillejord & Børte, 2016

²¹ J. M. Allen et al., 2010

²² Feiman-Nemser, 2001

²³ Teacher educators can be used to refer to any person form a provider or school that supports a candidate during

their preparation. In this paper, ‘university-based teacher educator’ refers to faculty instructors and field supervisors that are generally employed by providers. ‘School-based teacher educators’ are lead, mentor or co-operating teachers that are generally employed by districts and schools. We acknowledge this is a simplification and that teacher educators may be employed jointly by districts, schools, providers and or alternative providers.

²⁴ Feiman-Nemser, 2001

²⁵ Zeichner, 2010

²⁶ Clift & Brady, 2005 summarize a number of studies on the impacts of one type of collaboration, professional development schools. While there were several positive outcomes related to better prepared teachers, there was some evidence for higher stress levels and strain in negotiating conflicts between university and school faculty.

²⁷ In the United States 89 per cent of teachers are prepared by traditional programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

coursework and practical training. For example, providers may think they are preparing elementary candidates in the professional standards for learner development, but they won't create better math teachers until they work with schools on how to identify and address the issues candidates have with teaching children specific concepts.

How can providers and districts overcome their differences so they can have the robust conversations needed to collaborate on and improve beginning teacher learning?

First, partners need to find common ground. They need to build mutual understanding of how teachers get better and what they need to learn. There are two reference points that are not used enough in ITE: first, what we know about good teacher professional development, and second, K-12 curriculum. The next section explains how these provide a clear starting point for productive discussion.

Box 1: Providers that work with multiple districts and schools

Large providers may work with many districts and schools. Large districts may work with many providers. Creating deep and coherent partnerships in these cases can be difficult.

Texas Tech University is a large provider that has strong partnerships with over 20 districts. Texas Tech gives a faculty member responsibility for each district partner and sends cohorts of candidates to that district. The governance processes require the faculty member to seek feedback from the district on candidate and graduate performance and how coursework might improve. Texas Tech uses the feedback to shape its program improvement cycle. Because more than half of its candidates are placed in one district, it can prioritize its efforts if required.

The approach outlined in this paper will help providers go deeper with each of their partner districts. In the case of Texas Tech, it will help faculty members have deeper conversations with their partner districts on how to create improved learning journeys for beginning teachers.

Source: [Texas Tech case study](#)

3 Stages of developing partnerships

There are now more partnerships than ever in teacher preparation, but not all are equal. Some make great strides in improving beginning teacher learning, but many stay narrowly focused on operational issues such as governance structures or finding practicum placements. How can mutual understanding be built so that partners can collaborate deeply on the work of improvement?

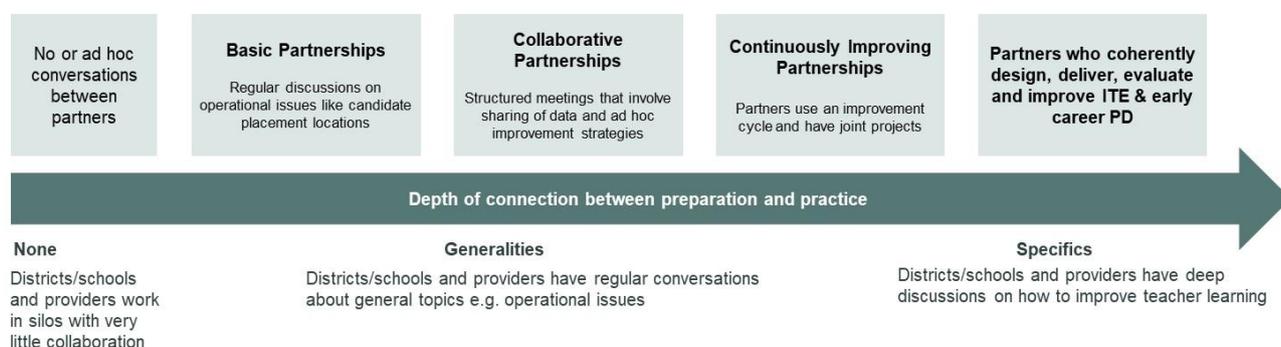
Partners should build their collaboration to the point of being able to have robust conversations about how to improve the specifics of beginning teacher learning. The development of partnerships is not always linear, but there tends to be common stages that represent different levels of partnership depth. Over the course of the CoP, and across many systems, we have seen the types of partnerships described in Figure 1.

The diagram does not represent a sequence of reform; rather, it is a spectrum of partnership depth. Strong partners might have all the elements of deep, specific collaboration without needing to progress through each stage sequentially. The most effective partnerships embody all the elements represented in the diagram: they have regular, structured meetings; undertake joint projects based on a formal

improvement cycle; and coherently design, deliver, and evaluate ITE and early career PD. In ‘Basic Partnerships’, districts and provider partners meet regularly. They share information about what they are doing and work together to find school placements for candidates.

The second type of partnership, ‘Collaborative Partnerships’, involves more structure, which might include written partnership agreements, formal meeting procedures, data sharing, and discussion of ad hoc improvement strategies. The ‘Collaborative Partnership’ does not rely on individuals, but operates with distributed roles and systematic responsibilities. Partners may start to develop a shared vision and general goals for beginning teacher learning, but they do not yet get into the specifics of how they will improve it. Good structures are important for building better partnerships²⁸, but what partners do within these structures is critical. Structural changes will have little impact if they do not improve the way teacher expertise is developed.²⁹

Figure 1: Levels of depth in partnership collaboration



²⁸ Greany et al., 2014

²⁹ Hattie, 2015

In the third type of partnership, 'Continuously Improving Partnerships', partners jointly start to rigorously address improvement. They may implement a formal improvement cycle such as the Deming cycle to plan, implement, evaluate, and adjust joint projects.³⁰ They will develop a detailed shared vision, aligned with concrete frameworks and language, for how to improve beginning teacher learning across preparation and early career development. They have specific information about their beginning teachers' performance, and they begin to share staff and collaborate on the specifics of how beginning teachers improve.

In the fourth type of partnership, partners collaborate on the design, delivery, evaluation and improvement of ITE and early career PD. They share an approach to beginning teacher learning that uses what we know about good teacher development, and they use K-12 curriculum to deeply connect preparation to practice. They reward and recognize staff who collaborate to improve beginning teacher learning.

Box 2 gives a hypothetical example of what a journey to a deep partnership could look like.

Box 2: Partners who coherently design, deliver, evaluate and improve ITE and early career PD

Sue and Bruce's journey

A long-time teacher educator who was born and bred in his state, Bruce works in the teacher preparation program at Hometown University, coordinating field placements for pre-service teachers.

Every semester Bruce has formal meetings with Sue, the coordinator for early career teachers from the university's partner, Smithfield District. In these meetings, they decide which teaching candidates in Hometown's program will be placed in which schools in Smithfield. Bruce dreads seeing Sue's name in his inbox because it means there is a problem with one of his candidates.

For her part, Sue wishes Bruce's program would get its act together and start to teach the candidates how to teach math. She recently observed a Hometown candidate teaching a lesson on fractions that made her cringe. She dares not raise this concern with Bruce, because last time she raised a similar issue, he blamed Sue for putting his candidate in a poor placement school.

Policies, priorities and data review

When the State Department of Education adopts new K-5 curriculum standards that encourage deeper conceptual understanding and problem solving in math, the superintendent of Smithfield District decides that it is high time to improve elementary math instruction in her district.

The superintendent and Dean of Education at Hometown University meet to discuss how to improve elementary math instruction. They decide to jointly plan, implement, evaluate, and adjust a math instruction project. In consultation with faculty at Hometown University, the leadership team in Smithfield District reviews their student assessment and teacher evaluation data and chooses fractions as a priority area for the next three years.

Improvement planning

Smithfield District's superintendent and Hometown University's Director of Teacher Preparation ask Bruce and Sue to jointly create and implement a plan to address the priority math area. The superintendent suggests they take advantage of the learning progressions, work samples, recommended materials, and training that the state is providing, and that they study how some of the best schools in the district are using these resources in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Bruce and Sue travel together to the state capital to take part in training in elementary math. On the way back, they visit some Smithfield District schools to sit in on their PLC meetings. During the trip, they discover that

³⁰ Improvement cycles evolved from improvement science, and are frequently associated with Deming's work on continuous improvement strategies in business management (Deming, 2000). The original inception of a

cycle for improvement is often referred to as the Shewhart or Deming Cycle for Learning and Improvement, and has four steps: Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA).

have much more in common than they thought. “I never really had the chance to get to know Bruce until now,” thought Sue. “But now we’ve done this work together, I see that he wants the best for teachers and students just as much as I do.”

Bruce and Sue begin meeting weekly to craft their strategy. They decide that they will first offer professional learning for teacher educators in the new math program the district has chosen, Eureka Math. Next, they will create a school-based research program for teachers, teacher educators, and researchers to evaluate whether Eureka Math both helps teachers to achieve the intent of the new math standards and deepens students’ understanding.

Finally, they plan to improve training and support for candidates and new teachers in teaching fractions, using Eureka Math where possible. They will have to review the Hometown University coursework and find ways to connect the Math Methods course sequence with the new standards and curricular materials. They also need to identify placement schools with strong professional learning processes, expert math teachers, and a willingness to implement Eureka Math.

Implementation, review and evaluation

Bruce and Sue used to struggle through their meetings, but now they feel they’re speaking the same language. As they implement the strategy, they know they will need to be guided by interim assessment and observation data as well as feedback from pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, district leaders, Hometown University professors, and Smithfield District students. They decide to meet regularly with several people at each level of the district to talk about how the work is going, and to work together to make adjustments as required.³¹ It’s more work, but they feel excited about the opportunity to collaborate to prepare better teachers and lift student outcomes.

³¹ For more information on the coursework and practical training they implemented, refer to Amy’s journey in the companion paper *Connecting teacher preparation and practice*

4 How districts and providers can improve their partnerships

In every type of partnership, district and provider partners have the opportunity to make the work deeper and more meaningful. How can they take this step?

First, district and provider partners should create a shared vision and framework for teacher learning. Then they should increasingly work together on concrete aspects of the framework, at the same time developing capabilities and incentives that will enable their staff to collaborate.

Along the way, providers and districts and schools should shift their discussions from the abstract, the structural and the operational, to the specifics of beginning teacher learning. First, they should establish the fundamentals of good partnerships: governance structures, data sharing and common goals. Then they might collaborate on the work of teacher training, beginning with what we know about good teacher professional learning and K-12 curriculum. From that mutual understanding could come joint projects and eventually the co-design, delivery and evaluation of ITE and early career PD.

The rest of this section provides examples of what district and provider partners could do to deepen collaboration. It is based on the two essential elements that high-performing systems use to develop their teachers: 1) using a common language and approach to explicitly connect how teachers learn in initial teacher education, how they learn in professional development, and what they do every day in classrooms; and 2) a shared understanding of what new teachers need to learn that comes from K-12 curriculum.³²

Figure 2 summarizes these suggestions.

Figure 2: Suggestions for what district and provider partners do at each stage of their journey

		Depth of connection between preparation and practice			
District & provider roles		Basic Partnerships	Collaborative Partnerships	Continuously Improving Partnerships	Partners who coherently design, deliver, evaluate and improve ITE & early career PD
		Regular discussions on operational issues like candidate placement locations	Structured meetings that involve sharing of data and ad hoc improvement strategies	Partners use an improvement cycle and have joint projects	
Shared vision and framework	No shared vision or language for beginning teacher learning	Shared vision and goals for beginning teacher learning	Shared vision, frameworks and language for beginning teacher learning Examples: Melbourne University's Clinical Model, University of Michigan 'rounds'	Shared approach to beginning teacher learning embedded in K-12 curriculum Examples: Japanese Lesson Study, The Learning Cycle	
Work on concrete aspects of teacher training together	Meet a few times a year to discuss operational issues and share updates on what each partner is doing	Regular, structured meetings that involve sharing of data and ad hoc improvement strategies Examples: Partnerships in Tennessee, Florida, and Massachusetts	Use of an improvement cycle to collaborate on evaluation; joint projects to improve teacher learning Examples: Texas Tech University joint school-based research and improvement projects	Joint design, delivery and evaluation of beginning teacher learning embedded in K-12 curriculum Example: Some teacher residency programs	
Staff rewards and capabilities	Clear job descriptions for school and university based teacher educators	Training and competency frameworks for teacher educators Example: NCTR/USPREP Teacher Educator Practice Framework	Staff positions that encourage collaboration e.g. secondments, job rotations, shared/joint positions, joint improvement projects Examples: Singapore, Finland, Japan	Career progression and district hiring based on contribution to improvement of beginning teacher learning Examples: University of Michigan clinical professorships, Singapore academic promotions	

³² This is discussed further in our companion paper *Connecting teacher preparation and practice*

4.1 Create a shared vision and framework

First, partners should create a shared vision and potentially some joint goals, in order to create buy-in and mutual understanding. A study of several ITE programs in New York City found that “simply increasing contact among staff or requiring more supervisory visits to teachers’ classrooms will not have an impact without well-articulated goals for those meetings and visits that are intended to continue to build understanding”.³³ To build a shared vision for the Boston Teacher Residency, for example, leaders from Boston Public Schools worked with partners to define common goals, including a focus on training teachers in high-needs areas, and targets for retention rates of program graduates. These goals were formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the parties.³⁴

After establishing the vision, partners can begin to enact it by creating frameworks and language that set out the specifics of beginning teacher learning. A 2016 review of partnerships research finds that providers and their partner districts and schools must agree on principles and practices. It stresses that “high-quality professional education of teachers needs new models where the students’ learning is placed at the center of activities – not on one of the axes”.³⁵

A good place to start developing common principles lies in what we know about adult and teacher learning. As our companion paper³⁶ shows, extensive research and global case studies show that high-quality professional development gives teachers multiple opportunities to connect their various teaching skills and knowledge into a whole, to apply them in practice with high quality feedback from experienced mentors, and to reflect on this work with peers.³⁷ The power of focusing on common principles is that they can be enacted in many different forms, allowing providers and districts

and schools to design the most appropriate learning activities for their candidates and beginning teachers.

Next, providers and districts can enact these principles to implement a common approach to teacher learning. A shared approach consistent with best practices for teacher professional learning would mean that candidates could join professional learning teams during their placements just as any other teacher in the school would. For providers, it means their coursework is more connected to practice and they can offer more engaging and coherent learning experiences for their candidates.

A shared approach also makes it easier for staff at universities and schools to work together, holding common discussions with candidates to reflect on practice, for example. The need to observe and analyze teaching practices and student learning in order to provide feedback to candidates builds the capabilities of both teacher educators and mentor teachers.

The University of Michigan uses a “clinical rounds” approach to ensure that candidates can integrate learning from both coursework and practical training. Candidates present videos of their teaching practice and analyze them with peers, mentor teachers, and teacher educators from all subject areas. The university extended this approach beyond ITE by initiating “grand rounds” that bring together teaching professionals of all levels of expertise to present and discuss cases of instructional practice.³⁸

The University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education also uses a clinical teaching model, based on what we know about teacher development, to inform their approach to beginning teacher learning. The approach permeates coursework, practical training, and how the university and their partner schools collaborate on assessment of candidates’ learning (see Box 3 for further details).

³³ Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, & Ronfeldt, 2008, p.283

³⁴ Luckzak, Vaishnav, Horwath, & Sanghani, 2016

³⁵ Lillejord & Børte, 2016, p. 561

³⁶ Refer to our companion paper *Connecting teacher preparation and practice*

³⁷ See for example studies by Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Timperley et al., 2007 and Yoon et al., 2007.

³⁸ Bain, 2012

Box 3: A clinical teaching approach at the University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education's preparation program uses a clinical teaching approach to develop candidates' teaching skills.

Candidates are required to assess the learning needs of students, provide appropriate interventions, and evaluate the impact they are having on each student, with feedback from experienced teachers and university instructors. The model, known as diagnose-intervene-evaluate, is based on medical training, in which students need to critically appraise information, solve problems, and respond to feedback.³⁹

The model relies on close collaboration between the graduate school and their partner schools to enable candidates to practice these skills with students while being supported by school-based mentor teachers and university clinical supervisors (field instructors).⁴⁰

Every week candidates both spend time in schools and complete coursework at the university. They gather evidence about student learning, research and devise appropriate teaching strategies to come up with learning interventions, and work with others to evaluate their strategies. Candidates can use the process they learning during their training in order to assess and improve their practice over their career.

A final assessment, the Clinical Praxis exam, is designed to integrate knowledge and skills across academic courses and practical training placements. Candidates must identify a school student during their practicum, and undertake a series of diagnostic assessments, learning interventions, and monitoring for that student. Candidates present a 20-minute oral report, and then a panel of university and school staff questions them on what they did and why they did it, linking their actions to literature and school resources.⁴¹ This approach is highly engaging for candidates and creates connections between theoretical and practical training, not only for candidates but also for the university and school staff who work together to analyze, discuss and assess the exam.

The Clinical Praxis assessment model instigated a number of changes in the way faculty members and school-based teacher mentors develop candidates. Because the assessment combined content from three courses, faculty members from each of them had to collaborate to create coherent content that would enable candidates to perform the task. Faculty members also had to work with school staff to grade the assessment, which created richer discussion and common expectations between university-based teacher educators and school-based teacher mentors. School-based staff got a clearer sense of the learning that candidates had undertaken during their practical training. They also realized they needed to ensure that candidates received the authentic learning experiences needed to complete the task.

The final stage of creating a shared vision and framework is to ensure that providers, districts and schools ground their approach in a careful understanding of K-12 curriculum – in other words, the concrete and daily work of teaching. Paper 3 in this series sets out how that should happen.⁴²

4.2 Work on a project together

In high-performing systems, districts, schools, and providers are equal partners in preparation and early career development. These partnerships create trust and the experiences that deepen

shared understanding and language. As partners share what they are working on, and then collaborate on joint projects, they can build to a point where they jointly design, deliver, evaluate, and improve ITE and PD.

A 2016 summary of partnership research argues that the optimal solution appears to be concrete projects in which the partners jointly create a common product, one that is often focused on solving a local problem through a sustained program of work.⁴³

³⁹ Conn, Lake, McColl, Bilszta, & Woodward-Kron, 2012

⁴⁰ Davies et al., 2013

⁴¹ For more information on the Clinical Praxis Exam refer to [a publication on ITE assessment](#) by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. It includes a link to a [sample student presentation](#) given as part of the exam.

⁴² Refer to our companion paper *Using K-12 curriculum to improve teacher preparation*.

⁴³ Lillejord & Børte, 2016

In order to begin collaborating together in this way, partners should establish structures to meet regularly, share data, and communicate about what they are doing. Once these foundations are established, partners can start more formal improvement cycles⁴⁴ to jointly evaluate and discuss improvement priorities. They might start working on some joint projects to deliver aspects of ITE and or early career PD. For example, some providers deliver in-service induction or early career development programs for new teachers; others establish joint school-university research projects.

Texas Tech University uses design-based implementation research, in which researchers and practitioners work closely together to address practical problems of teaching and learning. The approach involves systematic inquiry, iterative and collaborative design, and developing capacity for sustaining change.⁴⁵ Texas Tech and its district partners jointly evaluate the impact of their programs on candidates' knowledge and teaching practices. One research project, for instance, looks at the effects of their elementary math methods course interventions on candidates' math knowledge for teaching.⁴⁶ All faculty members come together twice a year for "data

days" to review candidate performance and design a coherent organization-wide improvement agenda for coursework and practical training. Faculty members regularly meet with their partners in districts or schools to discuss data on candidate performance and mentor teacher support. Together, they work to improve candidate performance.⁴⁷

At the deepest levels of collaboration, partners start to jointly design, deliver and evaluate ITE and early career PD. Districts work with providers on what candidates need to know, where candidates and new teachers are struggling during practical training and induction, and how to create deep connections between preparation and practice. Some residencies reflect this deep, collaborative partnership (Box 4).

To jointly design, deliver, and evaluate teacher preparation and development, partners should collaborate on the concrete work of teaching as defined by a system's achievement standards and K-12 curriculum. Districts and providers can use K-12 curriculum as a foundation to co-design ITE and early career PD that is grounded in student learning and the daily work of teachers. Paper 3 in this series explores this issue.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Our companion paper on *Continuous improvement in teacher education* covers improvement cycles in more detail.

⁴⁵ For more information on design-based research refer to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching article [Quality Improvement Approaches: Design-Based Implementation Research](#)

⁴⁶ Internal ITE CoP documentation supplied by USPREP/Texas Tech University

⁴⁷ For more information refer to a [case study](#) on how Texas Tech University built meaningful partnerships with schools

⁴⁸ Refer to our companion paper *Using K-12 curriculum to improve teacher preparation*

Box 4: Teacher residencies – an example of collaborative design, delivery, and evaluation

Teacher residencies are partnerships between providers and districts⁴⁹ to train graduates and mid-career professionals, typically to teach in hard-to-staff schools and subjects. Built on the medical residency model, they usually involve a full year of practical training in schools, an expert mentor teacher, and coursework from a partnering university that is tightly integrated with practice.⁵⁰ Residents generally work full-time in schools and take some night classes.

High-quality residency programs are co-designed and co-delivered by districts and universities and incorporate ongoing mentoring and support for alumni. University and district partners ensure that the entire program uses the same language and approaches, thereby creating a coherent learning journey and giving beginning teachers a chance to build deep competencies in core teaching skills.⁵¹

The most rigorous residencies anchor their training in high-quality curriculum. For example, coursework may incorporate how to understand and teach prioritized aspects of the district curriculum, while practice may involve the mentor teacher giving feedback on how the candidate taught those materials in class, and discussing whether the students understood the concepts and achieved the appropriate standards.

Initial research suggests that residencies are a promising way to improve teacher retention and student learning in hard-to-staff schools.⁵² They reduce the gaps between theory and practice that occur in some traditional programs, and they do so without neglecting theoretical grounding or supervised student teaching, a criticism that has been levelled at other non-traditional routes into teaching.

Deep collaboration between providers and districts can take many forms.⁵³ Residencies can be costly,⁵⁴ but their early success shows that the principles of co-design, delivery and evaluation of teacher preparation and ongoing development are worth adapting to other models of teacher training. The task is to take the elements of deep collaboration that make teacher residencies effective and efficiently apply them to partnerships between traditional providers and their districts/schools.

4.3 Reward and build the capabilities of staff who collaborate

Successful partnerships require all partners to commit for the long term.⁵⁵ People need incentives and capacity building to change established ways of working. Leaders of preparation programs need to show their staff that they value efforts to collaborate and improve teacher learning, especially when collaboration can be frustrating until mutual understanding and

shared language are established. Providers and districts need to recognize and prioritize the work that deep collaboration takes, and reward staff who devote time and effort to it.⁵⁶

To build better partnerships, the first task is to create job descriptions for school- and university-based teacher educators to clarify their relative responsibilities for training new teachers. The next stage is to develop teacher educator competency frameworks and professional development that focus on skills in collaboration and continuous improvement. The National Center for Teacher

⁴⁹ Teacher residencies can also involve partnerships between providers and schools, and or providers and Charter Management Organisations (CMOs).

⁵⁰ Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016.

⁵¹ Memphis Teacher Residency, Jacksonville Teacher Residency, and Richmond Teacher Residency are examples of residency programs where mentor teachers and district curriculum leaders co-design and co-teach the coursework (Learning First interview with National Center for Teacher Residencies, October, 2017).

⁵² Guha et al., 2016

⁵³ For an example of establishing a residency between a university and a district, refer to a case study on [California State University, Fresno](#) and partner [Sanger Unified School District](#).

⁵⁴ Residency program costs generally involve upfront recruiting; preparation including financial support for residents; induction; and program operations and co-ordination. Design and implementation decisions, and district contexts, impact total residency costs, and make it difficult to compare the costs of programs. The expense of residencies can be partially offset by higher retention of new teachers, which results in cost savings. Residency programs costs and funding sustainability are further discussed in [an Aspen Institute report](#).

⁵⁵ Greany et al., 2014

⁵⁶ Greany et al., 2014; Zeichner, 2010

Residencies and USPREP are jointly developing a framework to support teacher educator competencies and professional learning. Early results from USPREP's pilot work, conducted for the ITE CoP, show that teacher educators value the opportunity both to collaborate with colleagues and to receive feedback from their candidates and peers.⁵⁷

District and providers may then create specific jobs centered on collaboration for improved teacher preparation and development. Research from the United Kingdom endorses the important role that placements, secondments (job rotations or short-term placements), and joint appointments have in overcoming the cultural and practical barriers faced in partnerships.⁵⁸ Some districts, schools and providers create roles for staff members to work part-time in universities and part-time in schools. The Netherlands is developing leaders of learning who work across ITE and PD. As one Dutch stakeholder put it, this enables them to “think together” about teacher preparation and development.⁵⁹

Some systems and providers use formal incentives to encourage faculty members to prioritize the work of preparing teachers for practice. Singapore's one teacher education provider, the National Institute of Education, has tried to create such incentives by evaluating education faculty on how many schools are using their research and practical teaching tools, along with their impact on students. This form of assessment relies, of course, on reliable feedback and assessments from schools.⁶⁰

The University of Michigan School of Education, realizing that its traditional professorship track rewarded only academic research, created a clinical professorship track to recognize faculty who devote time and effort to the quality preparation of teachers. These academics spend more of their time working in schools to conduct

research and support teacher preparation programs.⁶¹

Districts and schools can also create incentives for providers to collaborate more closely with them. For example, schools and districts can choose to hire graduates from providers that are willing to work with them and respond to their feedback. This happens covertly in many places, but schools and districts can more openly use hiring practices to give preference to candidates from certain providers. These candidates are likely to be better prepared for their new job if the district and provider have a strong partnership. United States districts and schools can take advantage of the publication of graduate data to make providers more accountable for the employability of their graduates.⁶²

Schools and districts can also create incentives for university-based teacher educators to work with them on school-based research projects. School and districts can apply for grant funding to partner with universities to conduct school-based research, or be willing to open their classrooms to researchers. This kind of collaboration helps to develop common principles, priorities, and language for teacher development and preparation through projects that schools can strongly influence.

⁵⁷ Internal ITE COP document submitted by USPREP

⁵⁸ Greany et al., 2014

⁵⁹ Learning First interview with teacher educators in The Netherlands, March 2017.

⁶⁰ Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann, & Burns, 2012

⁶¹ See the [University of Michigan faculty handbook](#) for more information on clinical professorships

⁶² How the publication of data can be used to make more informed hiring decisions is discussed in Learning First's paper [A new approach: Reforming teacher education](#).

5 What systems can do to improve partnerships

Systems can encourage stronger partnerships in three main ways:

1. Use accountability processes to encourage quality and continuous improvement, rather than quantity and minimum standards in teacher preparation;
2. Build the capabilities of stakeholders to better connect preparation and practice by offering guidance, training, tools, and opportunities to share best practice in the use of high-quality K-12 curriculum;
3. Offer financial rewards to encourage providers and districts and schools to collaborate deeply on the detailed work of teacher and student learning.

A variety of mechanisms, including accountability levers, incentives, and supports, can be used to achieve these objectives. Perhaps the most important reform, in districts that have a strong curriculum, is to encourage providers to embed it in teacher preparation (see Paper 3 in this series).⁶³ Districts that lack a strong curriculum should nevertheless ensure that beginning teachers are provided with one in their preparation, so that they learn how to ground their teaching skills in the concrete work of the classroom.

The way systems deploy these mechanisms may differ based on the maturity of their district-provider partnerships. As partnerships evolve, systems can raise the benchmark for the depth of collaboration. Many systems have changed with strong political and stakeholder support.⁶⁴ For example, Tennessee has implemented many reforms to teacher preparation (described below) with the support of its state political leader, who created incentives for university leaders to prioritize the improvement of their teacher preparation programs.

5.1 Use accountability to encourage quality and continuous improvement

Systems should above all promote the quality of teacher preparation and development. Merely adding more practical training will not improve teacher learning if district-provider partners do not talk about how it is connected to and builds on what a candidate already knows.⁶⁵ A study of ITE programs in New York City found that thoughtful, purposeful, and well-constructed links between coursework and fieldwork matter more to candidate perceptions of coherence than the number of hours of fieldwork.⁶⁶

The design of accountability mechanisms – including program accreditation, teacher licensure, district and school review processes, and the use of data – should encourage the continuous improvement of preparation programs and partnerships, rather than focusing on requirements for minimum hours for practical training, for example.

⁶³ See our companion paper, *Using K-12 curriculum in teacher preparation*

⁶⁴ Fullan, 2010

⁶⁵ Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012

⁶⁶ Grossman et al., 2008

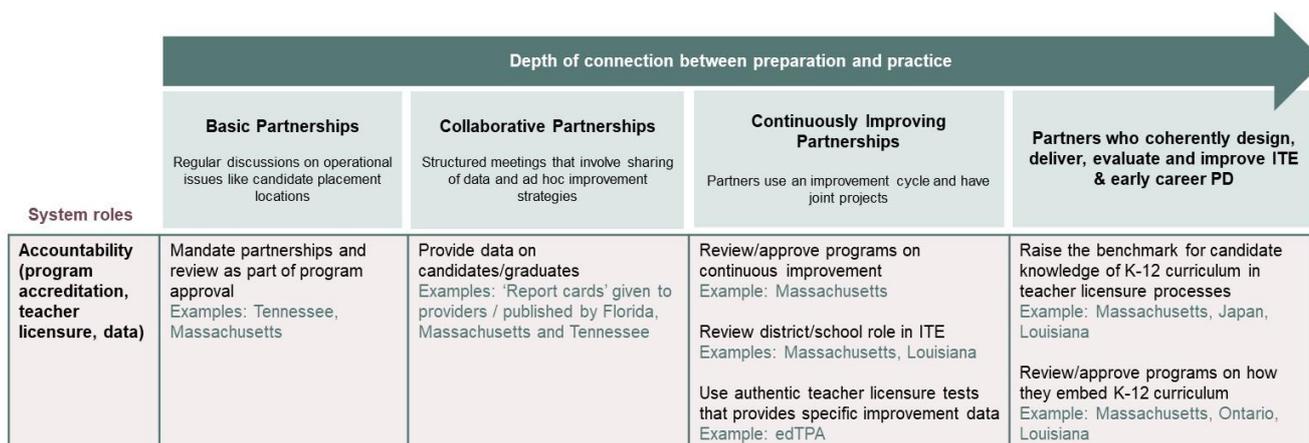


Figure 3: How system accountability can support deeper connections

Most systems in the United States and Australia have accountability measures for teacher preparation. Systems use accreditation processes to set requirements and regularly review whether programs meet them, which usually involves an initial approval process followed by ongoing reviews.⁶⁷ They use teacher licensure (also known as registration or certification) to confirm that prospective teachers have the knowledge and skills to do the job.⁶⁸ Some systems also collect and publish data on preparation program outcomes to create public accountability.⁶⁹

The impact of these levers on teacher quality and effectiveness is inconclusive.⁷⁰ Yet what matters most is not the levers but how they are used. Program accreditation, teacher licensure, and data can make it very clear what providers are expected to do, and influence them to act in a certain way.⁷¹

Systems can tailor how they use accountability measures as partnerships mature across their system. Initially they may mandate partnerships and then provide data to partners to help them collaborate on specific improvement initiatives. Next, they might use program accreditation and teacher licensure to focus partners on the implementation of continuous improvement processes. Finally, they may raise the bar on

program accreditation and teacher licensure to require programs to embed K-12 curriculum in their preparation of teachers.

In the early stages of reform, a system can use accountability measures to mandate partnerships, review them as part of program accreditation, and provide partners with data on their graduates. Tennessee requires each provider to have formal partnerships with its local districts and schools. Building partnerships is one of six domains that Massachusetts prioritizes in its program accreditation standards. Massachusetts, like Tennessee and Florida, supplies its providers with detailed information on the quality of their graduates.⁷²

In the next stages of partnership development, a system can encourage more formal improvement efforts in partnerships and programs. Too often, accreditation and licensure are used as a pass/fail mechanism that gives a system little information about which providers are outstanding and which are just average. Accreditation and licensure processes that give a continuum of ratings provide much more information on what is working best.⁷³

A good example of minimum standards that have failed to improve partnerships is the requirement that providers must give candidates a certain

⁶⁷ National Research Council, 2010; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015

⁶⁸ National Research Council, 2010; TEMAG, 2014

⁶⁹ Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012

⁷⁰ M. B. Allen, 2005; National Research Council, 2010

⁷¹ Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012

⁷² See TNTP's [Getting to Better Prep](#) for more information on the data collected and supplied by states.

⁷³ For a longer discussion about minimum standards compared to continuous improvement refer to the companion paper *Continuous improvement in teacher education*.

number of days of practical training. This rule is only useful if it is accompanied by ways to improve the quality of training, since candidates will learn less in 100 days of poor quality training than in 50 days of good quality training.⁷⁴ New teachers in Japan have only two- to four-week practice, yet they report that they are well prepared in the content, pedagogy and classroom practice of their subjects.⁷⁵

Systems can encourage quality and continuous improvement in partnerships by embedding continuous improvement into program accreditation processes. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, for example, reviews whether a provider engages in continuous improvement efforts to better prepare teachers. Programs are expected to examine their effectiveness by using an internal continuous improvement cycle based on the compilation and analysis of data. Massachusetts, rather than simply determining that a program should be accredited or not, also uses various ratings, recommendations and approval determinations to inform providers about their performance.⁷⁶ This kind of accreditation process can be extended to incorporate how providers are working with districts to continually improve how they are preparing teachers.

Systems can also use licensure tests to give providers and their district partners rich information about how well graduates are prepared. The more specific these data are, the more they help teacher educators to reflect on the way their candidates are learning and gives them the information they need to improve their preparation practices.⁷⁷ Some new licensure tests, including edTPA, incorporate videos of candidates' teaching in placement schools, which

showcase the district's prominent role in teacher preparation.⁷⁸

Systems have other levers – less often used – to influence what districts and schools do in relation to teacher preparation. Many systems have review processes that use data and site visits to determine whether districts and schools are providing quality education. The frameworks for these reviews do not usually include criteria related to teacher preparation, but the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, for example, is considering how to modify district grant funding and review processes to incorporate the district's role in the teacher education pathway.⁷⁹

These processes could be used to encourage districts to become equal partners in preparation and to hold them to account for the learning experiences they provide to candidates. In Singapore, both the National Institute of Education and schools are accountable for acting upon feedback about how to improve beginning teacher learning.⁸⁰

Louisiana is taking a different approach to the role of districts and schools in teacher preparation. Following a pilot, the state recently made it mandatory for all preparation programs to provide year-long residencies, in which candidates work alongside mentor teachers in a classroom. The reform elevates the role of districts and schools in two ways. First, in-service teachers are responsible for guiding candidates for a more substantial proportion of their training. Second, districts can select, train and review the in-service teachers who are responsible for guiding candidates. In the next three years, Louisiana will train and credential more than 2500 mentor teachers to implement the approach, and provide

⁷⁴ A 2012 study of over 1000 prospective teachers across multiple programs in a large urban district in the United States found that the duration of student teaching had little effect on teacher outcomes on teacher efficacy, perceptions of instructional preparedness and career plans; however, the quality of student teaching had significant and positive effects on these outcomes (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). A 2008 study on coherence across multiple programs found that simply increasing the number of courses with attached fieldwork components also may not promote program coherence, and suggested that the quality of university support for practical training

may be more important than the quantity of links between coursework and practical training (Grossman et al., 2008).

⁷⁵ OECD, 2017

⁷⁶ More information on the Massachusetts accreditation processes can be found in the companion paper, *Continuous Improvement in Teacher Education*.

⁷⁷ Peck, McDonald, & Davis, 2014

⁷⁸ For more information about edTPA, refer to the [Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity website](#).

⁷⁹ Learning First interview with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, September 2017

⁸⁰ Jensen et al., 2012

millions of dollars in funding to support providers to switch to a residency model.⁸¹

As partnerships mature, systems can start to raise the benchmark for use of K-12 curriculum in preparation and development. Licensure tests and program accreditation processes can encourage partners to embed K-12 curriculum in beginning teacher learning.

Accreditation processes, for example, could seek evidence of district-provider partners who incorporate K-12 curriculum into learning experiences, and credit those who do so. Accredited ITE programs in Ontario, Canada, for example, are expected to reference the Ontario curriculum in coursework and practical training.⁸² Massachusetts is changing its regulatory language governing the pre-practicum experiences candidates need to have to recommend that candidates evaluate, adapt, and implement curriculum materials during early practical training, rather than create them from scratch.⁸³

While a lot of systems have some form of licensure, registration, or employment process, many only cover broad knowledge about a subject or generic teaching strategies, require a low standard to pass, and are not aligned with curriculum.⁸⁴ Yet teacher licensure processes can encourage prospective teachers to be intelligent consumers of K-12 curriculum. They can be aligned with K-12 curriculum by requiring knowledge about curriculum standards, content and materials, in order to encourage providers to incorporate this knowledge into their programs.

The Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) tests, for example, are aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks⁸⁵ and collect and report data by sub-test area, such as “development of reading comprehension” and “reading assessment and instruction” in the

Foundations for Reading test.⁸⁶ Data from the test give programs rich information on what aspects of courses they need to improve, such as whether they need to improve their teaching of reading comprehension or reading assessment for elementary candidates.

Louisiana is changing to a competency-based approach that gives providers flexibility in program accreditation and teacher licensure. The approach allows programs to move away from course type and length requirements to better align their coursework with the K-12 curriculum resources that Louisiana uses in its districts and schools. The state has defined a list of initial teacher certification competencies that are heavily based on the subject-specific knowledge and pedagogies required to teach the Louisiana K-12 curriculum. The competencies were developed in collaboration with content experts, teachers and providers, and aim to give providers and their district partners the framework to co-construct learning experiences for candidates.⁸⁷

5.2 Build capabilities to better connect preparation and practice

Because systems play an important role in building the capabilities of those involved in beginning teacher learning, they can offer them guidance documents, training, tools and opportunities to share best practice, both in the use of high-quality K-12 curriculum and in how to build deep partnerships.

Some systems that lack extensive resources to contribute to teacher preparation need to be innovative in how they build capability. In many cases, they may act as a broker, facilitating networks or sharing best practices. As partnerships mature, systems should move from providing general tools to extending the

⁸¹ For more information on the Louisiana residency model refer to [a summary of the approach](#), a [briefing of their approach to mentor teacher training](#), and their [transition guide for preparation programs](#).

⁸² Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2016

⁸³ Learning First interview with Massachusetts DESE, September 2017

⁸⁴ National Council on Teacher Quality, 2012

⁸⁵ For more information on the MTEL development process refer to the [Test Information Guide](#).

⁸⁶ See the [MTEL Foundations of Reading Annotated Score Report](#) for more information.

⁸⁷ For more information on Louisiana’s competency-based approach to ITE, refer to their [list of competencies for initial teacher certification](#).

Depth of connection between preparation and practice				
➔				
	Basic Partnerships	Collaborative Partnerships	Continuously Improving Partnerships	Partners who coherently design, deliver, evaluate and improve ITE & early career PD
System roles	Regular discussions on operational issues like candidate placement locations	Structured meetings that involve sharing of data and ad hoc improvement strategies	Partners use an improvement cycle and have joint projects	
Build capabilities	Publish partnership tools and templates Examples: Tennessee, Massachusetts	Facilitate partnerships networks to share practices and build capability Examples: Tennessee Partnership Network, Florida ITE Communities of Practice	Publish detailed guidance on how to prioritise and apply student achievement standards Example: Louisiana standards guidance for teachers Offer training opportunities in state improvement projects / K-12 curriculum Examples: Tennessee reading standards, Louisiana mentor and content leaders Provide intense training/support to selected district-provider partnerships Examples: Massachusetts, Louisiana	Provide guidance for how to incorporate K-12 curriculum into ITE Examples: Singapore, Japan, model ITE programs

Figure 4: How system support can build capabilities for deeper connections

capabilities of partnerships through networks and communities of practice. Once partnerships are established, systems should focus on deepening them, by encouraging them to work on state priorities for student (and thus teacher) learning through the use of K-12 curriculum.

In the first stage of partnership development, systems can provide tools to help partners to collaborate. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education publishes a toolkit to share best practice for partnership governance so that partners do not have to create agreement documents and meeting templates from scratch.⁸⁸

At the next stage, systems can create partnership networks to share practices and build capability for collaboration. Tennessee’s pilot for the CoP is a network in which district-provider partners support each other. With backing from the state Department of Education, district-provider pairs have strengthened their collaboration to the point of creating formal structures for two-way conversations and feedback from each other. The state facilitated the network, capturing and disseminating best practices and providing help to partners on how to use data.⁸⁹ Other states, such

as Florida, coordinate communities of practice of providers, districts, and state representatives who work together to define problems, share data and learn.⁹⁰

As partnership structures mature, systems might invest in development opportunities by building the capability of all involved in teacher preparation and development, including university-based teacher educators. Many systems see their role as brokers, rather than providers, of professional development, but some extend direct professional development opportunities to staff of ITE providers, or offer more intense support for providers with poor outcomes.

Some systems give university-based teacher educators access to professional development, teacher evaluation tools, K-12 curriculum materials, and research in areas of state priority. Tennessee, which has a state-wide focus on reading, provides reading research and data to provider faculty members, while also offering teacher educators training opportunities in the new Tennessee reading achievement standards.⁹¹ Louisiana is investing in extensive training for mentor teachers as it implements year-long teacher residencies.⁹² The state is also

⁸⁸ The Massachusetts Partnership Toolkit is available on their [website](#).

⁸⁹ Internal ITE CoP working document submitted by Tennessee Department of Education.

⁹⁰ Internal ITE CoP working document submitted by Florida Department of Education

⁹¹ For more information refer to p.267 of [Every Student Succeeds Act: Building on Success in Tennessee](#)

⁹² For more information refer to [briefing on Louisiana’s approach to mentor teacher training](#)

looking to train and credential content leaders with deep expertise in subject-specific topics, curricula, and tools, starting with English language arts and math specialists. Louisiana plans to allocate some training positions to teacher preparation leaders, in order to build deep expertise in university and well as school-based teacher educators.⁹³

Louisiana is also working to better connect preparation to practice by collaborating with stakeholders to publish detailed guidance on K-12 curriculum. The Louisiana Student Standards Companion Documents for Teachers contain detailed information on student learning priorities, clustering of teaching topics, and pre-requisite student knowledge. Such practical guidance gives district and provider partners a concrete framework for the topics that coursework and practical training should prioritize. The Louisiana Department of Education also publishes detailed reviews and ratings of K-12 curriculum materials, while state procurement policies make it easier for districts and schools to access highly-rated materials to embed into both coursework and practical training.⁹⁴

A number of systems provide intensive technical support to selected district-provider partnerships. The support includes structured project management, facilitated partnership conversations, in-person convenings, and monthly progress check-ins. This type of assistance is effective but resource-intensive. Since it usually involves dedicated personnel it may be sustainable for just a small number of programs. Massachusetts, for example, provided intensive support to four partnerships (chosen from a number of applicants) through a mix of Department staff and external consultants.⁹⁵ Louisiana hired USPREP, a university-based center for educational transformation that works with a coalition of university-district partners, to support some of its programs and partnerships.

Yet this model was hard to sustain financially and logistically, given the complexities of reform in some universities.

In the latter stages of partnership maturity, systems may help partners to embed K-12 curriculum into teacher preparation. Singapore and Japan provide guidance to providers on how to incorporate content from K-12 curriculum into their preparation programs. In Japan, a consortium of providers is working on a model ITE program to share best practice for coursework and training among providers and partnerships.

5.3 Offer financial rewards that encourage collaboration

Systems can offer financial rewards to help deep partnerships to develop. At the first stages, a system may offer small amounts of start-up funding to help partners establish the basics of a partnership, such as governance structures and processes. As partnerships evolve, a system might offer financial rewards to encourage them to focus on system priorities for improving student and teacher learning.

After the initial stages of development, systems may fund job opportunities centered on collaboration. Singapore, Japan, the Netherlands, and Norway build capacity to connect preparation and practice by rotating staff in frequent secondments among state or national education agencies, regional authorities, schools, and providers, or by helping to fund positions shared by universities and districts and schools.⁹⁶

As partnership structures mature, a number of systems use competitive grants to encourage deeper and more innovative partnerships, especially in areas of system priority. Such funding can be crucial.⁹⁷ Massachusetts, for example, provides small competitive grants to providers and district partners who meet the department's criteria for innovating in an area of

⁹³ Learning First interview with Louisiana Department of Education, October 2017

⁹⁴ Kaufman, Thompson, & Opfer, 2016

⁹⁵ Learning First interview with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

⁹⁶ Jensen et al., 2012; Jensen, Roberts-Hull, Magee, & Ginnivan, 2016; Learning First interviews with teacher

preparation leaders from Singapore National Institute of Education, Japan's National Institute for School Teachers & Staff Development, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, and the Dutch Ministry of Education

⁹⁷ Greany et al., 2014

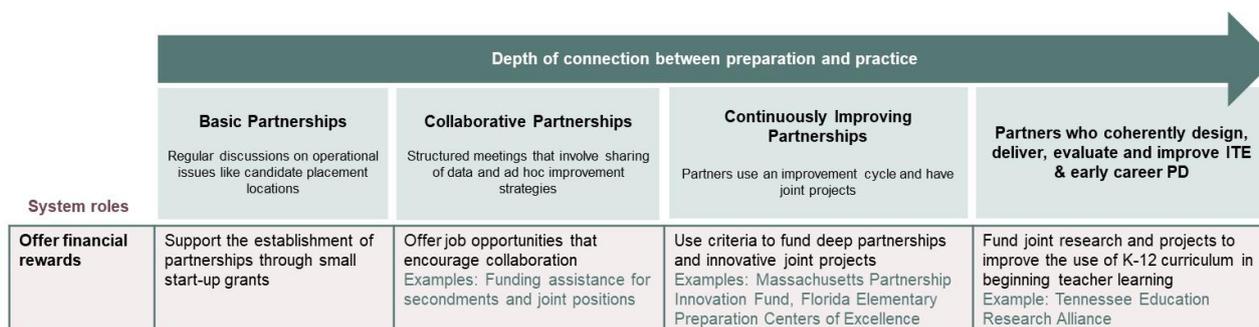


Figure 5: How financial rewards can build capabilities for deeper connections

ITE reform. Partnership work is monitored and grants can be withdrawn if grantees do not continue to meet the criteria.⁹⁸ Florida provides competitive grants for selected providers and their district partner to establish Centers of Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation.⁹⁹

The Netherlands encourage deep collaborations between schools and universities by reviewing and accrediting teacher training-school partnerships. The partners must collaborate on preparation, in-service training and research initiatives. Those that pass accreditation receive additional funding.¹⁰⁰ Staff at all levels of these partnerships work together: executives have regular governance meetings, researchers and teachers conduct school-based research projects, and teacher educators work alongside teacher mentors to support candidates in schools.

Other systems fund providers and districts and schools to jointly conduct school-based research in priority areas. In British Columbia, small grants encourage research and innovations in beginning teacher development.¹⁰¹ In Norway, schools can apply for funding to lead school-based research projects as part of a new national strategy to increase school-provider collaboration.¹⁰²

Such collaboration, in projects that schools can strongly influence, helps to develop common

principles, priorities, and language. Collaboration opportunities should be extended to more mature partnerships to encourage districts and providers to innovate in the use of and research into high-quality K-12 curriculum in teacher preparation. Some systems are researching teacher preparation and development in specific areas of the K-12 curriculum. The Tennessee Education Research Alliance, for example, is investigating the relationships among providers, state support for early reading instruction, and teaching.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ See Massachusetts DESE’s district/provider [partnerships site](#) for more information.

⁹⁹ For more information on Florida’s Centers of Excellence refer to the project’s [Request For Proposal](#)

¹⁰⁰ Snoek, 2011

¹⁰¹ For more information see the [University of British Columbia New Teacher Mentoring Project](#)

¹⁰² See for example Norway’s new ITE strategy that funds school-university research partnerships recently [announced by the Norwegian Government](#) announcement (in Norwegian).

¹⁰³ For more information refer to p.339 of [Every Student Succeeds Act: Building on Success in Tennessee](#)

6 Conclusion

Deep district-provider partnerships are the engine for improving the learning journey of new teachers. Effective partners work together to create coursework that is connected to what teachers need to do in classrooms; practical training that helps candidates enact coursework; and induction and early career professional development that deepens these competencies.

Partners can work together in many ways. While there is no one-size-fits-all for activities, they should develop a shared vision for teacher learning, increasingly work on concrete aspects of teacher training, and develop capabilities and incentives that will enable their staff to collaborate. A variety of system mechanisms, including accountability levers, incentives, and supports, can be used to support deeper partnerships.

In the US, Australia, and around the world, there are great opportunities to produce lasting, beneficial change to relationships among teacher educators, districts and schools and, thereby, to teacher development and student learning.

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