

# PARTNERS IN PREPARATION:

## A SURVEY OF EDUCATORS &

## EDUCATION PREPARATION PROGRAMS

**“Teacher training programs and school systems must join together to fully prepare aspiring teachers for their first day on the job.”**

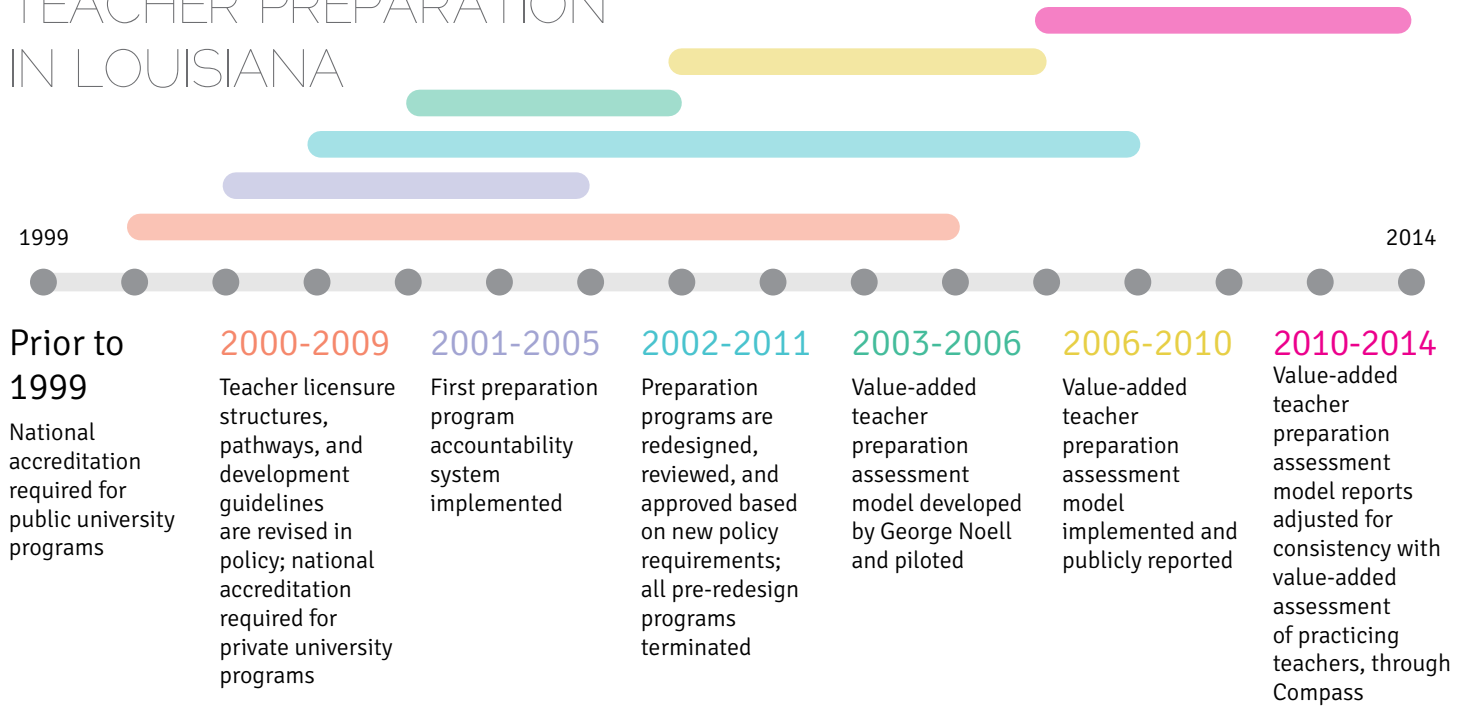


**Louisiana students are just as smart and capable as any in America.**

Louisiana has acted on this belief by raising academic expectations for students. To help students succeed in the classroom and beyond, Louisiana has also raised the bar for teaching excellence, as research has long indicated that quality of classroom teaching is a major factor in increasing student achievement. For this reason, strengthening teacher preparation programs has been a major focus in Louisiana over the last decade.

During this time, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), in partnership with the Board of Regents (BOR), has made policy changes to required coursework and licensure assessments, preparation program approval processes, and preparation program accountability. Preparation programs and the BOR worked together to redesign programs of study to align with Louisiana’s standards at the time, the Grade Level Expectations with the involvement of district personnel. In addition, BOR and BESE worked together to design and implement a teacher preparation program accountability system, becoming one of the first states in the nation to develop a value-added teacher preparation assessment model that links teacher effectiveness back to preparation programs.

# EVOLUTION OF TEACHER PREPARATION IN LOUISIANA



## This work established Louisiana as a national leader on teacher preparation.

A [recent teacher preparation program analysis](#) by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) ranked two Louisiana teacher preparation programs in the top ten nationally: Northwestern State University's elementary teacher preparation program ranked fourth, and Louisiana State University's elementary teacher preparation program sixth out of 788 programs. A [2014 policy analysis](#) by the same group rated Louisiana as a B, in large part due to the strength of the teacher preparation policy on identifying and retaining effective teachers.

Yet the education landscape in Louisiana has evolved over the last several years. To help students achieve college and career readiness, Louisiana has raised expectations for student achievement while allowing teachers greater autonomy. Schools and districts have adopted new curricula, revamped professional development programs, and used

the Compass process to provide feedback and support to educators. In the 2013-2014 school year alone, districts invested \$50 million in Title II federal funds and countless hours developing the knowledge and skills of their practicing teachers. Additionally, schools, districts, and community partners have moved toward a unified system of early childhood education to ensure that children are ready for kindergarten. Secondary schools across the state are increasing the number of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses, Advanced Placement courses, and career pathways that prepare students in high school for the careers they will pursue when they graduate. As a result of investments like these, schools and districts have made great progress with student learning, raising the number of students reaching proficiency in math and English language arts by 4 percent over the past five years.

Teacher preparation programs in Louisiana have also continued to make changes to their programs since the redesign, in response to these shifts. Beginning in 2011, universities created teams dedicated to understanding new content standards and aligned assessments. In addition, the Department trained faculty on Compass, the state's educator support and evaluation system. Beginning in fall 2013, universities integrated Compass and aligned teacher preparation curriculum to Louisiana's expectations for student learning. Universities have advisory councils and other partnerships involving PK-12





has increased across the state. With these shifts, teachers’ work has evolved, as have the knowledge and skills that yield success in today’s classrooms. Districts’ staffing needs have changed, too. In order to address these changes, districts and schools must further explore opportunities to build on the teacher preparation work of the last decade and ensure that teachers are successful on day one in the classroom.

partners and use input from the PK-12 partners to make improvements to their programs. This recent success is proof that when Louisiana strengthens academic programs and systems, positive changes take hold in our schools and communities. Schools, districts, and preparation programs have invested in improving K-12 education, and student achievement

To better understand how educator preparation is aligned with school and district needs, and to determine how preparation should change in the coming years, the Louisiana Department of Education surveyed new teachers, the programs that prepare them, and the schools and districts that hire and support them. The Department developed a set of

questions about new teacher readiness and teacher training experiences. The survey also included questions meant to shed light on the role districts and schools should play in preparing and certifying new teachers. With the support of Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana, Louisiana Association of Educators, and Stand for Children, a link to the online survey was sent to teachers, principals, district leaders, and preparation program faculty members. More than 6,000 educators responded. These results of this survey provide the state with an important fact base for strengthening educator preparation programs, so that new teachers keep pace with the evolving academic landscape.

## SURVEY RESULTS

The [survey results](#) provide valuable insight into the challenges new teachers, principals, district leaders, and preparation programs face, as well as opportunities to address those challenges. The most prominent theme that emerges from survey results is the need for stronger partnerships and collaboration between schools, districts, and preparation programs.

- 1 **School systems and preparation programs agree that teacher candidates need more hands-on experience prior to entering the classroom full-time, but they typically do not partner to provide adequate time for aspiring teachers to practice in the classroom and do not consistently pair aspiring educators with top educators as coaches or mentors.**

There is widespread agreement that teacher candidates should have more time to practice in the classroom prior to entering the classroom full-time, and that this training must occur under the guidance of the profession’s best educators. Yet finding those placements is a challenge: **51 percent of the preparation program faculty surveyed say that there are not enough classrooms available for student teachers each year, and 38 percent of faculty say they do not have enough information to identify effective teachers who can serve as mentors and coaches to aspiring teachers.** Meeting this need is a responsibility shared by districts and preparation programs. Through partnerships and collaboration, districts and preparation programs can together build extensive practice experiences with the district’s most knowledgeable educators.

- 2 **Preparation programs and school systems generally agree on what should be taught to teacher candidates, but greater collaboration is needed to better prepare new teachers to be “ready on day one” for the classroom.**

Practicing teachers and district leaders agree that today’s classrooms require a different set of knowledge and skills. **They agree that teacher preparation programs should include courses in:**

### SELECTING CURRICULAR RESOURCES

**94%**  
teachers

**95%**  
district

### ASSESSMENT

**96%**  
teachers

**100%**  
district

### ANALYZING STUDENT DATA

**96%**  
teachers

**98%**  
district

Yet districts and preparation programs do not consistently work together to design curricula that address this essential knowledge. **Only 39 percent of school and district leaders surveyed said that they regularly collaborate with preparation programs to align preparation practices** to ensure that aspiring teachers' preparation is focused on the most important knowledge and skills a new teacher will need in order to be successful. This leads to preparation experiences that are disconnected from realities and expectations that teachers face on day one in the classroom.

Teachers experience this gap, too: **50 percent of teachers with one to five years of experience surveyed say that they were not fully prepared for the realities of a classroom in their first year of teaching.** When responding to the survey questions about their readiness, they indicated the need in the following areas:

**When I finished my program, I was prepared to:**



For teachers to be successful on day one in the classroom, educator preparation programs and districts must have deeper discussions about schools' expectations and candidates' readiness to teach. The need for further collaboration was supported by survey results that indicated that **only 30 percent of district leaders and 58 percent of preparation program faculty agree that schools and districts in their regions provide feedback on prospective teachers' preparedness.**

**3** School systems experience shortages of teachers in specific subject areas but typically do not coordinate with preparation programs on recruitment into those subject areas.

Districts rely on teacher preparation programs to provide effective teachers in the subject areas and grade levels they need most. Yet **63 percent of district leaders surveyed reported that partnerships with preparation programs do not produce enough teachers to meet demand in all subjects and grade levels.** This means that certain classes are unstaffed or staffed with uncertified teachers. Others subjects, like elementary education, have a surplus of graduates, some of whom have difficulty finding a job when they graduate. Yet **48 percent of preparation program faculty members say they do not get enough information about districts' staffing needs to inform recruiting and selection.** Collaboration around these needs could ensure a better balance of teachers.

## MOVING FORWARD

The day-to-day work of a classroom teacher is complex and challenging, as is the work to recruit and prepare Louisiana's next generation of teachers. Preparation focused on a shared vision of classroom readiness prioritizes the practical knowledge and skills that teachers most need and sends clear messages about readiness to an aspiring teacher and to a hiring school or district.

The **Believe and Prepare** pilot program launched in April has demonstrated that the challenges of teacher preparation can be met through increased, authentic school leader involvement in educator preparation, creating partnerships with preparation programs that focus on meeting school and districts' workforce needs.

- St. Charles Parish in collaboration with Southeastern Louisiana University and Lincoln Parish in collaboration with Louisiana Tech University have worked to design hands-on learning experiences that are centered on a clear vision for what it means to be "ready to teach" in Louisiana classrooms.



- St. Bernard Parish, Collegiate Academies in collaboration with TNTP TeachNOLA, and New Orleans College Preparatory Academies in collaboration with Relay Graduate School of Education are developing better methods of embedded coaching and measuring a teacher candidate’s ability to positively impact student learning.
- Lafourche Parish and Nicholls State University, as well as West Feliciana Parish and Louisiana State University’s Cain Center, are working to address teacher shortages in mathematics, science, and special education by collaborating on the recruitment and training of future teachers.

**Over the next year, the Department, in collaboration with the BOR and preparation programs, will explore opportunities to build on the improvements made over the past ten years.**

Throughout the year, the Department will hear from educators, principals, district leaders and preparation program faculty across the state during statewide tours and focus groups. Through joint meetings with BESE and the BOR, regular meetings with the heads of preparation programs and the Louisiana Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (LACTE) and consultation with BESE’s Educator Effectiveness Committee, the Department will work to understand how these challenges in teacher preparation can be met and propose policies that will support needed changes. The Department will expand the Believe and Prepare pilots further catalyze innovation in teacher preparation and support partnerships between school systems and preparation programs across the state.

Because this work is important to Louisiana, the Department commits to exploring solutions to the challenges through collaboration with educators, school systems, and preparation programs. By engaging the people who are directly impacted by the work of teacher preparation, schools and the teachers themselves, in the process of generating these solutions, Louisiana will be able to make the right changes to teacher preparation that will ensure that the next generation of Louisiana’s teachers is ready on day one.

