

ATPE Feedback on Draft Summary of EPAC's Components of High-Quality Educator Preparation/Effective Preparation Framework (EPF)

TEA asked members of the Educator Preparation Advisory Committee (EPAC) to solicit feedback from their organizations to propose recommendations for the EPF. To date, the EPF is being drafted through two developmental pathways – through the EPAC and through Educate Texas' Educator Preparation Regulatory Committee (EPRC). Both EPAC and the EPRC have created draft content for the EPF, which we provide feedback on in this document.

The following goal and purpose of the EPF, as communicated by TEA, are below:

Goal: The goal of the Effective Preparation Framework (EPF) is to codify a framework that defines the quality components of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in order to (1) recognize high-quality, high-performing EPPs, and (2) support EPPs in continuous improvement.

Purpose:

1. Build a common language around best practices effective EPPs engage in daily.
2. Support EPP continuous improvement through recognition of high-quality programs and an aligned continuing review process.
3. Provide the foundation for alignment of statewide resources and supports to the needs of Texas EPPs.

TEA has requested that the EPF emulate the Effective Schools Framework ([ESF](#)). Therefore, ATPE chose to mirror the formatting of the ESF to organize our recommendations.

Our Recommendations: As stated in our member-developed and approved [Legislative Program](#), ATPE supports a state certification process that ensures educators are appropriately trained and certified exclusively by the state. Additionally, ATPE recommends that the state:

- a. Standardize teacher preparation programs to include policies and practices designed to ensure that new teachers receive adequate mentoring and support and increase the standards for entrance into the profession.
- b. Require comprehensive pedagogical training, including classroom and discipline management, child and adolescent psychology, and methods courses.
- c. Require coursework in the areas of reading, special education, gifted/talented, ESL and computer literacy.

Additionally, we reached out to our members to ascertain what they prioritize in an effective EPP. Based on those conversations, the following summarizes ATPE members' top priorities, in order of importance:

Curriculum and Coursework

As practicing educators who have continued to learn throughout their time in the classroom, seen the struggles of those entering the profession, and reflected on the critical competencies for beginning educators, our members' top priority was curriculum and coursework.

Competency in understanding how adverse life circumstances impact learning topped the list. Closely connected to this was building relationships with students and their families. Our members said new educators should understand personal connection strategies, creating a safe learning environment, restorative discipline practices, celebrating and accepting students' differences, and trauma-informed instruction. Reflecting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, one ATPE member said students are only able to learn after "a child's critical needs are taken care of (communication, food, understanding, compassion, safety)."

Our members' emphasis on understanding how to educate a diverse group of children wasn't meant to diminish content expertise. In fact, one ATPE member said beginning educators should receive specialized content instruction, especially in math. Rather, they felt it was hard to teach content without first being able to address the variety of backgrounds students have. One member said content and pedagogy are equally important and that teachers "bring understanding of content through effective, pedagogically proven means."

Classroom management – setting procedures, guidelines, routines, and high expectations for students – was also crucial and connected to having meaningful relationships with students. One member said classroom management skills are what allow an educator to be ready on day one.

Another key competency expressed by ATPE members was professional roles and responsibilities, including understanding teachers' rights and how to comply with relevant laws. One member said, "[An EPP] must instill a high level of integrity in its candidates," which includes being dedicated to professional growth and swearing to do no harm (just as a doctor would do).

Lastly, ATPE members felt that practice in planning lessons, including examining the TEKS and curriculum options and understanding various instructional strategies (e.g. small groups), was essential. One member said, "Classrooms have many unexpected events; however, when there is an educational plan, chaos is minimized." Additionally, beginning educators should understand that effective time-management is accomplished through a thorough understanding of not only lesson planning, but taking into account the evaluation of student understanding that informs subsequent lesson adaptations.

Practice-Based Experiences and Support

The application of curriculum and coursework occurs through practice-based experiences, which were another top priority for ATPE members with whom we consulted. Members recommended that EPPs provide candidates a greater number of hours in the classroom *prior* to certification to "truly see beginning to end and help build strong classroom discipline

procedures.” They also suggested that these in-person experiences occur throughout the entirety of the program. It is one thing to prepare sample lessons and set classroom expectations that are responsive to student needs, all while following the law, but it is another thing entirely to put these concepts into action.

Connected to practice-based experiences was the crucial need for providing certification candidates with support. This included giving them the ability to observe master teachers and engage in long-term, meaningful opportunities to practice teaching under the coaching and supervision of the EPP and cooperating school district, including throughout the first full year of teaching.

Admissions

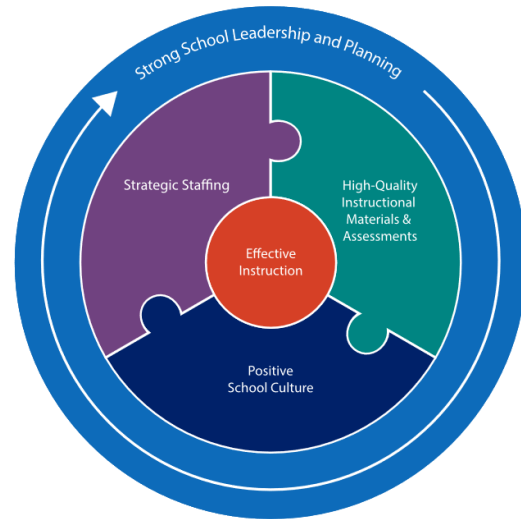
One member commented on the responsibility of the EPP to “recruit individuals who are willing to tackle the challenges of today’s diverse classrooms.” Accepting all applicants to an EPP or not engaging in rigorous screening could set many applicants up for failure and waste their time and money.

Based on ATPE member feedback, we propose that effective preparation is achieved when EPPs responsibly recruit and prepare beginning educators who have the competency and skills to persist and grow in the profession and to effectively respond to students’ academic, social, and emotional needs.

We believe our EPP-focused statement above supports the EPRC “vision for effective preparation,” which is focused on what teacher candidates experience. The EPRC vision states, “Teacher candidates - regardless of the program or pathway into the field - have opportunities and support to learn, practice, reflect, and demonstrate proficiency of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, mindset and professionalism to ensure they will effectively serve all students before they become the teacher of record.” In reflecting on these, it is apparent that stakeholders should approach this work by thinking about what candidates should experience and master, what EPPs should do to ensure that experience and mastery is met, and ultimately what the state must do to ensure EPPs are successful in this endeavor. In future EPAC meetings, ATPE suggests gathering stakeholder feedback on a thoughtful vision statement for the EPF that considers expectations for EPPs, candidates, and the state.

ATPE used our proposal of what effective preparation looks like to guide our recommendation for an EPF structure based on the ESF.

ESF Structure: Shown to the right, the ESF has a core, three supporting elements, and an encompassing structure that ensures proper functioning of the system. These comprise the five “levers” of the ESF framework. Each lever is described by “essential actions” taken by effective schools and “districts commitments” to ensure schools are supported. Each essential action is further described by a set of indicators that signal the action is being met. The first essential action is “foundational” and must be addressed before moving on to those that follow.



Similarly, we propose a five-lever system with a core, three supporting elements, and an overarching structure that ensures the system is running properly. Since EPPs are different from schools within a district, we recommend “state commitments” rather than “district commitments,” as these will tie into the overall vision, which should include state expectations to hold EPPs accountable for success.

In May 2021, EPAC members participated in a brainstorming exercise with TEA staff that resulted in five “findings,” as compiled/condensed by TEA staff. These were curriculum and coursework; training, supervision, and support; admissions; P-12 partnership; and assessment and evaluation. To further reflect what EPAC members said, TEA staff also wrote several descriptions under each finding. The EPRC also suggested three main categories for the framework: training and support (about field-based experiences), curriculum, and progress management and candidate development (about coaching and demonstrating mastery).

Considering the findings and EPRC categories, other research, the ATPE Legislative Program, and feedback from ATPE members on what they believe leads to effective educator preparation, we recommend the following EPF structure:

1. Core – Curriculum and coursework
2. Support 1 – Training, supervision, and support
3. Support 2 – Admissions
4. Support 3 – P-12 partnership
5. Encompassing – Assessment and evaluation

For each of the levers, described in further detail below, we propose a definition, essential actions (which reflect, verbatim as written by TEA, the May 2021 EPAC discussion findings, framed in quotations with suggested changes noted in red), and a foundational essential element. We believe there was significant overlap between the EPRC recommendations and the EPAC-derived recommendations, and ATPE therefore worked off of the EPAC recommendations, taking the EPRC draft language into consideration.

As the development of the EPF continues, we propose that TEA engage in a stakeholder-involved deep dive to examine existing state requirements for EPPs, the Accountability System for Educator Preparation Programs (ASEP), and the parameters of the five-year continuing review process to define state commitments that will align with the expectations of the EPF. Additionally, we recommend that, after the levers and essential actions are determined, stakeholders engage in setting and refining the criteria for fulfilling the essential actions.

LEVER 1: The Core – Curriculum and Coursework

At the core of effective educator preparation is the foundational curriculum and coursework that are applied during practice. An understanding of subject-area content, instructional design and strategies, and educational theory and law is necessary before creating or teaching lessons. Additionally, it is imperative that EPPs instill in candidates the professional culture of continuous growth shared among educators. Educators' growth mindset leads to persistence in the classroom and sets a positive example for students.

Essential actions:

1. Foundational: "Curriculum and coursework ~~that both demonstrate and align~~ aligned with critical competencies (e.g., academic content, ethics and professional responsibilities, lesson design and internalization practices, trauma-informed, health and well-being practices, diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, progress monitoring and data-driven instructional practices, technology integration, behavior management, strategies to meet the individualized needs of special populations)."
2. "Regular hands-on practice, coaching, and reflection on the ~~and~~ application of critical competencies to reinforce a culture of professional growth and the translation of educational theory to practice (e.g., structured practice and role-play during courses, opportunities for application in field-based experience, practice in clinical teaching or internship)."

LEVER 2: Core-Supporting Element – Training, Supervision, and Support

No teacher is ever entirely day-one ready, as teaching is ultimately mastered through doing. It takes at least five years for teachers to hone their craft, making it crucial that EPPs do as much **training, supervision, and support** before teachers enter the classroom as a teacher of record.

Furthermore, it is extremely important that cooperating/mentor teachers and field supervisors are highly qualified. For instance, teachers who engage in clinical practice in the classroom of a highly effective teacher saw two years of gain in their effectiveness as a first-year teacher (Goldhaber et al., 2019).

Essential actions:

1. Foundational: "Rigorous selection and high-quality training of cooperating/mentor teachers and field supervisors to ensure dispositional alignment, knowledge of

- content and pedagogical best practice (e.g., critical competencies integrated in preparation coursework), and effective coaching practices, along with measures to ensure candidates have appropriate access to the mentors and supervisors.”
2. “High-quality field-based experiences occur in a variety of instructional settings with diverse student populations and meaningfully connect course concepts to classroom application through thoughtful reflection, coaching, and mentoring.”
 3. “High-quality, rigorous clinical teaching that is focused on growth, extended, context rich, intentional, and scaffolded to include meaningful opportunities for co-teaching and lead teaching coupled with cooperating/mentor teacher coaching and support.”
 4. “Frequent and iterative observations from the EPP field supervisor and LEA staff that include actionable feedback and coaching that explicitly connects coursework and practice.”

LEVER 3: Core-Supporting Element – Admissions

Just as a phlebotomy training program may want to ensure its entrants are comfortable with the sight of blood, an EPP will likely want to build in some basic guardrails to increase the probability that the candidates it accepts will be successful. It does no good to train someone to become an educator only to have them leave the classroom one semester in because they had inappropriate expectations of how teaching would look and feel. Plus, [research](#) shows that high standards lead to higher academic outcomes for students and higher retention rates (see Henry, Bastian, & Smith, 2012 for an example of an outstanding scholarship program).

In 2014, ATPE advocated that SBEC raise the minimum grade-point average (GPA) required for admission into an EPP from 2.5 to 2.75. Although SBEC did not raise the minimum of 2.5, which is codified in 19 TAC 227.10(a)(3), the board did establish in 2016 that the overall incoming class GPA average must be no less than 3.0 (19 TAC 227.19).

Furthermore, research has demonstrated significant academic gains when students of color are taught by educators who match their race/ethnicity (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010).

Essential actions:

1. **Foundational:** Increase the chances of candidate success in the classroom by maintaining equitable and rigorous admissions standards that set a high bar for the teaching profession.
2. “Responsibly and equitably ~~R~~ecruit a diverse pool of candidates into the preparation program.”
3. “Recognize and fulfill ~~that~~ candidates’ ~~may~~ needs for additional supports to fully access programmatic content and supports (e.g., financial, program accessibility).”

LEVER 4: Core-Supporting Element – P-12 Partnership

Many times, there is a disconnect between the EPP and the district/LEA in which a candidate is engaging in a practice-based experience or teaching (as in the case of many alternative certification and post-baccalaureate EPPs). This can lead to increased stress and feelings of

ineffectiveness for the candidate, often resulting in a candidate's deciding not to pursue a teaching career.

Essential actions:

1. Foundational: ~~Alignment~~ “A memorandum of understanding exists between the EPP and LEA partners on shared priorities for teacher preparation and a shared vision for teacher readiness.”
2. “Alignment of recruitment, placement, and training practices in service of LEA needs (e.g., staffing, instructional approaches, professional development).”
3. “Shared governance structures that include collaborative decision making over teacher recruitment, training (including the ability to observe district teachers), placement, hiring, and support, ongoing processes for collaboration and communication, and data sharing and analysis to ensure teacher candidates’ needs are being met and that they are making an impact on P-12 student outcomes.”
4. “Long-term partnership to support the transition of candidates from pre-service to in-service educators (e.g., ongoing coaching and support during first year(s) teaching, training and support of mentor teachers, induction content development and support, support with development of candidate development plans).”

LEVER 5: Core-Supporting Element – Assessment and Evaluation

Internal assessment and evaluation of EPP outcomes are just as important as external evaluation through ASEP and the continuing approval process. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality State of the States 2021 [report](#), states use performance assessments in a variety of ways. Some use it as a requirement for program completion, some for licensure, and some not for licensure but as part of their EPP approval process. Several states require performance assessments as a licensure requirement for teachers undergoing alternative certification, but those candidates often work as a teacher of record for a year or more before ever potentially benefitting from the assessments.

Because the majority of educators in Texas are prepared through an alternative certification route, it is imperative that EPPs engage in continuous monitoring of their outcomes and that the state commit to ensuring ample supports and practice-based experiences are available to candidates before they enter the classroom as a teacher of record.

Essential actions:

1. Foundational: “Alignment across EPP faculty and staff on the importance ~~and utility of reliable evaluation tools to~~ of reliably evaluating and establishing ing a normed bar for success that includes and support candidate and programmatic continuous improvement and candidate support.”
2. “Formative performance gates and/or milestone assessments that align with critical competencies and ~~can~~ ensure candidates can effectively apply what they are learning ~~in such a way that results in improved student outcomes.~~”

3. "Use of a formative evaluation instrument that allows the field supervisor and cooperating/mentor teacher to guide and direct the candidate in their growth and development."
4. "Consistent candidate progress monitoring, including frequent touchpoints with cooperating/mentor teachers and field supervisors to understand impact of coursework on candidate growth."
5. "Systems and processes that allow the EPP to consistently collect, analyze, monitor, and communicate, and implement continuous improvement strategies based on around multiple sources of data (e.g., candidate readiness, impact on student outcomes, placement, satisfaction, retention, including analysis by candidate demographic group)."
- ~~6. "Systems and processes to support use of these sources of data to inform and implement continuous improvement strategies." (See above.)~~
- ~~7. "Summative performance assessments that measure educator preparation requirements and educator preparation program effectiveness." **~~(We believe this is not a choice EPPs can make, but rather a state decision and commitment to a certain summative assessment type that, combined with other data points, will provide EPPs with information about their effectiveness.)

Resources:

Goldhaber, D., & Hansen, M. (2010). Race, gender, and teacher testing: How informative a tool is teacher licensure testing? *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(1), 218-251.

Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J., Naito, N., & Theobald, R. (2019). Making the most of student teaching: The importance of mentors and scope for change. *Education Finance and Policy*, 1-11.

Henry, G. T., Bastian, K. C., & Smith, A. A. (2012). Scholarships to recruit the "Best and Brightest" into teaching: Who is recruited, where do they teach, how effective are they, and how long do they stay? *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 83-92.