



Rethinking Teacher Quality Partnerships: A Proposal for a State Grant Program

At the very core of education is the interaction between teacher and student. Yet America's approach to preparing and supporting teachers—as professionals, not merely technicians—is often antiquated and inadequate. As a bipartisan network of state and district leaders of K-12 educational systems, we at Chiefs for Change believe that change is necessary and possible; we believe that more can be done to elevate the teaching profession and promote innovative, effective strategies to improve teacher training and professional development.

The Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) program, as currently designed, seeks to reform teacher preparation by bringing together high-need school districts, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and other potential partners to develop high-quality pre-baccalaureate, post-graduate, or school leadership training programs. While its purpose is laudable, TQP's impact has been dubious, in part due to the lack of flexibility in its authorizing language.

A New Approach

We are calling for a redesign of TQP. We believe TQP should serve as an incentive, rewarding states that take key steps toward improving teacher preparation, expanding access to high-quality curriculum, and providing effective professional development. TQP should also be a vehicle for innovation, allowing states to identify and support promising practices among districts, IHEs, and nonprofit providers of alternative routes to the teaching profession.

- *Rewarding Progress at the State Level:* TQP should incentivize and reward progress at the state level by providing funding to states, on a competitive basis, according to eligibility criteria designed to incentivize and ensure state-level policy reform.
- *A Lever for Innovation:* TQP funds should be a tool for states to effect change and drive innovation at the local level. Under the new TQP, states receiving grants would administer subgrants, on a competitive basis, to partnerships of districts, IHEs, and/or nonprofit providers, with maximum flexibility to align the grants with state policy priorities.
- *Smarter Use of Title Funding:* TQP eligibility criteria should be tied to the use of Title II, Part A, funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Grants should go to states that are leveraging ESSA title funding to modernize the teaching profession, so that TQP funding serves as an accelerator for promising and effective practices already underway.

Grants to States

- *Improved Data and Information:* State eligibility should be limited to states that have developed or are developing the data infrastructure necessary to compare inputs and outputs; *i.e.*, evaluating the efficacy of the training provided by teacher preparation programs by examining student outcomes. Data should also inform recruitment, retention, and professional development, similar to efforts such as the [D.C. Staffing Data Collaborative](#).



- *High-Quality Instructional Materials:* States seeking TQP grants must have in place a mechanism to assess and approve high-quality instructional materials, such as [Louisiana’s curriculum reviews](#), and to discourage the use of low-quality options.
- *Cultural Competencies:* States should have in place standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders to ensure expertise in working with high-quality, culturally relevant materials.
- *Modernized Licensure and Career Pathways:* States should modernize and link together licensure, certification, professional development, and career pathways for educators. Tiered licensure, for example, could allow new teachers to enter the profession at one level while more experienced educators could be certified as “advanced” or awarded another title that signifies progression along a career ladder.

Subgrants to Partnerships

- *High-Quality, Culturally Relevant Instructional Materials:* Local education agencies (LEAs) and IHEs should design preparation around high-quality, independently evaluated instructional materials that are rigorous, aligned to state standards, relevant to the cultural experiences of students, and in use within the LEA.
- *Robust Alternative Routes and Independent Academies:* Eligible LEAs should have in place an agreement with one or more nonprofit organizations to provide alternative routes to the teaching profession. Likewise, partnerships should embrace charter-led or other independent, nonprofit teacher and leader academies.
- *Innovative Solutions to Shortages:* Partnerships should use TQP funding to address critical shortages, whether in high-need schools, hard-to-staff subjects, or among subgroups of students (e.g., English learners). Innovative strategies could include, for example, a formal partnership with local business and industry to create an adjunct teaching corps, allowing professionals to step in, on an as-needed basis, to teach specialized subjects (e.g., STEM).
- *Talent Pipelines and the Diversification of the Teacher Workforce:* Eligible partnerships should be prepared to build upon state-level action, including programs funded through Title II, Part A, to implement strategies designed to develop talent pipelines and diversify the teaching force.



Amendments to HEA Title II (Teacher Quality Partnership Grants)

1. In HEA Title II, redesignate sections 203 through 209 as sections, 204 through 210, respectively.
2. Strike section 210, as redesignated, and insert:

"Sec. 210. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

"(a) IN GENERAL. There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this part such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020 and each of the following five succeeding fiscal years.

"(b) RESERVATION. From the amounts appropriated under subsection (a) for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve 25 percent to carry out activities authorized under section 203."

3. After section 202, insert:

"Sec. 203. GRANTS TO STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES FOR THE REFORM OF TEACHER PREPARATION

"(a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED. From amounts made available under section 210(b) the Secretary shall make grants to eligible State educational agencies to carry out activities designed to bring about fundamental reforms and improvement in the preparation of teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

"(b) ELIGIBILITY. A State educational agency shall be eligible for a grant under this section if it can demonstrate to the Secretary that it has made significant progress in reforming educator preparation and modernizing the teaching and school leader professions in the State of such agency, including by having completed at least two of the following:

"(i) Implementing reforms through the use of funds available to the agency under section 2101(c)(4) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

"(ii) Developing a data infrastructure that enables policy-makers and the public to measure the impact of educator preparation programs on student achievement and other student outcomes.

"(iii) Implementing mechanisms for the assessment and approval of high-quality, culturally relevant instructional materials and for ensuring that educators have the competencies needed to use those materials effectively.

"(iv) Implementing reformed and aligned policies for educator licensure, certification, professional development, and career progression.



“(c) STATE RESERVATION. A State educational agency receiving a grant under this section shall use no more than 20 percent of such grant for administration of the grant and for continuation of the State’s reforms of educator preparation and modernization of the teacher and school leader professions.

“(d) SUBGRANTS.

“(1) AUTHORIZATION OF SUBGRANTS. A State educational agency receiving a grant under this section shall use all grant funds not reserved under subsection (c) to make subgrants to partnerships that include at least one high-need local educational agency and at least one of the following:

“(A) One or more institution(s) of higher education.

“(B) One or more nonprofit provider(s) of an alternative route to the teaching or school leadership profession.

“(2) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES. An eligible partnership receiving a subgrant shall use such subgrant to carry out activities to strengthen educator preparation or the teacher or school leader profession in the communities served by the high-need local educational agencies included in the partnership, including at least two of the following:

“(A) Designing and implementing teacher preparation focused on the use of high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with the State’s academic standards, are relevant to the cultural experiences of students, and are approved by the State for use by the participating high-need local educational agencies.

“(B) Implementing an alternative route to the teacher or school leader profession (such as a teacher, principal, or other school leader academy as defined in section 2002(4) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) that is operated by a non-profit provider and is aligned with the needs of a participating high-need local educational agency.

“(C) Developing and implementing innovative methods of addressing teacher shortages, such as shortages of teachers of special education, the education of English learners, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education, including computer science education.

“(D) Carrying out activities that build on State-level reforms.”