



*Inspiring productive, fulfilled, life-long learners*

THE FRAMEWORK FOR POST-BACCALAUREATE  
PROGRAM GUIDELINES  
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Introduction

## *The Role of Post-Baccalaureate Programs in Pennsylvania's Teacher Preparation*

The majority of teachers in Pennsylvania and the United States obtain teacher certification by completing a traditional teacher preparation program as part of an undergraduate degree.<sup>i</sup> For candidates who already possess a bachelor's degree and want to enter the field of teaching, post-baccalaureate programs offer the possibility of building on that degree and other experiences while acquiring the additional skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to become a successful teacher.

Beyond providing a route to certification for such individuals, post-baccalaureate programs can also play an important role in meeting some of Pennsylvania's teacher needs. Though Pennsylvania does not face an overall teacher shortage, there are gaps in specific content areas and geographical regions, as well as a need for greater diversity in the teaching force. Post-baccalaureate programs can serve to address some of these needs, and there is evidence that many programs across the country successfully serve that purpose already.<sup>ii</sup>

The typical undergraduate candidates differ from typical post-baccalaureate candidates in important ways, and their preparation should therefore differ as well. At the end of a post-baccalaureate program, successful candidates receive the same certificates as pre-baccalaureate candidates, and programs should therefore demonstrate how candidates have acquired the same competencies acquired by candidates in undergraduate preparation programs. However, post-baccalaureate programs must be tailored to the specific and unique needs of candidates, who enter programs with established skills and knowledge. In order to assess prior knowledge and experience, the admissions, entry, and intake processes become particularly important components of post-baccalaureate programs. Other program components also differ from the pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs, and candidates may require different supports, such as mentors, during the program.

Though there is not complete consensus on the ideal characteristics of post-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs, research in the field identifies multiple critical program components:

- A design aimed to recruit and prepare individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree;
- A rigorous selection process that includes academic selectivity and relevant subject matter knowledge;
- Field-based experiences with embedded candidate competencies;
- Candidates working closely with mentor teachers;
- Coursework addressing immediate candidate needs with an emphasis on pedagogy and human development;
- High performance standards for program completion;<sup>iii</sup> and
- Regular, comprehensive assessment woven through all program elements to ensure that candidates are fully prepared to teach upon completion of the program.

In reviewing multiple post-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs across the nation, it is also evident that successful programs are developed to meet the unique needs of districts and candidates; and while they often deviate from pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs as a result, they still ensure that candidates acquire the necessary competencies to serve as successful teachers. Thus, candidates must emerge from programs with the same mastery of the content, pedagogy, and human development in their certificate area that their peers in pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs achieve; but there must also be considerable flexibility in how candidates achieve that level of mastery through post-baccalaureate programs.

With high expectations for program entry, an infusion of competencies in field experiences and student teaching where appropriate, streamlined and accelerated course delivery, strong candidate supports, and thorough assessment tools to ensure candidate mastery of competencies, the post-baccalaureate program can provide high quality teacher preparation without mirroring the structure of pre-baccalaureate programs.

These guidelines are designed to function as a supplement to the existing Certificate Framework guidelines for pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs. The content and competencies that are required of all teachers receiving certification in Pennsylvania are outlined in the pre-baccalaureate guidelines and are not repeated here. Rather, this document focuses on the key elements that distinguish Pennsylvania's post-baccalaureate standards from the state's pre-baccalaureate standards; and it provides as well examples of best practice from across the country to guide the creation of the post-baccalaureate programs.

Specifically, the following elements of Pennsylvania's post-baccalaureate programs are consistent with the existing Certificate Framework guidelines for pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs and can be adapted to inform the post-baccalaureate program guidelines:

- Mission Statement
- Collaboration for Program Design
- Program Delivery
- Faculty Qualifications
- Collaboration Activities
- Educational Technology

Other components of the existing Certificate Framework guidelines for pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs are referenced throughout the document where relevant, particularly regarding the candidate competencies and expectations for field experiences.

## **Critical Program Criteria**

A successful post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program must contain six critical program criteria. These criteria were developed with extensive input from Pennsylvania teacher preparation programs, as well as a thorough review of available research and literature regarding effective post-baccalaureate programs. The six critical program criteria are as follows:

1. **Needs Assessment & Recruitment Plan:** A focus on district, regional and state needs for a highly qualified and diverse teacher pool.
2. **Admissions & Intake Process:** Identifying promising candidates and assessing their skills and knowledge.
3. **High Quality & Streamlined Program Design:** Meeting the needs of both candidates and school districts.
4. **Field Experiences & Student Teaching:** Comprehensive and coordinated field experiences, embedding candidate competencies throughout.
5. **Candidate Assessment & Program Completion:** Ensuring candidates meet state standards and are ready to enter the classroom as teachers of record through regular, comprehensive assessments.
6. **Candidate & New Teacher Supports:** Emphasis on a range of high-quality supports during and following the program.

Each critical program criteria is described in more detail below. In addition, best practices gleaned from across the country are also highlighted and are provided to serve as potential models to be used by institutions as they develop their post-baccalaureate programs.

## 1. Needs Assessment & Recruitment Plan

Post-baccalaureate programs can serve a critical function in meeting an array of Pennsylvania's teacher needs. Specifically, there are regions in the state that face teacher shortages, as well as certain content areas that continually face shortages, such as math, science, and special education. In addition, Pennsylvania would benefit from more diversity in the teaching force, especially among historically underrepresented minorities. Nationwide, research indicates that post-baccalaureate programs do in fact help to alleviate these shortages and diversify the teaching force.<sup>iv</sup>

It is important that programs have a tailored recruitment plan to try and meet these needs, as it can be challenging to attract individuals who already possess bachelor's degrees to the field of teaching. One program in Texas identified recruitment as a major struggle for the program to begin operating. In tracking their public relations efforts, they found that increasing their efforts vastly expanded their applicant pool.<sup>v</sup> Incentives can also attract candidates to programs, especially if the program is designed to meet the unique and specific needs of post-baccalaureate candidates.

### **Pennsylvania Post-Baccalaureate Program Expectations – Needs Assessment & Recruitment Plan:**

- ✓ Programs must recruit historically underrepresented minorities into programs to diversify the teaching force in Pennsylvania.
- ✓ Programs must demonstrate that there is an effort to meet at least one high need content area, as defined by the state, or fill an identified shortage in a geographical region.
- ✓ Programs must provide evidence of a strong and comprehensive recruitment plan that aligns with goals to meet state needs or recruit historically underrepresented minorities into teaching.
- ✓ Programs must ensure that potential candidates can easily access information about the program through such tools as:
  - A clear website that is easy to navigate,
  - A public relations campaign,
  - Brochures, mailings, and pamphlets, and/or
  - E-mails to prospective candidates.

## **Examples of Best Practice**

### ***\* Incentives Attract Candidates \****

Offering incentives can serve as an effective recruitment tactic in attracting candidates to post-baccalaureate programs. Though not always sufficient, financial incentives such as scholarships, bonuses, loan forgiveness, employer-assisted housing, master's degree tuition assistance, salary incentives, and good benefits can attract individuals to the profession, according to a recent National Governor's Association report. A recent report by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation arrived at a similar conclusion, finding that, "Career changers need greater incentives (particularly stipends, partial salary support, health care coverage, and loan forgiveness) to help them make successful transitions to teaching." This finding was magnified with the African-American and Hispanic mid-career professionals surveyed.

### ***\* Addressing a Statewide Need: A Best Practice in Pennsylvania \****

E=mc<sup>2</sup>, Educating Middle-Grades Teachers for Challenging Contexts, is an experimental program through Temple University designed to train mid-career and early retiree mathematics and science professionals as middle-grade teachers. To meet Pennsylvania's crucial need for mathematics and science teachers, E=mc<sup>2</sup> provides an accelerated path to Pennsylvania teaching certification that also enables professionals to begin the program while maintaining their current jobs. Participants receive practical and rigorous preparation to meet the needs of individual middle school students, with program academic coursework thoroughly integrated with field-based experiences. E=mc<sup>2</sup> offers a unique set of advantages designed to ease and speed the transition to teaching:

- complete in 12 months with a cohort of similarly situated adults
- a partial tuition subsidy of \$5,000
- be eligible to receive a Pennsylvania teacher certification upon completion
- coursework geared to allow continued employment at current job for at least the first half of the program
- courses designed and taught by Temple University faculty that link mathematics or science with teaching strategies appropriate for middle-school-aged children
- initial practical experience in cooperating schools with middle school students
- followed by progressively more independent and involved classroom work
- independent teaching supported by master teachers

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## **2. Admissions & Intake Process**

Some researchers have found that, particularly in urban low-income communities where teacher quality is affected by shortages and the need to hire under-qualified individuals through temporary or emergency permits, post-baccalaureate programs can help raise the quality of the teacher pool.<sup>ix</sup>

There is also some initial research on how improving teacher quality improves student performance. Using five years' worth of student achievement data and historical teacher data in New York City, one report found a modest but statistically significant improvement in the average achievement of students in the poorest schools with improvements in the observed qualifications of teachers. The results suggest that selecting teachers with stronger academic indicators (such as SAT scores and GPA) could substantially improve student achievement.<sup>x</sup>

The bar a post-baccalaureate program sets for admissions standards is therefore an important one, and it can also help to ensure that candidates can quickly master the competencies necessary to enter the teaching profession. With a more streamlined curriculum, it is

particularly important that the admissions process results in high quality candidates that can successfully transition to teaching.

The intake process is just as important as the admissions process. A thorough and rigorous admissions and intake process, which could include tools such as a prior learning assessment or a portfolio, can both avoid duplicative coursework while maximizing a candidate's previous experiences in the context of the program. One of the primary reasons why post-baccalaureate programs must be tailored to the specific and unique needs of candidates is that candidates enter programs with established skills and knowledge. Their previous experiences can contribute to their work in a teacher preparation program and should therefore be assessed upon entry. For example, demonstrated content expertise in the certification sought can be assessed through the candidates' coursework or undergraduate degree, testing (such as GRE subject tests or certification exams), or work experience. If candidates possess prior knowledge and demonstrated content expertise in the certification sought, their post-baccalaureate program can focus on pedagogy and human development, for instance, to streamline their coursework.

### **Pennsylvania Post-Baccalaureate Program Expectations – Admissions & Intake Process:**

- ✓ Though no admissions and intake process is identical, approved post-baccalaureate programs must share some key criteria:
  - Applicants already hold a BA or BS degree from an accredited college or university;
  - Applicants have a minimum 3.0 overall undergraduate GPA;<sup>1</sup>
  - Applicants have 6 undergraduates credits in mathematics, and 6 undergraduate credits in English composition (3 credits) and English literature (3 credits);<sup>2</sup>
  - Applicants have Pennsylvania required clearances;<sup>3</sup>
  - For a Special Education Certificate, applicants must provide evidence of an earned PreK-4, 4-8, Secondary (7-12) or Reading Specialist certificate.
- ✓ Beyond this basic set of criteria, programs must demonstrate that accepted applicants meet a high bar for admission. Programs must develop and describe the admissions criteria and process, as well as show that the process results in a high quality pool of potential candidates.
- ✓ Finally, according to Chapter 354, programs should go to great effort to avoid unnecessary duplication of coursework and strive to create an efficient, streamlined program for candidates. (§ 354.25 (2)) One way to avoid duplicative work is to conduct a thorough intake on each candidate and consider prior experiences. Programs must therefore demonstrate a system or process for assessing prior knowledge, experience, coursework, and exam performance and a subsequent system of ensuring that the program is efficient, streamlined, and customized to meet candidate needs. If the program deems certain coursework duplication essential, it will be incumbent upon the institution to identify when and why duplication of coursework is necessary.

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1 OR receive conditional admissions contingent upon maintaining a 3.0 GPA or higher after 12 or more credits of post-baccalaureate coursework.

2 OR receive notification upon program admission that the course credits must be completed in order to be recommended for certification.

3 OR receive notification upon program admission that all required clearances must be in place prior to program field experiences and student teaching.

## Examples of Best Practice

### *\* Accounting for Previous Experiences \**

Post-baccalaureate programs in Pennsylvania already employ some best practices in the intake and admissions processes. First, during the intake process, it may become clear that some candidates already have experience working with children and students. This experience may be applied towards the 40 required observation and exploration hours and/or the 150 required pre-student teaching hours. In addition, some programs include a requirement for content mastery prior to entry. This requirement streamlines the program, allowing programs to focus primarily on human development and pedagogy, as well as other areas central to the practice of teaching. Programs can assess content mastery through many different means, such as exams, portfolios, transcript review, previous work experience and standardized tests (such as GRE subject tests or certification exams). Finally, some programs conduct personal interviews with candidates after they are accepted into the program to better assess and gain a deeper understanding of previous experiences. Examples such as these demonstrate that the program can be streamlined, tailored to and maximizing on candidate experience, through a comprehensive intake process.

### **3. High Quality & Streamlined Program Design**

Since the typical undergraduate candidates differ from typical post-baccalaureate candidates in important ways, their preparation should differ as well. It is important to emphasize, though, that upon successful completion of any approved teacher preparation program in the state, candidates receive the same certificates. Programs should therefore demonstrate how candidates have acquired the same competencies acquired by candidates in pre-baccalaureate preparation programs, while streamlining and tailoring the program to meet the specific and unique needs of post-baccalaureate candidates.

Many participants in post-baccalaureate programs around the country are not just recent college graduates but are mid-career adults with work experience. One continual criticism of post-baccalaureate programs is that coursework is not tailored to candidates' unique needs. Other than the time of day courses are offered, the coursework often mirrors pre-baccalaureate certification coursework.<sup>xi</sup>

In particular, coursework for participants in post-baccalaureate programs should focus on pedagogy and human development, especially if content area expertise is established through program admission and the intake process. One study noted, though, that subject-specific pedagogy was not emphasized in the majority of post-baccalaureate programs. Rather, candidates took general pedagogy coursework, which failed to address both their previous experience and their most immediate needs.<sup>xii</sup> In addition, candidates in post-baccalaureate programs often note the need for classroom management coursework.<sup>xiii</sup> Therefore, pedagogy courses must be subject-specific, and particular attention must be paid to classroom management.

Research suggests that:

Coursework content should be tailored to meet the needs of candidates, with particular emphasis on pedagogy, human development and classroom management;

A streamlined course of study that deviates from pre-baccalaureate programs is most effective; and

Competencies should be embedded in multiple experiences within the program.<sup>xiv</sup>

## **Pennsylvania Post-Baccalaureate Program Expectations – Program Design:**

- ✓ Programs must provide evidence that all competencies listed in the relevant Certificate Framework guidelines for each certification program are adequately addressed in terms of both depth and breadth.<sup>xv</sup> This expectation can be achieved through a combination of program curricula, admissions requirements, and the intake process (to account for previous experiences and coursework).
- ✓ Programs must demonstrate how and why the coursework is streamlined and differs where appropriate from the pre-baccalaureate program in terms of course sequence and other program design elements. This differentiation in program design can be identified in many ways, such as:
  - A different and flexible schedule for candidates, especially since candidates may be employed full-time while taking coursework;
  - Coursework that is tailored to post-baccalaureate candidates and specific course syllabi that differ from the equivalent pre-baccalaureate preparation course;
  - The program results in a higher degree, such as a master’s degree;
  - Candidates can complete the program in less than the number of credits recommended for the professional core of the relevant pre-baccalaureate teacher preparation program;<sup>xvi</sup>
  - There are multiple paths provided for different types of post-baccalaureate candidates based on their previous experiences; and
  - Course content is designed to meet the immediate needs of candidates.
- ✓ Programs may embed competencies throughout the curriculum where appropriate, including field experiences.<sup>xvii</sup>
- ✓ Programs must demonstrate that candidates are assessed in their acquisition of the competencies in the relevant Certificate Framework guidelines for each certification program. When embedding competencies, assessment becomes a particularly important program component to ensure that candidates are indeed acquiring the competencies.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition to course assessments and assessments that accompany field experiences or student teaching, programs should utilize additional overarching assessment tools, such as portfolios, to evaluate candidates.

### **Examples of Best Practice**

#### ***\* Embedding Competencies Outside of Courses: A Best Practice \****

“When we began mapping competencies to courses, it became clear to us that the major place in which we reinforce professionalism is in student teaching. Here we have a chance to immerse the student in the school experience and mentor him or her in best practices. While we have discussed professionalism in almost every course, here is where it becomes real for students.”

– Professor Ward Cates, Lehigh University

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#### 4. Field Experiences & Student Teaching

Field experiences and student teaching are central components of all professional educator programs. As regulated by Chapter 354 of the Pennsylvania Code (Title 22), field experiences benefit candidates by providing opportunities to apply principles and theories from the program to actual practice in the classroom, as well as practice with diverse populations, ages, and school settings (§354.25(d)(1-2)). Though diverse experiences are important, it is also vital that candidates have a strong clinical experience in the specific areas in which they are preparing to teach. Mentors can assist in providing a well-rounded field experience, helping candidates integrate pedagogy, theory and practice.

As some candidates enter post-baccalaureate programs with previous experiences with children and in classrooms, the field experiences should be adapted from the Certificate Framework guidelines to meet the specific and unique needs of post-baccalaureate candidates.<sup>xx</sup> Overall, the expectations for post-baccalaureate candidates are consistent with expectations for pre-baccalaureate candidates, including but not limited to:

A minimum of 190 hours of field experiences prior to student teaching – 40 hours of observation and exploration and 150 hours of pre-student teaching; and

A minimum 12 week full-time supervised student teaching experience.

Though the guiding principles of field experiences and student teaching do not differ, some of the practices should be adjusted to provide a better overall experience for candidates.<sup>xxi</sup>

#### **PA Post-Baccalaureate Program Expectations – Field Experiences & Student Teaching:**

- ✓ Programs must demonstrate how field experiences and/or student teaching have been adapted from the Certificate Framework guidelines to meet the specific and unique needs of post-baccalaureate candidates, especially for those that enter post-baccalaureate programs with previous experiences with children and in classrooms.
- ✓ Programs must provide evidence of partnership and ongoing collaboration with participating schools and educational settings, which may be provided in many ways, such as:
  - A detailed partnership agreement with through a memorandum of understanding or similar documentation;
  - A log of communication;
  - Information about advisory boards, listservs, or other formalized networks for partnership and communication;
  - Lists of all partnering entities and points of contact; and
  - Letters from partners indicating the level of involvement and collaboration.It is incumbent upon the program to demonstrate the quality – not just amount – of communication, collaboration, and partnership.
- ✓ Programs must demonstrate that the program was designed with input and collaboration from partnering schools and educational settings, and that the program design is consistently informed by feedback and communication with those partners. Programs should include evidence of the following:
  - Programs are thoughtful of the time commitment required of partnering schools and educational settings;
  - Programs are aware of the different needs and levels of experience of post-baccalaureate candidates; and
  - Programs aim to coordinate coursework with field experiences and student teaching through the partnerships with schools and educational settings.

- ✓ Programs must provide information about the sequence and duration of field experiences, as well as how these experiences are closely integrated with coursework, assessment practices, and program goals.

### **Examples of Best Practice**

#### ***\* Streamlining and Tailoring Field Experiences and Student Teaching \****

Some post-baccalaureate programs in Pennsylvania have already identified best practices regarding field experiences and student teaching:

In many of the schools where candidates complete student teaching, the semester extends beyond the 12 weeks required. Some programs use this additional time to incorporate pre- student teaching field experience hours prior to student teaching. Candidates who have recent experience working with children and in classrooms may already meet the requirement to complete 40 observation and exploration hours. When programs take this experience into account during intake process, the program is further streamlined and tailored to the unique needs of the post-baccalaureate candidate.

#### ***\* Teaching Residencies: Innovation in Field Experiences and Student Teaching \****

Teaching residencies are non-traditional routes to teacher certification for post-baccalaureate candidates. These yearlong residency programs train teachers through field-based experiences supplemented by coursework and mentoring. Typically, these programs are in urban, high-need school districts and teachers ultimately work in high-need schools. There are multiple urban teaching residencies around the country, but the **Boston Urban Teaching Residency** is cited most often as the national model.

During the year-long teaching practicum, Boston Urban Teaching residents take master's level coursework, participate in collaborative teaching, and receive intensive mentoring from current teachers. The teaching residents are not teachers of record during their yearlong residency, but they are paid and make a commitment to teach as the teacher of record for three years beyond the yearlong residency. Further, teaching residents are supported through established induction programs during their first three years of teaching.

A recent study by NCATE identified seven key characteristics of teaching residencies:

1. Weaving education theory and classroom practice tightly together in a *year-long* residency model of highly relevant teacher education;
2. Focusing on Resident learning alongside an experienced, trained and well-compensated mentor;
3. Preparing candidates in cohorts to cultivate a professional learning community, foster collaboration, and promote school change;
4. Building effective partnerships and drawing on community-based organizations to promote a "third way" for teacher preparation;
5. Serving school districts by attending to both their teacher supply problems and curricular goals and instructional approaches;
6. Supporting Residents for multiple years once they are hired as teachers of record; and
7. Establishing incentives and supporting differentiated career goals to retain Residents and reward accomplished and experienced teachers.

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## **5. Candidate Assessment & Program Completion**

Especially in a streamlined program where competencies are embedded throughout, it is critical that candidates can demonstrate that they have mastered the competencies and have met the same bar for certification as their pre-baccalaureate peers. In addition, in reviewing programs

across the nation, the USDE identified the standards for program completion as an essential component for post-baccalaureate programs.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Therefore, programs should include detailed assessment at regular intervals throughout the program, as well as an overarching, comprehensive assessment for candidates, to ensure that candidates have not just completed the program but have met a high standard and are ready to enter the classroom as the teacher of record.

### **PA Post-Baccalaureate Program Expectations – Candidate Assessment and Program Completion:**

- ✓ Programs must demonstrate that candidates are given clear and specific expectations regarding assessment and program completion.
- ✓ Programs must provide a holistic plan of assessment that demonstrates how candidates are assessed at regular intervals throughout the program, including the assessment tools used during coursework and field experiences. The assessment plan must describe both formative and summative assessment strategies, and note all efforts to connect assessment and candidate growth and improvement. It should be clear from the integrated assessment plan that assessment is woven throughout all program components and connects to the cumulative, comprehensive assessment strategy.
- ✓ Programs must demonstrate that there are consistent, formative assessments in place. Programs must indicate how candidates will receive ongoing performance feedback to identify areas of improvement and develop a strategy for growth. Programs must also indicate that there is a feedback loop in place that supports and consistently allows for candidate improvement. In addition, programs must provide information about the supports available to candidates and how candidates are informed of those supports.
- ✓ Programs must provide evidence of a cumulative, comprehensive assessment strategy that ensures candidate mastery of the competencies.
- ✓ Programs must outline candidate requirements for program completion and demonstrate that there is a high standard in place to recommend the candidate for certification. At minimum, all candidates must demonstrate satisfactory completion of student teaching as evidenced through the PDE 430 form.

## Examples of Best Practice

### *\* Best Practices in Candidate Assessment & Program Completion \**

One program that exemplifies high performance standards is the Northeastern California Partnership for Special Education in Chico, California. Since 1990, the program has had a consistent 91 percent retention rate and has eliminated the need for emergency certified special education teachers in the region. This success has been partially attributed to their use of evaluative data from candidates and regional sources to continually adjust and improve their program.

Candidate Performance Evaluation: The Chico program surveys candidates after each class is completed, and candidates self-assess for each objective the class was aimed to address. Further, the program uses portfolios as both a formative and summative assessment tool. The Chico program asks administrators and school principals for feedback about candidates via surveys as well.

Program Performance Evaluation: Using administrator and school principal surveys, the Chico program is also seeking overall performance evaluation from the district. They collect data from a stakeholder advisory board, as well.

Responding to Candidate and Regional Needs: The Chico program has candidates complete a questionnaire prior to each course. The instructors are then expected to demonstrate how they will tailor the course to the particular needs of students. When candidates complete surveys at the end of the course, the program evaluates whether the candidates feel they have developed sufficient expertise in the course's objectives.

The Chico advisory board, comprised of parents, administrators, teachers, and local representatives from special education interest groups, provides feedback about regional needs as well. Responding to these needs, the program has shifted focus over time, such as their more recent emphasis on addressing autism in coursework for candidates.

To account for the many different needs they seek to address and then incorporate into programmatic improvements, the program created an "Outcomes Evaluation and Curriculum Development Continuous Improvement Cycle" program. They consider the many different inputs of sources, identify how they will address those sources, and identify clear outputs from the continuous improvement cycle.

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## **6. Candidate & New Teacher Supports**

Candidate and new teacher supports are crucial for candidate success, and research indicates that high quality supports throughout the candidate/new teacher's experience can positively influence multiple outcomes, including teacher retention.<sup>xxvi</sup> Some of these supports include but are not limited to the following:

Mentoring: Candidates are paired with a teacher who has a record of proven effectiveness and success in the profession for a significant portion of the post-baccalaureate program;

Apprenticeship: Candidates receive guided field and student teaching experiences as an apprentice under the supervision of faculty members and classroom teachers;

Cohorts: Candidates are grouped in cohorts to facilitate professional collaboration and build a strong peer network both during the program and as graduates;

Induction: A formal, comprehensive program that includes school and district orientation sessions, specialized in-service training and professional development opportunities, mentoring by an experienced teacher, classroom observation, and formative assessment.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Even for candidates who demonstrate mastery of the competencies in the program, the first years of teaching are filled with challenges and opportunities for learning. To help move new educators through the developmental phase, programs must provide a source of professional development, support and mentoring for the new graduate. The Final Report of Pennsylvania's Governor's Commission on Training America's Teachers recommends a two-year mentored practice post-graduation to help with the transition from student to professional educator, as research indicates that developing an effective pipeline for support helps alleviate stressors felt by new educator in the classroom.<sup>xxviii</sup> This finding is supported by additional research, especially when the support system consists of an induction program with an assigned mentor teacher, professional development, and networking opportunities through at least the first two years of teaching.

### **PA Post-Baccalaureate Program Expectations – Candidate and New Teacher Supports:**

- ✓ Programs must present a plan for candidate and new teacher support, demonstrating how candidates will receive a comprehensive sequence of supports throughout the program and upon program completion. In addition, the program should demonstrate how the candidate and new teacher support system fit into the overall program design and sequence.
- ✓ Programs must provide evidence that faculty supervisors and assigned mentors are qualified to advise candidates. Programs should outline the criteria used to select faculty supervisors and assigned mentors, as well as describe additional, specialized training that these individuals receive to support candidates.
- ✓ According to §49.16 (22 Pa. Code), all school entities (LEAs) must submit a plan for the induction experience for first-year teachers. This plan is submitted as part of the LEA's strategic plan written every 6 years as required by Chapter 4. Preparing institutions also have a role in a new teacher's induction experience. The preparing institution shall provide, "...ongoing support for novice educators in partnership with local education agencies during their induction period, including observation, consultation and assessment." (22 Pa. Code §49.14(4) (ix)) Though programs are only responsible for supporting their graduates, programs should provide evidence of collaboration and partnership with local education agencies to deliver induction programs.

## **Examples of Best Practice**

### ***\* Mentoring: A Best Practice in Program Design \****

Referred to as the “heart and soul of these high-quality alternative programs,” mentoring is crucial for teachers in need of on-the-job training. A 2004 report by the USDE on non-traditional teacher preparation programs identified three different elements of mentoring support: 1) program-provided supervisors, 2) on-site mentors, and 3) peer cohort support. Multiple studies and reports reference the need for intensive new teacher support, noting that mentoring is particularly effective.

The USDE report identifies the **Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (GA TAPPS)** as a model for incorporating all three types of mentoring experiences.

1. **Regular and Frequent Intensive Mentoring by Relevant Professionals**: GA TAPPS candidates are assigned classroom teachers as mentors who receive specific training and spend 150 working with candidates over the course of two years. Mentors observe candidates’ classrooms frequently, have individual coaching sessions, and demonstrate lessons. Mentors also arrange for candidates to visit other classrooms and provide feedback to candidates through a framework coordinated by the program.
2. **Coordinated Mentor Program**: The mentor program is run by supervisors who facilitate regular reporting and communication.
3. **Peer Cohort Support**: GA TAPPS provide peer support networks, including professional, problem-based seminars facilitated by master classroom teachers. Candidates attend 10 seminars over two years, and each seminar focuses on a specific area of teacher development.

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- <sup>vi</sup> Berry, Barnett and Eric Hirsch. *Recruiting and Retaining Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools*. NGA Center for Best Practices. Washington, D.C., 27 Oct 2005. The report highlights initiatives in Mississippi's hard-to-staff schools on p. 5.
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