

The Mutually Beneficial Partnership

Using Short-Term Disruptions from COVID-19 to Improve Partnerships Between Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) and Districts

Disruptions due to the pandemic present partnership opportunities for districts and educator preparation programs (EPPs) to strengthen the educator workforce and support student learning. Below, we share ways that states, districts, and EPPs can collaborate during recovery from COVID-19 to strengthen systems and relationships.

Hire and support preservice educators to help accelerate unfinished learning. Trained practicum students can provide instruction through [intensive tutoring](#), [summer programs](#), or extended learning programs. Research shows that this approach can be cheaper but just as effective as hiring fully certified teachers (Robinson et al., 2021). In return, practicum students can earn income while refining their teaching skills. States have an opportunity to encourage these partnerships between districts and EPPs as they propose legislation or set guidelines for using ESSER funds related to lost learning time, after-school programs, and summer enrichment programs.

Partner to attract and prepare educators. States can use [multiple funding sources](#) together with their [ESSER allocations](#) to stabilize and diversify the educator workforce (Griffith, 2021). Enrollment in traditional EPPs has declined, but growing evidence on the importance of a diverse workforce has renewed interest in other preparation opportunities. Grow-your-own programs, pathways from high school to EPPs, and teacher residencies present opportunities for reimagined partnerships between states, districts, and EPPs.

Previously, preparation programs often partnered with districts based on their geography. During the pandemic, many clinical experiences became virtual and both programs and districts relied on virtual recruitment strategies. EPPs and districts can create new partnerships moving forward that emphasize support and the quality of an experience over geography, which Goldhaber et al. (2021) note in their [recent blog post](#). States can do this by looking at how they offered guidance during the pandemic to reflect on lessons learned and best practices.

Rethink induction and mentoring programs. As of October 2019, [31 states](#) required induction and/or mentoring for new teachers (Education Commission of the States). States, districts, and EPPs have an opportunity now to re-evaluate these programs. New hires bring different experiences and skills to their teaching roles. However, these new hires are entering schools after a period of disruption and trauma for many students. Districts and

EPPs can partner to develop or revise [cost-effective and sustainable induction and mentoring programs](#). These programs should build on new teachers' strengths and address gaps in their experience.

Establish or improve research-practice partnerships. Now more than ever, [states and districts need access to data and research to inform policy and practice](#). Colleges and universities often have the resources and expertise to conduct high-quality research. Higher education can be valuable partners in understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on student achievement and educator talent pools. For example, Providence Public Schools and the Rhode Island Department of Education recently partnered with Annenberg Institute at Brown University to [study local teacher staffing](#) to inform changes to their talent management system. To be successful, states and districts need to prioritize data sharing agreements and get researchers data in a timely manner. At the same time, researchers must share actionable information with states and districts.

Over the past year, we've been reminded of the importance of relationships and communities. Moving forward, we need to value, build, and maintain partnerships to ensure success. If states, districts, and EPPs truly partner, silos will decrease. True collaboration can help ensure all PreK-12 students receive the instruction and support they need from highly effective teachers and leaders.

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Lead Author: Lauren Matlach

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