

Recommendations to the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force

About the NSHE Teacher Pathways Task Force

The NSHE Teacher Pathways Task Force (TPTF) is comprised of representatives from NSHE's four- and two-year institutions, representatives from the Nevada Department of Education, a rural school district superintendent, and the chief human resources officers from Nevada's two largest school districts (Clark and Washoe).

The TPTF is charged with increasing the number and diversity of licensure-ready candidates graduating from NSHE educator preparation programs. Its charge includes:

- Scaling up and replicating current teacher pipeline initiatives that have proven to be successful across NSHE institutions
- Identifying and preparing to implement solutions to barriers to locally growing and retaining Nevada's diverse teacher workforce
- Making recommendations to the NSHE Chancellor and Superintendent of Public Instruction for improvement regarding current State policy and practices that govern teacher preparation, licensure, and retention
- Exploring the role of educator preparation programs in supporting districts' and schools' short- and long-term teacher retention efforts

The TPTF held its first meeting in April 2021 and has collected two types of data to inform its work:

- Each NSHE institution conducted a self-assessment of its educator recruitment and retention activities across multiple focus areas, including recruiting students, educator preparation program admissions, praxis core and content exams and related supports, retention and on-time completion, alternative/non-traditional supports, and alumni engagement.
- NSHE institutions provided data regarding recent graduates and current enrollment to support projections related to the educator workforce.

In addition, members of the TPTF consistently share best practices and collaborate to address problems of practice at their local institutions and across the system.

The recommendations below reflect the discussions and deliberations of the TPTF to date.

Recommendations:

1. Nevada Aspiring Educators Initiative

Recommendation: The Legislature should invest in a series of events and supports for aspiring educators, which refers to pre-service educators or potential future educators. This is distinct from the current mission of the Nevada Department of Education, districts and schools, and institutions of higher education because it focuses on those not already enrolled in preparation programs or who do not already hold a license who would benefit from tailored information and mentorship as they consider pathways to careers in education.

Specifics: Pilot a year-long series of events and supports for teacher candidates to include:

- **Hotline for aspiring educators** that serves as the State’s primary source of information for individuals exploring careers in education. This would not duplicate/replace licensure processing services provided by NDE; this would offer career advisory support to those contemplating teaching for perhaps the first time. It is important to note that NDE’s Licensure operation does not have the capacity to respond to open-ended questions related to licensure and in most cases individuals will need to initiate a licensure application to get support. Nevada needs a place future educators can call before they have even enrolled in postsecondary programs and while they’re proceeding through preparation programs.
 - **Career Ambassadors.** Could be used to ‘staff’ the hotline and facilitate events. Solicit experienced/retired educators who are committed to changing the narrative and supporting candidates through the licensure journey.
- **Recruiting events paired with licensing labs.** After/concurrent with hosting recruiting events, offer a “licensing lab” where candidates have access to computers and support on standby to help them navigate licensure and job applications. (WCSD model)
- **Resume building and interviewing classes.** Building on the example of WCSD, offering a series of professional development supports for aspiring educators and existing educators who want to become administrators.
- **Financial aid resources.** Simple information that helps people determine eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, etc, and estimate anticipated aid and understand the various programs and options available to them.

Pathways to Teaching Webinar that helps candidates navigate different routes and credentials, i.e., traditional vs. ARL, B&I, etc. Can be recorded and repurposed.

Rationale: When people want to explore careers in education the first question they need answered is “what will it take to

become a teacher/counselor/etc.?” The task can be daunting. Anecdotal evidence from administrators’ experience in supporting Alternative Route to Licensure programs demonstrates that this is a significant area of opportunity. This comprehensive suite of proposed events and resources would help candidates with specific information on benefits, community resources, and practical/logistical information about joining the profession.

Evidence Base (data/research etc.): This request is based on anecdotal evidence from NSHE faculty, district and school staff, and teacher candidates that they are seeking tailored advice to determine the most efficient pathway to teaching. NDE consistently receives these types of requests, but human and resource capacity does not allow NDE to provide guidance to candidates unless they are actively applying for licensure

2. Enhancing Financial Supports for Educators

Recommendation: The Legislature should invest to support tuition scholarships, clinical experience stipends, and other costs related to educator preparation, which may include the cost of assessments required for licensure.

Specifics:

- Enhance funding for Teach Nevada Scholarships to increase availability. The budget is approximately \$5M per biennium. With scholarships of up to \$24,000 per candidate, this allows for approximately 170 awards.
- Establish State funding for the Incentivizing Pathways to Teaching Grant Program that was created using federal relief funds. This program provides tuition assistance of \$2,000 to support pre-service educators who are in their final three semesters as well as stipends of \$8,400 (\$700 per week for 12 weeks) to support educators. Candidates must agree to teach in a Nevada public school for two years.
- Consider covering the costs to candidates of assessments required for licensure, which may include the Praxis Core and Praxis Content exams.

Rationale: The cost of a college education has risen over the past few decades as states have shifted an increasing amount of the costs to tuition. These costs have increased at a faster rate than new teacher salaries. Historically, continuing to advance in postsecondary education has also been key to moving up the teacher salary schedule. Our State needs to affirm that teachers are of value. With a persistent teacher shortage plaguing Nevada we need to accelerate the pace of candidate completion, ensure there are no financial barriers to candidates completing their preparation programs, and we need to attract more candidates into preparation programs.

Funding stipends for pre-service teachers completing their student teaching at NSHE institutions will strengthen the pipeline and retain/support students in their progress to completing educator preparation programs. Ensuring that qualified candidates complete graduation/licensure requirements - including student teaching - by providing financial supports will expand Nevada's teacher workforce and help ensure equitable access to effective teachers. Providing funds to support pre-service teachers during student teaching removes the financial burden placed on many pre-service teachers and in particular supports students who may otherwise not have been able to afford to do so (for example, students may have to give up part-time jobs to accommodate student teaching in their schedule or incur extra expenses associated with traveling to student teaching sites). This also prioritizes equitable access to ensure a diverse group of teacher candidates to bring the demographics of Nevada's teaching workforce closer to the demographics of our students.

Evidence Base (data/research etc.): Data analyses have shown stark inequities in students' access to effective educators:

- Students who identify as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino have significantly less access to experienced teachers compared to their peers who identify as white or Asian.
- Students attending 1- and 2-star schools have significantly lower access to experienced teachers than those attending 3-, 4-, and 5-star schools.
- Despite slightly smaller class sizes experiences by students in 1- and 2-star schools, research says the class size difference is not large enough to improve student outcomes.

Expanding and enhancing the educator pipeline will expand access to qualified and effective educators including teachers, school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, library media specialists, etc.

3. Expand Teaching and Training (T/T) Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

Recommendation: The Legislature should invest in expanding the availability of CTE Teaching and Training programs in Nevada's high schools, including covering dual enrollment tuition for students and potential staff support at NSHE institutions to sustain partnerships related to the program.

Specifics: Teaching and Training CTE programs are programs in high schools where students can earn dual high school and college credits in undergraduate work and teacher education coursework. This training program is a grow your own program to encourage our high school students to consider careers as educators in Nevada. At graduation, graduates can immediately be employed as a paraprofessional (teacher assistant) in the classroom while they continue in a teacher prep program.

The start-up costs for these programs exceed what each rural school district receives in federal and State CTE funding without hindering their ability to maintain their existing CTE programs of study.

The Nevada Department of Education made \$2.2M in federal relief funding available to support the start-up of these programs in Carson HS, Churchill HS, and Douglas HS, as well as 7 new programs in Elko (Elko, Spring Creek, Carlin, Owyhee, West Wendover, Jackpot, and Wells).

In addition, the Legislature may consider covering the costs of dual enrollment coursework for students participating in CTE T/T programs.

Rationale: Nevada’s heavy reliance upon teachers who earn their teacher licensure in other states/nations is not a long-term and sustainable solution to our educator shortages. Nevada needs to make a bold commitment to **locally** growing a much higher percentage of their PK-12 teachers. Every high school in the State should be offering the T/T CTE program.

The Teaching and Training CTE program provides a solid foundation for encouraging high school students to explore careers in teaching. The curriculum is solid. This programming should include a robust dual credit opportunity that allows high school students to jump start their college career.

Simultaneous with efforts to expand CTE T/T programs, NSHE community colleges and educator preparation programs are exploring ways to enhance articulation of dual enrollment credits and standardize coursework to ensure seamless transfer of dual enrollment and other coursework credits. This will help ensure that teacher candidates are getting credit for the courses they have completed and do not face unnecessary delays on their path to graduation and licensure due to institutional differences. This is a critical step to accelerating candidates’ path to being licensure-ready.

Evidence Base (data/research etc.): Nevada’s K-12 student body is increasingly diverse; growing our own teachers from within our student population will enhance the diversity of Nevada’s licensed educator workforce, resulting in a workforce that better reflects the demographics of Nevada’s students. Research shows that the racial and cultural identity of an educator can make a difference, particularly for students from underrepresented groups. For students, having teachers that look like them reinforces their own identity; for the school community, it creates a bridge to increased engagement in schools. In addition, educators of color are more likely than their white peers to remain in the very schools that need them most: the urban schools with high proportions of students of color and from families experiencing poverty

4. Review Educator Competency Requirements

Recommendation: The Legislature should commission and fund a study of Nevada’s licensure requirements, including the “Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators” exam (NAC 391.036), to identify whether it is a barrier to locally growing a more diverse educator workforce and to ensure that competency requirements are reasonable indicators of a candidate’s future effectiveness as an educator.

Specifics: Given the current educator shortage, it is important to ensure that all educator preparation and licensure requirements are meaningful and necessary to ensuring Nevada’s students have equitable access to effective educators.

The “Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators” reading, mathematics and writing exam is a prerequisite to educator licensure. Some NSHE institutions have aligned their educator preparation program entry requirements with the need to pass the Praxis Core to put candidates on a clear path to being licensure-ready.

Rationale: In practice, the Praxis Core has proven to be a barrier to many candidates seeking to pursue educator licensure as they struggle to pass the writing portion of the assessment.

Assembly Bill 225 (2021) requires the Commission on Professional Standards to consider alternative means of demonstrating competency for persons with a disability or health-related need that the Commission determines are necessary and appropriate, which has opened the door to consider alternative forms of demonstrating competency.

Evidence Base (data/research etc.): The National Council on Teacher Quality’s [analysis](#) of Praxis exams for elementary teachers (distinct from the Core) found that teacher candidates, regardless of race and ethnicity, are too often poorly prepared and supported to pass their state licensure tests.

The data in this report showed 55% of test-takers failing on their first attempt in states that use a well-structured licensure test which does not exempt some candidates nor allows a candidate's high score in one subject area (e.g., English language arts) to compensate for a low score in another (e.g., mathematics). The burden of this uniquely high rate of failure is placed on teacher candidates, rather than on an education system that has failed them. This burden is significant, as candidates are beset by costly retakes, delays, and no doubt angst.

A similar analysis focused on Nevada’s experience with the Praxis Core would empower the Legislature and the Commission on Professional on Standards in Education to review licensure requirements to ensure that competency requirements are reasonable indicators of a candidate’s future effectiveness as an educator and are not a hindrance to increasing the size and diversity of Nevada’s educator workforce.

5. Funding Workforce Data Portal

Recommendation: The Legislature should invest funding to sustain the educator workforce supply and demand portal currently being developed using federal relief funds.

Specifics: The Nevada Department of Education has invested over \$800,000 in federal relief funds to support an ongoing analysis of the educator workforce and class sizes in Nevada. As part of the contract for that work, we will initially roll out to school and district staff and then deploy public-facing dashboards during the 2023-24 school year that monitor:

- Average class size experience
- Access to experienced teachers
- Use of long-term substitutes
- Teacher workforce age
- Licensed staffing ratios
- Teacher pipeline metrics, including connecting data with NSHE educator preparation programs

To continue support and ongoing development and training there will be an annual licensing fee of \$75,000. In addition to the technical management of the application, the annual licensing fee will include 200 hours of support. The support hours can be used to refine existing dashboards, develop new dashboards, provide training, and/or create summative presentations to provide transparency and accountability to the public.

Rationale: The dashboards will support NDE's role in communicating and advocating for public policy regarding the teacher workforce and class sizes. Most importantly the public-facing dashboards provide built-in accountability and transparency to support advocacy and ongoing support for educator recruitment and retention.

Evidence Base (data/research, etc.): Access to data will improve the ability of NDE, NSHE, the Legislature, schools, districts, candidates, and educators to understand the challenges and opportunities related to Nevada's educator workforce and make decisions accordingly