

**Guiding Principles for Strengthening Quality Teacher Preparation in Nevada**  
*Reforming Nevada Teacher Preparation Programs*  
TEACHER QUALITY AT NSHE INSTITUTIONS  
DECEMBER, 2013

**What is AACTE?**

- The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) is a national alliance of educator preparation programs dedicated to the highest quality professional development of teachers and school leaders in order to enhance PK-12 student learning. It is generally regarded as the primary national association for teacher education programs in institutions of higher education and the principal authority on issues pertaining to teacher education and teacher quality.
- The 800 institutions holding AACTE membership represent public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam. AACTE's reach and influence fuel its mission of serving learners by providing all school personnel with superior training and continuing education.
- AACTE is well recognized nationally as establishing and maintaining a credible voice in state and federal policy making, advocating for high quality in teacher and student learning.
- AACTE's stated goals are to promote preK-12 student learning through high-quality, evidence-based preparation and to unify their membership through evidence and professional consensus about educator preparation in the areas of standards, curriculum, assessment, accountability and who belongs in the profession.

**AACTE's and our view on teacher preparation and development:**

- The purpose and intent of teacher preparation programs is that beginning teachers are entering classrooms with the resources and skills that they need in order to teach in the 21st century as they begin as novices in the profession. We view the development of teachers as over a continuum of many years. As teachers gain more experience, mentoring and continued professional development, they will continue to have an effect on increasing student learning.

**AACTE's view on teacher education quality improvement and assurance:**

- AACTE believes that all educator preparation programs should be evaluated using the same standards. One of the primary goals of evaluating teacher education programs is to inform institutions about the quality of their programs to support continuous improvement so that all teacher education programs are of high quality. Given that no indicator alone can accurately determine program quality, educator preparation programs should be evaluated using multiple measures that are selected based on research that is valid and reliable.
- A robust quality assurance system ensures continuous improvement by relying on a variety of measures, establishing performance benchmarks for those measures (with reference to external standards where possible), seeking the views of all relevant stakeholders, sharing evidence widely with both internal and external audiences, and using results to improve policies and practices in consultation with partners and stakeholders. Program quality and improvement are determined, in part, by characteristics of candidates that the provider recruits to the field; the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions that candidates bring to and acquire during the program; the relationships between the provider and the P-12 schools in which candidates receive clinical training; and subsequent evidence of completers' impact in schools where they ultimately teach.
- Effective quality assurance systems function through a clearly articulated and effective process for defining and assuring quality outcomes. Continuous improvement systems enable programs quickly to develop and test prospective improvements, deploy what is learned throughout the organization, and add to the profession's knowledge base and repertoire of practice.

**AACTE's 6 quality indicators**

- We seek to ensure that the next generation of educators is optimally prepared for Nevada's 21st century classrooms. AACTE's 6 quality indicators include: high admissions standards, subject-matter content preparation, pedagogical preparation, extensive practice teaching opportunities, intense clinical teaching experiences, and satisfaction of program completers and their employers.

**1. High admissions standards:** Why have high admissions standards? Shouldn't we just accept anyone who has an interest in teaching into teacher preparation programs?

- Some research support the idea that measures of academic selectivity is associated with teacher effectiveness in the classroom. That is, some research suggests that college-entrance test scores and matching students to teachers by race may be associated with teacher effectiveness. Although this research is not conclusive, the evidence points to the potential importance of program selectivity as one of several important factors in the preparation of high-quality teachers.
- The quality of new teachers entering the field depends not only on the quality of the preparation they receive, but also on the capacity of preparation programs to attract and select academically able people who have the potential to be effective teachers. Attracting able, high-quality candidates to teaching is a critical goal.

- Diversity of candidate pool: This responsibility continues from purposeful recruitment that helps fulfill teacher education providers' mission to admissions selectivity that builds an able and diverse pool of candidates, through monitoring of candidate progress and providing necessary support, to demonstrating that candidates are proficient at completion and that they are selected for employment opportunities that are available in areas served by the provider.
  - High admission standards include recruiting and selecting candidates who possess high cognitive abilities. Research shows that teachers who make a positive difference in their students' learning have **strong general intelligence and verbal and written ability** that help teachers organize and explain ideas as well as observe and think diagnostically. This can be measured, part, by their reading, writing and mathematics abilities or meeting the standards measured by PPST scores. Some studies have shown that academic quality, especially in verbal ability and math knowledge, impacts teacher effectiveness.
  - The Praxis I, or **Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST)**, consists of three exams: reading, writing, and mathematics. In most colleges and universities, a passing score must be earned for admission to teacher education. In Nevada, a passing score must be earned before the teacher education graduate can apply for his or her teaching license or certificate.
  - High admission standards also include recruiting and selecting candidates who have the non-academic characteristics/dispositions of effective teachers. There is strong support from the professional community that qualities outside of academic ability are associated with teacher effectiveness. These include "grit," the ability to work with parents, the ability to motivate, communication skills, focus, purpose, and leadership, among others. Research has not empirically established a particular set of non-academic qualities that teachers should possess but the InTASC standards' set of dispositions as a promising area of research.
2. **High GPA in majors:** To what extent do teacher candidates have opportunities in teacher preparation programs to develop strong content preparation?
- Research shows that teachers who make a positive difference in their students' learning have **strong content knowledge** up to a threshold level that relates to what is to be taught.
  - Teacher education programs should ensure that candidates develop a deep understanding of the critical concepts and principles of their disciplines. Teacher candidates receive their content preparation from content experts in the field. Content members are active researchers who are able to disseminate the most current up-to-date knowledge to teacher candidates. This can be measured, in part, by the candidates, GPA in their majors.
  - The Nevada Department of Education establishes the minimal requirements for being certified in particular content areas. The depth of content and pedagogical content knowledge can also be measured by the Praxis II assessments, which cover different subject areas. In Nevada, passing content knowledge and curriculum and instruction exams scores are earned before teacher education graduates can apply for his or her teaching license or certificate.
3. **Intensive preparation in subject-specific methods:** To what extent do teacher candidates have opportunities in teacher preparation programs to develop strong pedagogy preparation?
- Research shows that teachers who make a positive difference in their students' learning have: **knowledge of how to teach others in their content area** (content pedagogy)—in using hands-on learning techniques and in developing higher-order thinking skills; **an understanding of learners and their development**, including how to assess and scaffold learning, how to assist students with learning differences (special education and ELL learners), and how to support the learning of language and content for those not yet proficient in the language of instruction; **curriculum (e.g lesson planning for CCSS), classroom management and assessment**, the use of **technology** and the relationship of **specific instructional practice and student achievement**.
  - In essence, teacher education programs must offer curricula that prepare candidates using research-based practices so that they are able to **practice flexibly to advance the learning of all students toward attainment of college- and career-readiness standards**
  - The opportunities for pedagogical development for teacher candidates can be measured by the type and number of coursework candidates enrolled in during their teacher education preparation. For example, do students take coursework in special education, ELL, assessment, etc. situated within research-based practice and aligned to standards, eg. CCSS? The type and number of required coursework in pedagogical preparation are determined by the Nevada Department of Education. Many times, teacher preparation programs exceed the minimal number of standards set by the State.
  - The depth of content and pedagogical content knowledge attainment can also be measured by the Praxis II assessments, which cover different subject areas. In Nevada, passing content knowledge and curriculum and instruction exams scores are earned before teacher education graduates can apply for his or her teaching license or certificate.
4. **Extensive practice teaching opportunities:** To what extent do teacher candidates have opportunities to engage in practice?
- High quality teacher education programs ensures that effective partnerships and high-quality clinical practice are central to preparation so that candidates develop the knowledge, skills and professionals dispositions necessary to demonstrate positive impact on all pre-K-12 students' learning and development. This necessitates teacher education providers to structure well supervised field experiences (analogous to medical school internships) throughout the teacher preparation program.
  - High-quality clinical experiences are early, ongoing and take place in a variety of school- and community based settings, as well as through simulations and other virtual opportunities (for example, online chats with students). Candidates observe, assist, tutor, instruct and may conduct research. They may be student-teachers or interns. These experiences integrate applications of theory from pedagogical courses or modules in P-12 or community settings and are aligned with the school-based curriculum

(e.g., Next Generation Science Standards, college- and career-ready standards, Common Core State Standards). They offer multiple opportunities for candidates to develop, practice, demonstrate, and reflect upon clinical and academic components of preparation, as well as opportunities to develop.

- In a clinically based preparation program, laboratory experiences, school embedded learning and course work are integrated through a structure designed to help the candidate develop both the knowledge base and skills of professional practice. The lab experiences, experts say, are designed to support the investigation of practice, and embedded school experiences offer guided practice in real-life situations. School-embedded experiences help teachers develop content-specific and general teaching skills and provide opportunities for candidates to become active members of learning communities, develop skills and dispositions associated with teaming, and work with parents within the community.
  - The opportunities for teacher candidates' development in this area can be measured, in part, by the type and number of clinical practices, and/or practica candidates experience in varying contexts during their teacher education preparation.
  - Prospective teachers can learn through online and video demonstrations, analyzing case studies representing both exemplary practice and common dilemmas, and participating in peer and micro-teaching (NCATE, 2010). Diverse clinical settings are also important to help candidates prepare to teach no matter where they accept a teaching job. Working with students with disabilities and in schools facing high needs and low-performance are challenging, but teachers should not face these challenges for the first time in their first teaching job.
5. **Semester long or year-long clinical teaching experience:** To what extent do teacher candidates engage in lengthy supervised student teaching experiences in their teacher preparation programs?
- Research suggests that teachers benefit from preparation programs that provide well supervised field experiences (analogous to medical school internships) that are congruent with candidates' eventual teaching.
  - Teacher candidates need to develop strong cultural competency and be prepared to teach every student to higher standards. Effective teacher preparation programs offer residency programs where candidates have an extended opportunity to practice their craft with students under the close guidance of an experienced and effective PK-12 teacher who is licensed in the area that the candidate is preparing to teach. These extended residencies also include supervision and mentoring by a representative of the preparation program who, along with the PK-12 teacher, ensures the candidate is ready for program completion and recommendation for licensure.
  - Effective teacher education programs works with partners to design clinical experiences of sufficient depth, breadth, diversity, coherence, and duration to ensure that candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness and positive impact on all students' learning and development.
  - Quality programs have clinical educators and coaches who are rigorously selected and prepared and drawn for both higher education and the P-12 sector. Specific sites are designated and funded to support embedded clinical preparation. Strategic partnerships are imperative for powerful clinical preparation which is between 10 to 14 weeks.
  - High quality clinical curriculum will provide the prospective teacher with real responsibilities, the opportunity to make decisions and to develop skills to analyze student needs and adjust practices using student performance data while receiving continuous monitoring and feedback from mentors.
6. **High student satisfaction and employer satisfaction in early career years:** How do we know if teacher preparation programs are producing quality teachers?
- Preparing a teacher to be successful and effective in the field is the shared responsibility of preparation program and partner districts. Preparation programs must ultimately be responsible for ensuring completers enter the profession with the skills, knowledge and dispositions to be effective in the classroom. Preparation programs must have access to data about their completers' performance in the classroom and should be held accountable for their programs' effectiveness in preparing teachers to enter and remain in the profession.
  - Surveys of student satisfaction with their preparation program as they exit their programs and employers' assessment of novice teacher candidates' performance in classrooms can be a measure of the quality of teacher preparation. Other quality measures may include the number of recipients of teaching awards during in their early career years.
  - Preparation as students exit programs and in their first year of teaching, employer satisfaction reporting, awards recipients of outstanding beginning teachers.

### Quality Teacher Preparation in Nevada

The following AACTE principles address initial teacher preparation programs including undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, graduate or alternate route. NSHE institutions are committed to exploring innovative practices in the effort to continue to strengthen and develop the next generation of teacher preparation programs.

#### Underlying Assumptions:

All teacher candidates must be prepared through a rigorous and coordinated program of courses and clinical experiences that focus on research-based pedagogy in alignment with national, state, and district teaching and student standards. Teacher quality is a byproduct of countless factors, including the depth and breadth of teachers' initial preparation, advanced study, mentoring and induction, and ongoing professional development. Each program should ensure that teacher candidates recommended for certification have:

- Strong content knowledge aligned to national, state and district student standards (e.g. CCSS);
- Strong pedagogical content knowledge aligned to national, state, and district teacher standards;
- Grade-level appropriate and culturally-relevant pedagogical knowledge;
- Knowledge and skills related to PK-12 student assessment; and
- Opportunities to develop and demonstrate the dispositions necessary for effective teaching (CTDE).

Preparation competencies included in coursework and clinical experiences should represent the current and future needs of Nevada's schools including high-need schools and subjects, new student standards and changing class structures or environments.

AACTE's 6 quality indicators include: admissions standards, subject-matter content preparation, pedagogical preparation, extensive practice teaching opportunities, intense clinical teaching experiences, and satisfaction of program completers and their employers.

Principles	Description	Examples of Measures/Actions	NSHE Institution Report
1. High admissions standards	Nevada teacher preparation programs must actively recruit, admit, develop and retain only those teacher candidates with strong knowledge, skills, dispositions that are indicative of those expected of teachers for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century and required to meet the needs of Nevadan students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements that program use a rigorous overall GPA and/or results of other cognitive/academic assessments such as SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT scores</li> <li>• Requirement that programs use Praxis I or Pre-Professional Skills Test</li> <li>• Requirement that programs develop recruitment and admission policies that reflect the importance of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High need and shortage areas &amp;</li> <li>-Diversity among our teachers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establishment by programs of dispositional entry requirement through such methods as rigorous interviews, consideration of professional standards and skills, recommendations and recent experience in schools.</li> <li>• Local school district and Nevada Department of Education should conduct a</li> </ul>	<p>Candidates entering the teacher education programs must meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ UNDERGRADUATE Teacher Education Programs:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete 24 hours of University Core Requirements</li> <li>2. Maintain a minimum grade point average set by the Education Unit</li> <li>3. Complete and pass all three portions of the Pre-Professional Skills Test (Praxis I) in Reading, Math and Writing.</li> </ol> </li> <li>✓ Admission Requirements to the GRADUATE Teacher Education Programs:                             <p>All advanced degree and certificate program applicants must meet these eligibility requirements to be considered for admission.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hold a baccalaureate or advanced degree from a regionally accredited four-year college or university.</li> <li>2. A student who has an advanced degree from an accredited college or university with a minimum overall GPA of 3.00 (4.00=A).</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of diverse candidates and high needs areas:</li> </ul>

		<p>statewide supply and demand study of Nevada's current and future teacher needs and student population to inform recruitment strategies and considerations.</p>	<p>Institutions of Higher Education regularly participates in recruitment career fairs and works with local middle &amp; high schools and other organizations to recruit diverse candidates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-academic standards (past experiences in application essays, interviews, etc.); Dispositions are measured in the early stages of their programs</li> </ul>
2. High GPA in major	<p>Nevada teacher preparation programs must ensure that candidates develop a deep understanding of the critical concepts and principles of their disciplines. Candidates must be able to demonstrate <b>strong content knowledge</b> up to a threshold level that relates to what is to be taught.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement of program policies for the assessment of content knowledge by exam, transcript review or other means as appropriate for program type (undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, alternate route) as measured by GPA in subject-major courses and state licensure requirements such as Praxis II examinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teacher candidates must maintain a minimum GPA in their subject major</li> <li>• Praxis II scores: All teacher candidates must attain a passing score in Praxis II (subject major and pedagogy) before being issued a license.</li> </ul>
3. Intensive preparation in subject-specific methods	<p>Nevada teacher preparation programs must ensure that teachers have: <b>knowledge of how to teach others in their content area</b> (content pedagogy; <b>an understanding of diverse learners and their development, curriculum (eg. CCSS, etc), classroom management and assessment</b>, the use of <b>technology</b> and the relationship of <b>specific instructional practices and student achievement</b>. Teacher education programs must offer curricula that prepared candidates using research-based practices so that they are able to <b>practice flexibly to advance the learning of all students toward attainment of college- and career-readiness standards</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement of program policies for the assessment of pedagogical knowledge by transcript review of the type of number or coursework or other means as appropriate for program type (undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, alternate route) or measured by GPA in pedagogy courses</li> <li>• State licensure requirements of pedagogical knowledge such as Praxis II examinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type &amp; number of courses in pedagogy: Teacher candidates receive coursework as it relates to their specific subject areas and to SPED, ELL, common cores standards, classroom management, instructional strategies, student development, assessment, curriculum, etc. The number of subject-specific methods courses exceed minimum standards set by the Nevada Department of education.</li> <li>• Praxis II scores: All teacher candidates must attain a passing score in Praxis II (subject major and pedagogy) before being issued a license by the Nevada Department of Education.</li> </ul>
4. Extensive practice teaching opportunities	<p>Nevada teacher preparation programs must ensure that all teacher candidates have a sequence of varied, structured, intensive and purposefully supported clinical school experiences that are appropriately staffed by qualified educators to ensure support for success. Experiences must be across the program, coordinated and support the continuum of content and skill development to become an effective educator. (Note: clinical</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement that preparation programs develop a coherent and varied sequence of clinical experiences that are aligned with coursework and scaffold candidate skills based on national, state, and district teaching standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number for field experiences in program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ UNDERGRADUATE Programs</li> </ul> <p>Teacher candidates engage in (a) semester-long classroom observation clinical experience; (b) two semester-long practica experiences where they engage in co-teaching with experienced mentor teachers and (c) semester long student</p> </li> </ul>

	<p>experiences include field experiences, practica, and student teaching.)</p>		<p>teaching.          ✓ GRADUATE Programs          Teacher candidates engage in (a) semester-long classroom observation clinical experience; (b) one semester-long practica experience where they engage in co-teaching with experienced mentor teachers and (c) semester long student teaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical field experiences are coupled with concurrent content-specific pedagogy coursework throughout the program</li> <li>• Types of teaching contexts: Teacher candidates are exposed to diverse clinical settings so they are prepared to teach no matter where they accept a teaching job. Working with students with disabilities and in schools facing high needs and low-performance are challenging, but teachers should not face these challenges for the first time in their first teaching job.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Semester long or year-long clinical teaching experiences</p>	<p>Teacher preparation programs and schools/districts must have well-defined, high-quality, collaborative partnerships to ensure the quality of clinical experiences for teacher candidates while addressing the needs of and benefits to all involved. Teacher preparation programs and school districts must develop strategic partnerships to support extended and intensive clinical and school-based training for which they share responsibility, authority, and accountability including program development and implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement that the duration of clinical experiences is sufficient to ensure that candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness across the program.</li> <li>• Innovation by preparation programs and partner districts in a variety of clinical experience structures that are shown to have a positive impact on future teachers' effectiveness and skill development including, without limitation, co-teaching models.</li> <li>• Establishment of standards for those educators supporting future teachers including the demonstrated effectiveness of cooperating teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher candidates are required to student teach in a semester-long (14 weeks) clinical experience in selected partnership schools within their local school districts.</li> <li>• Working together each day, the Student Teacher Intern and the Mentor Teacher work with preK-12 students in the classroom throughout the day. The Mentor Teacher provides ongoing feedback to the Intern regarding effectiveness.</li> <li>• Quality of mentors and facilitators: The Lead Mentor for a school is selected based on his/her teaching and supervision efficacy and experience. Each Lead Mentor is a veteran teacher who has participated in intensive mentor teacher training with institutions of higher education faculty. In turn, the Lead Mentor coordinates and facilitates the training at school sites (i.e., including modeling, sharing, team teaching, and assessing Interns) with other Lead</li> </ul>

			<p>Mentors and Site Facilitators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The criteria for school site selection were established jointly between the local school district and the teacher preparation program. Schools are expected to make a 3-year commitment and conduct an annual review process. School sites are expected to demonstrate most of characteristics listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A visionary and shared instructional leadership</li> <li>○ A school culture conducive to professional development</li> <li>○ An interest in developing learning communities</li> <li>○ Evidence of reform-minded teaching</li> <li>○ A commitment to research-based practice and closing the achievement gap</li> <li>○ Use of multiple assessments to evaluate student learning</li> <li>○ A technology-rich environment</li> <li>○ A diverse student population situated in an inclusive environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>6. High student satisfaction and employer satisfaction in early career years</p>	<p>Preparing a teacher to be successful and effective in the field is the shared responsibility of preparation program and partner districts. Preparation programs must ultimately be responsible for ensuring completers enter the profession with the skills, knowledge and dispositions to be effective in the classroom. Preparation programs must have access to data about their completers' performance in the classroom and should be held accountable for their programs' effectiveness in preparing teachers to enter and remain in the profession.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development &amp; implementation of annual reporting and data management systems to track preparation program effectiveness, candidate performance and teacher success including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Completers' satisfaction with program</li> <li>○ Completer employment and retention rates,</li> <li>○ Program compliance with admission criteria and goals,</li> <li>○ Survey data, and other instruments regarding partner district, employer and graduate feedback</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction of students surveys are administered to program completers annually.</li> <li>• Local school districts conduct surveys of first year teachers about the quality of their teacher preparation programs.</li> <li>• Surveys are administered to employers to assess satisfaction of teachers and their performance.</li> </ul>