



PREPARING TEACHERS FOR DEEPER LEARNING

Competency-Based
Teacher Preparation
and Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Executive Summary

Schools and districts across the country are redefining the goals of K-12 education and reimagining the very nature of teaching and learning, spurred by the implementation of college- and career-ready standards and the promise of a new generation of online assessments. This collective “re-imagining” is represented by a range of evidence—from the individual teacher who discovers a new app that will make learning more engaging and meaningful for her students to the formal acknowledgment by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Education Technology Plan’s renewed focus on the promise of personalized learning.

“Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning” explores the key questions:

If, then, the goals of American education are being redefined, and the opportunities are expanded with the advent of technology, the Internet and digital content, how must the role of the educator evolve? And, how must teacher preparation and ongoing professional development evolve to fully enable teacher success in this new environment?

Through an exploration of these central questions, the authors assert:

If we truly are to harness the power that technology brings and seize the moment wrought by new college- and career-ready standards supported by aligned assessments, we must reexamine the processes and methods used to prepare teachers, accredit institutions doing the preparing, and support continuous development of teacher competency throughout their professional careers.





As calls for improving achievement and increasing personalization of student learning echo across the national discourse, new adult learning models are creating the potential for personalized preparation and development pathways for teachers. As student roles change in a personalized learning environment, teacher preparation and professional learning should evolve accordingly in order to offer teacher control over time, place, path and/or pace; balanced goals; meaningful integration and competency-based progression.

Just as K-12 blended learning models offer students opportunities to learn in both in-person and online environments, blended teacher preparation and development could combine online learning with onsite experiences. New pathways could be part of a formal degree program or an alternative program, specific to a group of schools or particular models.

In the same way that student assessment is evolving to prioritize demonstrations of mastery over basic proficiency, competency-based teacher development would enable pre-service and practicing teachers to demonstrate knowledge and skills at regular intervals.

Micro-credentialing, or badging, is a competency recognition system aligned with a series of gates or milestones recognized by a community. Recent research and development efforts have focused on the use of digital badges or tokens to signify accomplishment and to measure and reward competency-based outcomes. A series of micro-credentials could be used to mark initial preparation as well as recognize and reward ongoing development and leadership in myriad aspects of the education profession.

These competency-based pathways can achieve [Deeper Learning learner outcomes](#), promoting active inquiry, critical thinking and collaborative problem solving, as well as content mastery. As a recent report illustrates, there are different approaches to promoting Deeper Learning and college- and career-readiness; school models and instructional strategies that

promote Deeper Learning competencies require unique and varied teacher knowledge and skills that are often underdeveloped in traditional teacher preparation.¹

This paper outlines the attributes of next-generation teacher preparation and makes recommendations to support the development of teacher preparation and development systems that will equip teachers to thrive in learning environments that develop Deeper Learning competencies.

The paper begins with an introduction that situates the changing roles of teachers inside the broader shifts to personalized, blended, Deeper Learning for students. After summarizing the current state of teacher preparation, professional development and accreditation, the authors describe a new approach to high-quality teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning opportunities that would offer:

- some element of teacher control over time, place, path and/or pace;
- balance between teacher-defined goals, goals as defined by administration through teacher evaluation efforts, and school and district educational goals;
- job-embedded and meaningful integration into classroom practice; and
- competency-based progression.

Drawing on examples from outside of the field of education as well as innovators in higher education and K-12, the next section builds the case for competency-based teacher education. This section defines the elements of a competency-based system and describes micro-credentialing in the context of teacher development.

The authors conclude with recommendations that will move the field toward a competency-based system and a call to action regarding the importance of better aligning teacher preparation and development with student Deeper Learning goals.