

Cross-cutting Themes in the Commission's Recommendations

Throughout its deliberations, the Commission faced the twin challenges of developing cohorts of new educators who can lift the performance of all of our diverse P-12 students, while taking advantage of the digital age's new opportunities. This is a challenge for P-12 educators, but it is also a great opportunity to strengthen our nation with a vigor that will ensure that our heterogeneous society maintains its unique place in the history of civilizations.

In fact, these two cross-cutting themes converge. Technology and digital learning in our schools can efficiently bring quality education to all P-12 students. It can address the inequitable access to essential learning technology resources in the home and the community that has too frequently been evident in schools serving diverse and economically disadvantaged students. When that inequity persists, there are profound implications for the educational and economic opportunities available for our youth. Candidates need to know how to assess specific technological inequities experienced by their students and identify and undertake strategies that improve P-12 students' access to, and skills in, using these resources.

Diversity and technology are, thus, two critical areas that will require new learning and substantial innovation by preparation providers; the significant demographic and technological changes that impact their programs also influence the skills their completers must master to be effective. Because these two challenges are imbedded in every aspect of educator preparation, the Commission chose to recognize them throughout the recommended standards and also to elaborate on them here.

Diversity

America's classrooms are increasingly diverse. Students come to school with differing religious and cultural backgrounds. Increasing numbers of students are classified as having disabilities. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that 48 percent of P-12 public school students are students of color,⁷⁵ and the U.S. Bureau of the Census reports that 20 percent of the school-age population comes from homes where native languages other than English are spoken.⁷⁶ Given current trends in immigration and birth rates, these numbers will grow. NCES projects that, by 2021, the proportion of students of color will exceed 52 percent of enrollments. From race and ethnicity to poverty, language, disabilities, giftedness, religion, sexual orientation, and gender, America *is* diversity.

The education workforce is far less diverse, with fewer than 20 percent of teachers being teachers of color. Candidates should more closely mirror the diversity of the student body. Candidates must experience education in diverse situations, encounter P-12 students with differing needs, and engage students' families to support learning.

Even geographically bound providers must make use of the diversity available in clinical experiences so that candidates develop generalizable knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Moreover, no single candidate preparing for an education position can reflect, from his or her own location and personal experience, all facets of diversity. Regardless of their residence, personal circumstances, and preparation experiences, candidates need opportunities to develop professional capabilities that will enable them to adjust and adapt instruction in appropriate ways for the diversity they are likely to encounter in their professional lives.

The standards recommended by the Commission have embedded aspects of diversity within them, extending across learning disabilities, language learners, gifted students and students from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example:

- Standard 1 emphasizes that “all students” should be the focus of educator preparation and that completers should demonstrate skills and commitment that provide all P-12 students access to rigorous college and career ready standards. Standard 1 endorses the Interstate Teacher and Support Consortium (InTASC) teacher standards in their entirety, and the performances, knowledge and dispositions that are extensions of those standards contain literally scores of references to cultural competence, individual differences, creativity and innovation and working with families and communities.
- Standard 2 on clinical experiences again is cast in terms of preparing candidates to work with “all students” and calls for diversity in clinical experiences.
- Standard 3 on candidate quality insists that providers must undertake positive outreach efforts to recruit a more able and more diverse candidate pool.

The pairing of recruitment with raising candidate quality level in Standard 3 is of particular importance. This point has been powerfully underscored by the February 2013 report from the Equity and Excellence Commission to the Secretary of Education, in response to a Congressional mandate:⁷⁷

We won’t have a serious equity policy until we steer our best talent to the classrooms where it’s most needed; and we won’t raise the bar for all children until far more of our entering teachers in all schools are well prepared themselves.

Diversity must be a pervasive characteristic of any quality preparation program. The Commission expects responsible providers to ensure that candidates develop proficiencies in specific aspects of diversity that appear in the Commission’s recommended standards and to embed diversity issues throughout all aspects of preparation courses and experiences. Examples of proficiencies that candidates who complete an educator preparation program should develop include:⁷⁸

- Incorporation of multiple perspectives to the discussion of content, including attention to learners’ personal, family, and community experiences and cultural norms.
- A commitment to deepening awareness and understanding the strengths and needs of diverse learners when planning and adjusting instruction that incorporates the histories, experiences and representations of students and families from diverse populations.
- Verbal and nonverbal communication skills that demonstrate respect for and responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and differing perspectives learners and their families bring to the learning environment.
- Ability to interpret and share student assessment data with families to support student learning in all learning environments.
- An understanding of their own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, the relationship of privilege and power in schools, and the impact of these frames on educators’ expectations for and relationships with learners and their families.

Because diversity is an overarching feature of educator preparation, the Commission recommends that CAEP ask educator preparation providers to demonstrate in their self studies how they have integrated diversity throughout their program.

Technology and Digital Learning

Children arrive at school with widely differing digital experiences, just as they enter formal education with differing cultural and family backgrounds, different exposures to language and vocabulary, and different community contexts. Digital age or connected learning integrates highly networked, technology-enabled learning environments with pedagogy and content knowledge. It creates new ways to engage students and learning environments that use tools of the digital age to connect content knowledge with students' interests and connect students with inspiring experts, mentors and peers to deepen learning. These approaches blend online networks and tools and in-classroom and out-of-school learning; effective options to fit instruction with differing student needs and powerful new forms of assessments with simulations, gaming, computer adaptation, and rapid scoring capabilities.

The Commission's standards include several references to applications of new technologies to educational situations:

- Standard 1 endorses the InTASC teacher standards in their entirety, and the performances, knowledge, and dispositions that are extensions of those standards include a score of references to applications of technology. Educators must know how to use technologies and how to guide learners to apply them. They must know how to use digital and interactive technologies for efficiently and effectively achieving specific learning goals.
- Standard 1 also states that providers are to "ensure that completers model and apply technology standards as they design, implement, and assess learning experiences to engage students and improve learning and enrich professional practice."
- Standard 2 on clinical experiences refers to technology-enhanced learning opportunities as part of clinical experiences, as well as appropriate technology-based applications for selection, development, evaluation, and continuous improvement and retention of clinical educators. Clinical partnerships are to include technology-based collaborations, as well.
- Standard 3 on candidate quality states that providers present multiple forms of evidence of candidates developing knowledge and skills during preparation, including "the integration of technology in all of these domains."

Candidates need experiences during their preparation to become proficient in applications of digital media and technological capabilities. They should have opportunities to develop the skills and dispositions for accessing online research databases, digital media, and tools and to identify research-based practices that can improve their students' learning, engagement, and outcomes. They should know why and how to help their students access and assess critically the quality and relevance of digital academic content. Preparation experiences should allow candidates to demonstrate their abilities to design and facilitate digital, or connected, learning, mentoring, and collaboration. They should encourage use of social networks as resources for these purposes and to help identify digital content and technology tools for P-12 students' learning. Candidates should help their students gain access to what technology has to offer.

The essence of technology is rapid change. Members of the Commission realize that for accreditation standards that may be in place for the better part of a decade, it is not possible to anticipate every opportunity through which technology might have potential to advance instructional effectiveness and student learning and development. The Commission has concluded that the current possibilities are insufficiently exploited, and those for the future are beyond current forecasting ability. Educator preparation providers should keep up with research, and those preparing educators should model best practices in digital learning and technology applications that the EPP expects candidates to acquire.