

## **Myth #1**

*Educator preparation in higher education is out of touch and hasn't changed in 50 years.*

### **FACT**

Widespread reform is well underway in higher education-based educator preparation. Robust partnerships with high-need P-12 schools, yearlong apprenticeships with master teachers, and residency programs based on the medical model have become increasingly widespread. Close collaborations between colleges of education and the arts and sciences to recruit high-performing content majors—particularly in the STEM fields—into teaching are occurring more frequently, and alternate routes for career changers are becoming commonplace in higher education-based educator preparation programs. Further, numerous institutions and states are working in collaboration with AACTE to develop a valid and reliable Teacher Performance Assessment that will inform the public and employers as to a candidate's readiness to be a teacher.

## **Myth #2**

*Educator preparation programs in higher education are locked in the ivory tower with little to no understanding of the needs of P-12 students.*

### **FACT**

Higher education-based preparation programs provide teacher candidates with extensive hands-on experience with P-12 students. Strategies for reaching diverse learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are developed under the guidance of effective mentor teachers who interact with teacher candidates daily, on site in live classrooms. In fact, teaching is increasingly acknowledged as an academically taught, clinical-practice profession—such as clinical psychology and medicine—involving rigorous and extended clinical experiences for candidates. The average number of clinical preparation hours required in programs is 749, and in many cases it is much higher.

## **Myth #3**

*Teachers have little to no knowledge about the content they are teaching.*

### **FACT**

Twenty-eight states require teacher candidates at the secondary level to major in a content area, such as math, chemistry, or English. Many preparation programs have this requirement even if their state does not. All teacher candidates must pass content exams before they complete their program and/or become certified to teach. In addition, 12 states require elementary teacher candidates to have a content degree, and 19 states require middle-level teacher candidates to have a content degree. The average GPA of teacher candidates in some preparation programs, such as that at the University of Colorado Denver, is higher than those of their colleagues in the content areas who are not in the preparation programs.

## **Myth #4**

*Alternative providers prepare most minority teachers.*

### **FACT**

The vast majority of minority teachers are prepared in higher education, particularly in minority-serving institutions such as historically Black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions. Approximately 91% of all Latino teachers and almost 90% of African-American teachers are prepared through higher education preparation programs.

### Myth #5

*Teachers do not require preparation. Credentials and experience don't matter. Only content knowledge matters.*

#### FACT

Knowing something and knowing how to teach it are not the same thing. Research shows that teachers who are fully prepared and fully certified are more effective than those who are not. Numerous rigorous research studies report positive effects on the achievement of students whose teachers were prepared at higher education-based educator preparation programs and were licensed by their state to teach. In fact, many studies have reported that well-prepared teachers are likely to stay longer in teaching than those from inadequate alternative preparation programs or those with no preparation. The fact that over 90% of all Teachers of the Year—from every state in the union—over the past 2 years received their initial preparation and/or subsequent professional degrees through universities illustrates their confidence in the value of higher education-based teacher preparation.

### Myth #6

*There are few entry or exit requirements for teacher candidates. Anyone can get in, and everyone gets out.*

#### FACT

Preparation programs utilize a range of entry criteria including GPAs, SAT/ACT scores, interviews, and success on basic skills tests. The quality of the teaching pool is rising as evidenced by increases in SAT scores earned by teacher candidates and by a significant increase in the number of top teacher candidates graduating from colleges. However, it is the in-program and end-of-program screenings that are most important, as they ensure that only the successful candidates are recommended as program completers. Particularly encouraging is the expanding interest and participation across the states—26 states and 180 institutions—in the new Teacher Performance Assessment (referenced in Myth #1). Candidates will be required to pass the TPA in order to become certified, thus ensuring their readiness for the classroom.

### Myth #7

*Teacher preparation programs in higher education operate with no accountability and actively oppose accountability efforts.*

#### FACT

Multiple accountability mechanisms are in place for preparation programs—such as state program approval, annual reporting on the quality of programs to the federal government, and voluntary professional accreditation. Most institutions have developed their own measures of program effectiveness, and as mentioned above, the profession is currently engaged in developing a nationally available, valid and reliable Teacher Performance Assessment to measure new teachers' readiness. Additionally, preparation programs support the development of statewide longitudinal data systems that offer feedback to programs regarding the performance of the P-12 students taught by their graduates. Data from these state systems and from the TPA are useful to institutions for program improvement.

### Myth #8

*Higher education offers only one route to becoming a teacher. Alternative routes are found outside of higher education.*

#### FACT

The U.S. Department of Education reports that 92% of all teacher preparation is provided by institutions of higher education, but a wide range of programs offer many choices to teacher candidates. Over 52% of all alternate-route programs are based in higher education. Higher education has been a great innovator in developing alternate routes for career changers and older students.

### Myth #9

*Value-added scores of teacher preparation programs' graduates are the most appropriate and meaningful measure of preparation program effectiveness.*

#### **FACT**

Value-added modeling (VAM) was created to measure teachers' impact on student learning, not the effectiveness of their preparation programs. While many institutions do use VAM to help inform their programs, it is not appropriately used for high-stakes determinations, such as establishing eligibility for student financial aid. VAM has many limitations: It can only be used for teachers in certain grades and subjects, as it requires standardized tests scored on equal interval scales. Further, the results provide no insights into why a teacher received a particular VAM score, thus limiting the usefulness of VAM to help improve preparation programs. VAM also provides no insights into characteristics of the preparation program that prepared the teacher, and VAM scores of individual teachers have been shown to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, making them an unreliable gauge of preparation program quality.

### Myth #10

*Graduates of teacher preparation programs do not know how to effectively use technology or assessment data with P-12 students.*

#### **FACT**

Higher education-based teacher preparation has been at the forefront of articulating the integration of utilizing technology and understanding student data into both pedagogy and content. Programs utilize a wide range of technologies and strategies for analyzing student data in preparing candidates for the P-12 classroom. Increasingly, preparation programs develop teachers to be virtual teachers for online schools and programs. The sophisticated use of technology in some programs has enabled the development of avatars who serve as P-12 students, allowing candidates to hone their teaching skills before they enter a classroom with live students. The new Teacher Performance Assessment (referenced in Myth #1) requires candidates to demonstrate how they analyze and use student data to improve their instructional strategies. Additionally, in a 2009 ETS-AACTE survey of 7,000 teacher candidates, 71% reported that they were very well-prepared or well-prepared to use student achievement data to modify or differentiate instruction. Another 22% said they were somewhat well-prepared to do so.

*June 2012*

*For more information, contact Mary Harrill-McClellan at [mharrill@aacte.org](mailto:mharrill@aacte.org).*

*AACTE, 1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005*

## **Sources and Examples**

**Myth #1** – Examples of widespread reform are the U.S. Department of Education’s Teacher Quality Partnership grantees, awardee abstracts for which are found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/tqpartnership/2009awards.html> and <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/tqpartnership/2010awards.html>. Additional examples are described in selected publications: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2010, November). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3D&tabid=715>; AACTE. (2009, June). *Innovation and reform in teacher preparation*. Washington, DC: Author. <http://aacte.org/Downloads/Innovation%20and%20Reform%20in%20Teacher%20Preparation.pdf>; AACTE. (2007, June). *Preparing STEM teachers: The key to global competitiveness*. Washington, DC: Author. [http://aacte.org/pdf/Events/AACTE\\_STEM\\_Directory2007.pdf](http://aacte.org/pdf/Events/AACTE_STEM_Directory2007.pdf). The new Teacher Performance Assessment is described at <http://aacte.org/Programs/Teacher-Performance-Assessment-Consortium-TPAC/teacher-performance-assessment-consortium.html>.

**Myth #2** – The emergence of teaching as an academically taught, clinical-practice profession is discussed in Alter, J., & Coggsall, J. G. (2009, March). *Teaching as a clinical practice profession: Implications for teacher preparation and state policy [Issue brief]*. New York Comprehensive Center and National Comprehensive Center on Teacher Quality. <http://www.tqsource.org/publications/clinicalPractice.pdf>. Data on hours required for clinical preparation are from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (2011). *Preparing and credentialing the nation’s teachers: The Secretary’s eighth report on teacher quality—Based on data provided for 2008, 2009 and 2010*, p. 16. Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/teachprep/2011-title2report.pdf>

**Myth #3** – See U.S. Department of Education (2011), pp. 43-46. See also AACTE. (2012, Spring). *Where we stand: Selectivity of educator preparation programs*. Retrieved from [http://aacte.org/pdf/Publications/Reports\\_Studies/Where%20We%20Stand%20-%20Selectivity%20of%20Programs.pdf](http://aacte.org/pdf/Publications/Reports_Studies/Where%20We%20Stand%20-%20Selectivity%20of%20Programs.pdf)

**Myth #4** – See U.S. Department of Education (2011), p. 14.

**Myth #5** – See two relevant research summaries: AACTE. (2012, Spring). *What we know: How teacher preparation affects student achievement*. [http://aacte.org/pdf/Publications/Reports\\_Studies/What%20We%20Know%20-%20Student%20Achievement.pdf](http://aacte.org/pdf/Publications/Reports_Studies/What%20We%20Know%20-%20Student%20Achievement.pdf); and AACTE. (2012, Spring). *What we know: How teacher preparation affects teacher retention*. [http://aacte.org/pdf/Publications/Reports\\_Studies/What%20We%20Know%20-%20Teacher%20Retention.pdf](http://aacte.org/pdf/Publications/Reports_Studies/What%20We%20Know%20-%20Teacher%20Retention.pdf)

**Myth #6** – Educational Testing Service reports that the quality of the teaching pool has increased in recent years, with SAT-Math scores of teacher candidates having risen by an average of 17 points, and SAT-Verbal scores by 13 points. See Gitomer, D. H. (2007). *Teacher quality in a changing policy landscape: Improvements in the teacher pool*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. Further, the number of teachers with degrees from top colleges and universities has increased by 59% for females and 29% for males over the last two decades. See Ingersoll, R., & Merrill, L. (2010, May). Who’s teaching our children? *Educational Leadership*, 67(8), 14-20.

**Myth #7** – For example, AACTE is a member of the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), which encourages the use of state longitudinal data for improving teaching and learning. AACTE, DQC, and other organizations collaborated to create a [template](#) that institutions can use to work with their SEAs and others to build data systems that provide useful feedback to preparation programs.

**Myth #8** – See U.S. Department of Education (2011), pp. 11, 14.

**Myth #9** – See <http://edpolicy.stanford.edu/blog/entry/573> for a useful statement, supported by AACTE, entitled “Evaluating Teacher Evaluation,” by Linda Darling-Hammond, Audery Amrein-Beardsley, Ed Haertel, and Jesse Rothstein, from the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

**Myth #10** – For example, see the Lockheed Martin/University of Central Florida Academy for Mathematics and Science program, which has developed the TeachLiVE program that provides teacher candidates the opportunity to learn skills and develop their practice without placing real students at risk in the process. Virtual classrooms are developed using student avatars that mimic real-world scenarios and students.