



TEACHING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: STATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND NEW TEACHERS



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ABOUT AACTE: THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

AACTE is a national alliance of educator preparation programs and partners dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based preparation that assures educators are profession-ready as they enter the classroom. The over 700 member institutions include public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Guam. Through advocacy and capacity building, AACTE promotes innovation and effective practices that strengthen educator preparation. Learn more at aacte.org and follow us on [Twitter](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States in early 2020 created many obstacles in PK-12 and higher education. Both systems have had to adapt to school and campus closures and the new reality of distance learning—which has further exposed the inequities that persist in U.S. public schools. Educational systems operate in a cycle, students in PK-12 schools often choose to pursue a teaching career because of a teacher who positively influenced them. Higher education prepares teachers who are grounded in positively influencing PK-12 students. Thus, while there are distinct differences between both systems, they depend on each other, particularly in those matters regarding the preparation of high-quality teachers to teach in PK-12 schools.

Due to PK-12 school closures, teacher candidates enrolled in educator preparation programs (EPPs) last spring experienced barriers to completing their clinical and field experiences. As a result, EPPs responded with alternatives to ensure that these candidates continued to receive learning opportunities that would prepare them to demonstrate required competencies for licensure, another area that has been impacted by the pandemic. Teacher candidates have been unable to complete required assessments for licensure due to closures of schools and testing centers. These interruptions, coupled with the teacher shortage crisis, have led to emergency policy changes in many states. These changes are meant to be temporary adjustments, ensuring recent graduates can teach in the fall whilst not having taken or passed required licensure assessments.

As the leading voice of educator preparation in the United States—dedicated to high-quality and evidence-based teacher preparation—the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) reviewed and analyzed COVID-related state guidance to EPPs in pursuit of three goals: (1) to understand what states are doing to help prepare teachers for the classroom during this crisis, (2) to understand any extant trends in state guidance and (3), to identify recommendations for state leaders to enhance the support of new teachers impacted by program and policy disturbances stemming from the coronavirus crisis. AACTE's [interactive map](#) provides a state-by-state analysis of guidance and Executive Orders that were issued by state education agencies and government officials, and pertain to EPPs and teacher candidates. Overall, trends in these three areas emerged from our analysis and provide the foundational context for the 10 recommendations in this report: changes to licensure and certification requirements, clinical experience pathways, and induction supports for novice teachers impacted by COVID-19.

“As an educator, I know that one of the strongest in-school influences on students is the teacher in front of the classroom.”

– Former U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King, Jr.

LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

- These 4 states waived assessments for licensure and certification indefinitely during the COVID-19 crisis: Connecticut, Georgia, Missouri, and New Jersey.
- Additionally, 28 states suspended licensure exams temporarily, allowing candidates time to take assessments when testing centers reopen. These states issued non-renewable (1-year) emergency certificates to teacher candidates unable to meet testing requirements during the COVID-19 crisis. They include but are not limited to, Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, New York, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia.



4 states waived assessments for licensure and certification



28 states suspended licensure exams temporarily



15 states waived clinical requirements



6 states addressed induction supports for new teachers

CLINICAL AND FIELD EXPERIENCES

- At least 15 states waived clinical requirements, in whole or in part, for the duration of the 2019-20 academic year, including California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Vermont.
- An additional 15 states recommended that EPPs use alternative methods (e.g., virtual realities and simulations, and alternative assignments) to meet clinical hours requirement.
- These 7 states required the use of alternative methods to meet clinical requirements: Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia.

NEW TEACHER INDUCTION

- At least 6 states addressed induction supports for new teachers impacted by COVID-19, including California, Delaware, Georgia, and New York, where teachers will receive mentoring and coaching, professional development, co-teaching experiences, among other supports.

As states begin to lift emergency orders and school districts prepare to reopen schools this fall, this is an opportunity for state leaders to reimagine education and build a system that will emerge from the coronavirus crisis stronger than ever. The recommendations in this report are intended to provide guidance to state leaders as they develop solutions for the short-term and long-term effects of COVID-19, with an eye toward maintaining high expectations for quality teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

Recommendation 1: In making licensure and certification waivers for teachers, states should make changes that are:

- Directly necessary because of the pandemic
- Temporary with a timeline for an ending that is clearly delineated
- Transparent in that those who are granted certification as a result of waived requirements must be so classified, (e.g., “waiver-certification”)

Rationale

For new teachers, licensure and certification represent an official imprimatur indicating readiness to practice. Licensure sends the message to the public that an individual is professionally proficient. Thus, changes to licensure and certification should be made with deliberation and consideration. They should be directly tied to the ramifications of the pandemic, such as the premature closing of schools and thus, the foreclosure of the opportunity to complete requirements. Changes should be temporary with timelines explicitly stated. Those granted licensure and certification under these unique and temporary circumstances should be clearly classified with an identifiable status.

Action Steps

States should work with their EPPs and other stakeholders to consider development and modification of necessary waivers as the pandemic and its implications for both higher education and PK-12 schools shift. States should utilize the guidelines provided above when considering temporary waivers and modifications.

Model State Examples

The **state of California** allows candidates who have made satisfactory progress in their programs to be employed under a “Variable Term Waiver.” They have one year to complete credential requirements.

The **state of Maryland** allows program graduates who have completed coursework six months from the time the state of emergency is lifted to complete required student teaching and certification exams (Praxis). These graduates will receive emergency certification and may temporarily serve as the teacher of record in the state.

“As the economy grows more complex, global, and competitive, students are expected to achieve at higher levels, and they need effective teachers in the classroom to reach these goals. States that wish to remain economically competitive must address head-on the quality of the education workforce.”

– National Research Council

Recommendation 2: States should seek innovative opportunities to address ongoing challenges—such as lack of diversity in the profession and the need to modernize the processes of licensure and certification—as they consider licensure and certification revisions.

Rationale

The pandemic has both created new challenges and laid bare ones that have been festering. This could be a time to assess the impact and effectiveness of aspects of licensure and certification and to consider new possibilities, without lowering standards. For example, are there barriers in the processes that serve as obstacles to the diversification of the profession? Should EPPs have a greater focus on preparing teachers who can effectively teach in an online environment?

Action Steps

Create a working group to include representatives of EPPs and alternative providers, teacher candidates, PK-12 educators and school leaders, and other members of the licensure or certification process within the state, including underrepresented populations, to analyze the process of licensure and certification. Critical to such an endeavor is ensuring that the standards for entering the profession are not lowered. For example, novice teachers should have at least a baccalaureate degree. Recommended areas of consideration include the following:

- **Number and costs of assessments required. Questions might include the following:**
 - Do required teacher performance assessments meet the current needs of the profession?
 - Are the performance assessments or tests currently required appropriate to assess the necessary skills for today's and tomorrow's teachers?
 - What can be done to reduce bias, including inherent bias, in assessments?
 - What streamlining can be done to the overall assessment process?
 - Are the costs prohibitive?
- **Barriers to entry into the profession for underrepresented populations, including candidates with disabilities:**
 - What is the impact of emergency, temporary, and/or provisional licensure or certification?
 - Does this process require the recipients to obtain full licensure or certification eventually?
 - Is the timeline for becoming fully licensed or certified appropriate?
 - Are teachers with temporary, emergency and/or provisional licenses disproportionately serving low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities? How can assignment of these teachers reduce existing disparities?
- **Actions necessary to carry out recommended changes and innovations**
 - Who are the key players that should be involved in informing these change ideas?
 - How will education stakeholders engage policymakers in these discussions early on to create real change?

- **Impact of any changes on the entities preparing teachers and associated timelines for transition**
 - What elements of the educational infrastructure within higher education should be re-examined as a result of these changes relating to teacher preparation (e.g., curricula, entry and exit exams)?
 - What resources will entities need to execute and sustain these changes over time?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

Recommendation 3: Ensure candidates continue gaining experience teaching in a clinical setting with a mentor teacher, university supervisor, and continuous feedback.

Rationale

High quality clinical practice can curb teacher turnover by ensuring teacher preparedness on day one. Clinical experiences provide candidates with invaluable opportunities, including observing mentor teachers throughout the school setting, collaborating with related service providers, leading their own classroom instruction, and facilitating meetings with the student and their stakeholders. Throughout clinical experiences the candidate receives direct feedback prior to action, on-action, and after action, affording the candidate multiple opportunities to incorporate feedback as well as course correct when challenges occur.

Action Steps

- State education agencies must recommend that schools provide access to candidates engaged in clinical experiences, regardless of the clinical setting.
- State education agencies should strongly encourage increased collaboration between EPPs and local education agencies. Local education agencies should increase collaboration between the local EPPs and school districts to ensure mentor teachers and university supervisors are working in tandem to support candidates, regardless of the clinical setting.

Recommendation 4: Encourage flexibility and collaboration between EPPs and school districts that ensure teacher candidates participate in clinical experiences online or in distance settings, if PK-12 schools are not physically back in brick and mortar buildings.

“To ensure there is a consistent pipeline of qualified teachers entering the workforce, AACTE has collaborated with Mursion to offer educators and students experiential learning through virtual reality simulations. The collaboration provides teacher candidates an opportunity to complete clinical field experiences remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

**– Mark Atkinson,
CEO of Mursion**

Rationale

COVID-19 interrupted both PK-12 schools and EPPs. Teacher candidates placed in local brick and mortar schools were often asked to continue their clinical experience in an online setting. Some candidates were provided opportunities to continue their clinical experience in a simulated setting that approximates teaching. As school districts decide whether to reopen in a face-to-face setting and the type of schedule students and teachers will navigate post-COVID, teacher candidates can be an asset to both current teachers and students. Candidates can provide timely and necessary instruction in a variety of settings. In order for schools to take advantage of these assets, candidates must be provided access to the classroom to continue their clinical experience.

Action Steps

- States should convene EPPs and school district leaders to plan for candidates' inclusion in the learning environment for PK-12 students.
- School leaders, in collaboration with EPPs and program supervisors, should communicate to teachers the intention to have candidates fill a variety of roles within the learning environment, including but not limited to the following:
 - Lead teaching
 - Synchronous and Asynchronous tutoring
 - Family engagement in online learning and support in completing activities at home
 - Small group instruction to support response to intervention
 - Creation of learning materials for online learning
- To the greatest extent possible, candidates should engage in immediate planning for content instruction, as well as a multi-tiered system of support in schools that include practices such as social emotional learning, trauma informed instruction, and child development.

Recommendation 5: Encourage innovative approaches to clinical experiences including distributed learning models that employ team teaching in PK-12 settings, simulated classroom environments that allow candidates to approximate teaching, and financially supporting candidates through employment with the local school.

Rationale

Innovation is accelerated during times of crisis. Clinical experiences can evolve to address both the needs of schools and those of EPPs. By implementing distributed learning models, candidates can support PK-12 students through team teaching while also receiving valuable mentorship from a mentor teacher. Team teaching allows candidates to effectively employ their own strengths in a cohort model supported by the mentor teacher and university supervisor. Further, simulation that approximates teaching can allow candidates to continue gaining meaningful learning during their clinical experience through discreet practice in a simulated, mixed reality environment.

Action Steps

- School districts may consider use of a team teaching approach, similar to a medical model, which includes a lead mentor teacher supporting a team of candidates.
- School districts and EPPs should seek out opportunities to engage candidates in simulated settings to supplement engagement with PK-12 students.
- State and local leaders should consider unorthodox budget allocations, including the use of grant funding, to develop models that financially support candidates. This may include employing candidates in:
 - Residency models
 - Substitute teaching positions
 - Paraprofessional positions

Model State Examples

In the **state of Arizona**, the institution preparing the largest percentage of the state's teachers, Arizona State University, has an Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) initiative that provides simulated learning labs for students across disciplines. With the ADL, the university is well-positioned to offer teacher candidates task-oriented experiences that will help them to develop skills that are transferable to live classroom settings. The university is also leading the United States in a global initiative to encourage team teaching and distributed learning. ASU's Next Education Workforce is a team-based professional apprenticeship model for teacher candidates.

In the **state of California**, the state has encouraged the use of mixed reality simulations for clinical experiences and urged EPPs to provide innovative approaches for teacher candidates to acquire skills needed to teach diverse learners, even in the absence of in-person clinical experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER INDUCTION

Recommendation 6: Assess the needs of new teachers impacted by COVID-19 and identify areas for additional support.

Rationale

States have provided guidance to EPPs and teacher candidates on how to navigate interruptions to instruction, like licensure and certification and clinical experiences. Therefore, it is important to understand what impact the guidance has had on new teachers and what supports they need to be effective as they enter classrooms this fall.

Action Steps

- Establish a coalition of stakeholders including EPPs, district leaders, administrators, and current teachers to identify the needs of novice teachers entering the profession.
- Assess the needs of novice teachers through surveys or focus groups to identify support areas.
- Identify the sources of funding to provide additional supports and timeline for supporting new teachers impacted by COVID-19.
- Align supports with state guidance and/or Executive Orders on changes to licensure and certification and clinical experiences.
- Align supports with EPP coursework and student teaching and practicum requirements that were interrupted as a result of COVID-19.

Recommendation 7: Require an induction action plan for new teachers describing the activities that must be completed or acquired for successful induction.

Rationale

To ensure accountability of districts to provide appropriate induction supports to new teachers impacted by COVID-19, we are recommending that states require districts to develop and implement an induction action plan for all new teachers who were impacted by this crisis.

“Due to COVID-19, schools are closed for 85% of students worldwide. If countries act quickly, they can build education systems better after the pandemic so they are more prepared to deal with future shocks.”

– The World Bank

Action Steps

- Require that school districts develop a Teacher Induction Action Plan that outlines requirements, activities, and experiences that new teachers must acquire for each content area.
- Ensure a system for monitoring progress and providing support for a successful completion of requirements of the action plan.
- Require conditions to obtaining initial certification for new teachers impacted by COVID-19 include successful completion of induction activities.

Recommendation 8: Establish a mentorship program to equip new teachers with strategies to deliver high-quality instruction to diverse learners.

Rationale

Many new teachers who will enter classrooms for the first time this fall were affected by interruptions to their course requirements and transitioned to distance learning that may or may not have fully prepared them to deliver quality instruction. Therefore, these new teachers will require ongoing coaching and mentorship from experienced educators.

Action Steps

- Establish clear criteria for mentor selection and matching.
- Utilize the expertise of retired teachers as volunteers to conduct observations and engage in reflexive coaching and feedback with new teachers.
- Identify veteran teachers to provide support with implementing instructional strategies like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and data-based decision making to inform instruction.

Recommendation 9: Implement co-teaching for new teachers whose clinical experiences were fully or partially waived, and teachers who have not passed exams for licensure and certification due to COVID-19.

Rationale

Without having fully completed their traditional field experience and demonstrating competencies for licensure and certification by passing a teacher performance assessment, new teachers will need additional support in several areas, including lesson planning, teaching methods, materials selection, and assessing student learning.

Action Steps

- Define expectations for co-teaching and communicate expectations to districts, administrators, and classroom teachers.
- Provide resources to new teachers on co-planning and co-teaching approaches.

Recommendation 10: Partner with EPPs to provide professional development to ensure that new teachers possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach diverse students.

Rationale

As preparers of the educator workforce, EPPs are uniquely positioned to provide professional development to new teachers on an array of topics to ensure that they are prepared to effectively teach in a changing education climate.

Action Steps

- Districts should collaborate with EPPs to develop and provide professional development to new teachers on instructional methods, and content and pedagogical skills needed to effectively teach diverse students.
- In the event that schools reopen fully or partially with distance learning this fall, new teachers need to be equipped to effectively integrate technology into their instruction. Thus, districts should seek faculty at higher education institutions with expertise in teaching and learning with the use of technology to deliver professional development to new and inexperienced teachers.

Model State Examples

In the **state of Kentucky**, EPPs are encouraged to work with new teacher graduates to provide additional mentorship. The use of EPPs to support new teachers increases districts' capacity to provide more coaching and guidance to novice teachers as they transition into their roles.

In the **Commonwealth of Massachusetts**, school districts will track candidates who have been impacted by COVID-19 to identify the impact of COVID-related changes on these new teachers in an effort to identify future supports and resources.

In the **state of New York**, teacher candidates impacted by COVID-19 will receive additional induction supports from districts, including mentoring and coaching, and co-teaching and professional learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Teaching in the time of COVID-19 has many challenges and has prompted states and EPPs to respond to urgent needs in the field. This report summarizes these changes and proposes recommendations to both manage the pandemic successfully and seek opportunities for innovative improvement. As these matters continue to evolve, we encourage states to establish certification and licensure modifications that are thoughtfully conceived, transparent, and that include clearly delineated end dates.

Finally, as novice teachers who have been affected by interruptions to their program requirements, such as truncated clinical experiences, enter classrooms for the first time this fall, we encourage state agencies to work with districts and EPPs to develop and implement induction initiatives for these teachers based on a genuine assessment of their needs. These induction initiatives should clearly define the professional development and experiences that must be completed or acquired for beginning teachers to become effective educators in the classroom. AACTE will continue to monitor the issues raised in this report as the initial actions of governors and state education agencies are later complimented by those of state legislative bodies.

RESOURCES

- [Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers \(PPAT\)](#)
- [InTASC Model Core Professional Teaching Standards](#)
- [edTPA](#)
- [AACTE Clinical Practice Commission Report](#)
- [Mursion](#)
- [Accomplished Teaching, Learning and Schools \(ATLAS\)](#)
- [AIR/CEEDAR/AACTE Recommendations](#)
- [Teacher Induction Program Standards: A Guiding Framework for Teacher Induction Program Leaders](#)
- [Teacher Quality Partnership Program](#)
- [Consortium for School Networking](#)
- [International Society for Technology in Education Standards \(ISTE\)](#)

“The novel coronavirus has not only exposed underlying inequality in the U.S. — it’s made it worse. Inequality is very real, and it’s been very real for a really long time. There are huge differences in access to healthcare. There are huge differences in access to education.”

-Facebook COO, Sheryl Sandberg



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