



PRELIMINARY REPORT ON TEACHER PREPARATION FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION

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Teachers are a critical factor in K–12 students' literacy performance. From the very first day of class, a teacher's instruction affects students' literacy achievement. Thus the quality and content of preservice teacher preparation programs features prominently in student success.

This report summarizes information about U.S. preservice teacher preparation in literacy that was gathered from state education department websites and from interviews with state education department representatives. Our report on these preliminary findings, compiled in May 2015, is intended to contribute to conversations about literacy teacher preparation.

Our report does not provide the complete picture needed to fully understand the landscape of teacher preparation for developing students' literacy in classrooms in the United States. Further investigation of both state and preservice teacher preparation program requirements is necessary. The data contained here reflect the first phase of our study of what states' requirements are for preservice teachers in terms of developing their skills as literacy instructors.

We will expand this conversation as we move into the next phase of our study that entails learning from university teacher preparation institutions how they prepare preservice teachers to address students' literacy needs.

Two-Part Procedure

We began by gathering information about requirements for teacher preparation in literacy from state education department websites between July and October 2014. Information on the following specific categories of traditional (as opposed to alternative) program requirements was gathered: professional standards, literacy courses, practica, and assessments. The information, in turn, was tied to the following licensure areas: early childhood, elementary, middle, high, special education, and endorsements. The data were collected in a spreadsheet and then summarized.

We then interviewed state education department officials to confirm the data we had collected from websites and to increase our understanding of how literacy instruction was addressed in the certification guidelines. In order to gain uncensored participation of state department officials, we promised that their comments would remain anonymous, and we gave them

assurance that our report would not be used to compare or critique how individual states address literacy preparation in their guidelines.

We conducted interviews with officials from 23 states. Two states declined to be interviewed but sent documents that explained their certification requirements and vision for teacher preparation. Interviewers submitted notes taken during the interviews that were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Interview notes and artifacts were analyzed for patterns and trends. Our preliminary findings are described in the paragraphs that follow.

Website Findings

The data we summarize here reflect the information on state education department websites as of October 2014, with some corrections provided by interviewees to reflect changes that occurred between the times the data were collected and the times the interview took place. Special care was taken to ensure that the data collected from websites were accurate and current. During the interviews, we found that certification requirements were undergoing change in many states. Most changes were scheduled to take place during 2015, whereas others were under consideration by state legislators and would be enacted at a later date if passed.

• Professional Standards

Approximately half of state department of education websites had state-specific professional teaching standards. Specific literacy standards could not be located for between 34 and 38 states in each category. When literacy could be located within professional teaching standards, it was typically present in one standard. Certification/licensure standards with reading/literacy standards were located for 2–4 states in each of the licensure areas.

• Traditional Program Literacy Courses

The literacy course requirements across the state department of education websites varied widely for each of the licensure areas examined. Literacy or reading course requirements seemed to be included primarily in the elementary licensure requirements, with 18 states having such a requirement. Thus, less than 40% of all states included a specific number of

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hours related to literacy or reading instruction for elementary education licensure. The other areas ranged from 11 to 16 states.

The majority of states did not have a requirement related to a specific number of hours in literacy or reading instruction coursework. In fact, the average number of states across the licensure areas that did not require any coursework was 25.4 states. Special education was the licensure area with the largest number of states (31) not requiring specific coursework.

- **Practica**

Approximately half of the states specified a minimum requirement for internship (most specify a 12-week internship; mean 11 weeks), with a smaller proportion specifying a minimum requirement for fieldwork prior to internship (mean approximately 110 hours). States did not specify requirements in the area of literacy for practicum/internship experiences. States used a variety of terms to indicate practicum experiences: field experience, clinical residence, fieldwork, internship, student teaching, and clinical practice.

- **Assessments**

Few state education department websites featured a required assessment specific to reading instruction for initial licensure in any area. In fact, the highest number of states requiring this type of assessment was 14 for elementary education initial licensure. Of those states requiring an assessment specific to reading instruction, the specific assessments were not consistent across the states.

The majority of states required a more general assessment in each of the content areas (early childhood, elementary, middle, high, and special education) for initial licensure in those areas. For these content area general assessments, the majority of states relied on Praxis II assessments, with some states contracting with vendors to develop a state-specific assessment for the content areas.

See Appendix for a specific breakdown of information within licensure areas.

Interview Structure

Each of the 23 interviews began by asking the state official to verify the data taken from the website search. After that task

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was completed, the interviewer followed a line of questioning designed to clarify how preparation for teaching literacy was incorporated into the state guidelines for certification. The questions we used are as follows:

1. Describe any specific requirements and assessments for preservice teacher preparation in terms of teaching literacy in grades K–12.
2. Describe requirements for entry-level teacher preparation related to teaching literacy that you would like to see added or strengthened.
3. Describe fieldwork and internship expectations in the area of literacy.
4. Describe how well teacher education programs in your state are enacting the state guidelines for preparing preservice teachers to teach literacy.
5. Think of a teacher education program in your state that is doing a particularly effective job of meeting your requirements for teacher preparation to teach literacy and describe the criteria you used to select that program.
6. During the second phase of the investigation, we would like to interview someone in this program. Please provide a suggestion.
7. Describe changes in teacher preparation requirements you foresee in your state.

Fifteen of the 23 state department officials interviewed talked about changes that were taking place in the requirements for teacher certification during the coming year.

Interview Results

The information yielded by the interviews reveals several important trends in how state department guidelines address or fail to address preparation to teach literacy.

• **Certification**

The first trend reflects the transitional status of teacher education programs. Fifteen of the 23 state department officials interviewed talked about changes that were taking place in the requirements for teacher certification during the coming year. Many of the changes relate to how literacy is addressed in standards, assessments, and coursework.

Although there was a lot of agreement that standards played a large role in shaping teacher education curriculum, there was a lot of variation in how prominent literacy standards were.

• **Teacher Education Program Content**

The interviews revealed that many state officials believed that literacy was embedded in their standards. This is not consistent with what our website search revealed. The majority of interviewees said that teacher preparation course content is not prescribed; however, course content is influenced by state departments of education through the establishment of state standards for teacher preparation.

In most interviews, state officials said that they expect teacher education programs to demonstrate how they are addressing standards during reviews by producing evidence (e.g., syllabi, student work samples, and performance data on state licensing tests). Although there was a lot of agreement that standards played a large role in shaping teacher education curriculum, there was a lot of variation in how prominent literacy standards were.

Eleven state officials interviewed said that their teacher preparation standards addressed literacy instruction to some extent. Some said that literacy standards were embedded in their state standards. One official said that in his state, there are specific standards for the demonstration of knowledge and preparation for elementary and secondary candidates to teach reading.

One state official said that literacy standards reflect scientifically based reading research, and another said that coursework in the teacher education programs had to be aligned with Common Core State Standards.

For the most part, state officials were vague about literacy standards. The reason could have been that sometimes we interviewed state officials who were not trained in literacy, but were responsible for teacher licensure.

• **Practica**

As reported in the website search summary, there is little evidence that states require specific literacy experiences within their practica. The strongest statement made by an interviewee was that field experiences are intended to include literacy; in other words, that the literacy experiences are embedded.

The most frequent response was that the state has a requirement for the number of field hours, but no specific

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recommendations for literacy experiences or hours in the field devoted to teaching literacy.

One state official said that the elementary field experience has a requirement that “some of it should be related to literacy.” Another state official said, “Literacy should be addressed in all field-based assignments as candidates complete their clinical teaching or internship.” He continued, “No specific literacy practices are required.”

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• **Assessments**

In our interviews, we tried to clarify the role of assessments in monitoring and shaping teacher preparation programs. The vast majority of states indicate that they require teacher candidates to demonstrate satisfactory performance on an assessment measure before being granted a teaching license.

One of the 23 state officials interviewed stated that candidates must pass a Foundations of Reading test to be licensed. He added that requiring the test caused education preparation programs to work backward to make sure their coursework and experiences would allow candidates to gain the knowledge needed to pass the test. He also said that implementing the test caused education preparation programs to review and revise course requirements and course content, including literacy skills.

There are important implications for how the assessments affect the curriculum taught in teacher education courses. Several state officials noted specific assessments that teacher candidates must pass in order to meet their respective state licensure requirement. The literacy-related proficiencies included on these assessments, therefore, receive a significant degree of focus in the courses candidates take during their programs.

Several states have developed their own teacher proficiency examination. Among those using nationally distributed assessments, edTPA, Praxis II, and Principles of Learning and Teaching assessments were most commonly cited.

General Implications

The preliminary findings of our investigation make apparent the need for increased attention to how preservice educators are prepared for teaching literacy, with particular attention to potential relationships between program design and teacher effectiveness. All stakeholders—teacher education leaders, state education department representatives, professional organizations such as the International Literacy Association, parents, and the business community—need to be involved in the conversation about how to improve preparation of preservice teachers to design and enact instruction that increases the literacy performance of K–12 students.

Analysis of our data leads us to suggest the following:

- Research that investigates preservice program features that prepare candidates to develop students' literacy across all grades and in all disciplines should be conducted. This research should be shared with all stakeholders, particularly state departments and teacher preparation programs.
- Collaboration among all educational stakeholders, particularly state education departments, teacher preparation programs, and K–12 educators, is necessary to improve the preparation of candidates to teach literacy.
- Educational stakeholders should collaborate to generate research-based state standards and aligned assessments that specifically address literacy teacher preparation and provide feedback needed to develop or revise teacher education curricula and state certification guidelines.
- State guidelines for preservice teacher preparation should make explicit references to what candidates should know and be able to do in relation to literacy instruction.
- All preservice teachers should be required to participate in activities during their practica that develop their ability to design literacy instruction and monitor literacy growth.
- Preservice teachers should be better prepared to address the needs of learners with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds across all grades and in all disciplines.

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APPENDIX

Results of Website Search of State Requirements in Literacy in Licensure Areas

Professional Standards		
<p>EARLY CHILDHOOD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-specific professional teaching standards were located for 24 states. • Within the standards located, nine states mentioned literacy in one standard; three states mentioned literacy in two standards; and four states mentioned literacy in three standards. • No specific reading standards could be located for 34 states. • Three states cited InTASC standards. • One state cited the CCSS and IRA Professional Standards. • Three states had reading/literacy standards for licensure/certification. 	<p>ELEMENTARY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-specific professional teaching standards were located for 23 states. • Within the standards located, one state mentioned literacy in six standards; seven states mentioned literacy in one standard; two states mentioned literacy in three standards. • No specific reading standards could be located for 34 states. • Three states cited InTASC standards. • One state cited the CCSS and IRA Professional Standards. • Four states had reading/literacy standards for licensure/certification. 	<p>MIDDLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-specific professional teaching standards were located for 27 states. • Within the standards located, seven states mentioned literacy in one standard; one state mentioned literacy in two standards; two states mentioned literacy in three standards. • No specific reading standards could be located for 37 states. • Three states cited InTASC standards. • Three states had reading/literacy standards for licensure/certification.
<p>HIGH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-specific professional teaching standards were located for 26 states. • Within the standards located, seven states mentioned literacy in one standard; two states mentioned literacy in two standards; one state mentioned literacy in three standards. • No specific reading standards could be located for 38 states. • Three states cited InTASC standards. • Three states had reading/literacy standards for licensure/certification. 	<p>SPECIAL EDUCATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-specific professional teaching standards were located for 24 states. • Within the standards located, eight states mentioned literacy in one standard; one state mentioned literacy in two standards; two states mentioned literacy in three standards. • No specific reading standards could be located for 37 states. • Three states cited InTASC standards. • Two states had reading/literacy standards for licensure/certification. 	<p>ENDORSEMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about standards for endorsements was located for 14 states. • Six states had state-specific standards. • Literacy was mentioned one time in eight states, two times for one state, three times for one state, four times for one state, six times for two states, and fourteen times for one state. • Three had no specific reading standards. • Three states cited reading standards for licensure/certification.

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Results of Website Search of State Requirements in Literacy in Licensure Areas (Cont.)

Traditional Program Literacy Course Requirements		
<p>EARLY CHILDHOOD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sixteen states dictate literacy or reading course requirements (ranging from 3 to 15 hours): Two states require 3 hours; seven states require 6 hours; one state requires 8 hours; three states require 12 hours; two states require 15 hours; one state requires at least one course without a reference to a specific number of hours required. • Twenty-four states have no literacy or reading course requirements. • Eight states require teacher preparation programs to cover specific reading or literacy topics in state regulations or state statutes. For example, some states include the following phrases: "address the science of reading," "coursework that specifically addresses development of oral language and literacy...", and "programs must include research-based practices in reading and must include effective, balanced instruction in all five areas of reading." • Information could not be located for two states. 	<p>ELEMENTARY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighteen states specify the number of hours in literacy or reading courses (ranging from 3 to 15 hours): Three states require 3 hours of coursework; seven states require 6 hours of coursework; one state requires 8 hours of coursework; two states require 9 hours of coursework; three states require 12 hours of coursework; and two states require 15 hours of coursework; one state requires at least one course. • Twenty-four states have no literacy or reading course requirements. • Other states have some type of language in regulations or statutes requiring that teacher preparation programs address specific literacy or reading topics for program approval (e.g., "must address the science of reading," "must address the teaching of reading, and "must include research-based practices in reading") • Information could not be located for one state. 	<p>MIDDLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eleven states require some specified number hours: Six states require 3 hours of coursework; one state requires 5 hours of coursework; four states require 6 hours. • Twenty-three states require no specific number of hours for literacy or reading coursework. • Eight states have specific language contained in regulations or statutes that require teacher preparation programs to address topics related to literacy or reading (e.g., "teaching of middle level reading," "study of reading in the content areas," and "fundamental processes of reading at the literal, inferential, and evaluative levels and techniques to evaluate students' comprehension must be addressed") • Information for seven states could not be located, and one state no longer has a license for the middle grades.
<p>HIGH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twelve states require literacy or reading coursework: One state requires two hours of coursework; seven states require three hours of coursework; four states require six hours of coursework. • Twenty-five states have no such requirement. • Six states were found to include language related to reading or literacy topics (e.g., "address the science of reading," "include literacy and quantitative objectives in content specific classes in alignment with state core standards," and "instructional methods in the content area") • Information for three states could not be located. 	<p>SPECIAL EDUCATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twelve states require some number of hours related to literacy or reading: Two states require three hours and five states require six hours, as well as one state that requires eight hours. • Two states have hour requirements that vary with the grade band. • One state requires the following: For grades 1–5, the requirement is 12 hours. For grades 6–12, the requirement is 6 hours. • One state requires 6 hours for birth to age 5 license, as well as 12 hours for early childhood and elementary special education license and 6 hours for secondary special education. • In 31 states, there is not a literacy or reading course requirement. • Two states have some language related to literacy or reading topics that teacher preparation programs must cover. • Information for five states could not be located. 	<p>ENDORSEMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area was difficult to determine from the state information that was located. • Three states require some number of hours specific to literacy or reading instruction for an endorsement at the undergraduate level. Those hours range from 12 hours (one state) to 24 hours (two states).

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Results of Website Search of State Requirements in Literacy in Licensure Areas (Cont.)

Practicum Requirements		
<p>EARLY CHILDHOOD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty states specified clock hours spanning between 30 and 800 hours. • Fourteen states required fieldwork prior to internship, spanning between 30 and 200 clock hours (mean: 110.66). • Twenty-three states specified an internship requirement in terms of weeks (mean: 11 weeks). • Six states specified a “semester-long” internship. • Four states specified semester hour requirements ranging from 3–12 hours. • Five states had “no specific literacy requirements” in fieldwork/internship. • Four states left the specifics of fieldwork/internship requirements up to the institutions or cited CAEP or NCATE. 	<p>ELEMENTARY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifteen states specified clock hours spanning between 30 and 800 hours. • Thirteen states required fieldwork prior to internship spanning between 30 and 200 clock hours (mean: 109). • Twenty states specified an internship requirement in terms of weeks (mean: 11 weeks). • Five states specified a “semester-long” internship. • Four states specified semester hour requirements for the internship ranging from 2–8 hours. • Six states had “no specific literacy requirements” in fieldwork/internship. One state left the specifics of fieldwork/internship requirements up to the institutions, and two states specified the meeting of CAEP or NCATE standards. 	<p>MIDDLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sixteen states specified clock hours spanning between 30 and 800 hours. • Twelve states required fieldwork prior to internship spanning between 30 and 200 clock hours (mean: 111.6). • Seventeen states specified an internship requirement in terms of weeks (mean: 11 weeks). • Six states specified a “semester-long” internship. • Three states specified semester hour internship requirements ranging from 2–8 hours. • Four states had “no specific literacy requirements” in fieldwork/internship. • Two states left the specifics of fieldwork/internship requirements up to the institutions (one mentioned CAEP standards).
<p>HIGH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sixteen states specified clock hours spanning between 30 and 800 hours. • Twelve states required fieldwork prior to internship spanning between 30 and 200 clock hours (mean: 111.6). • Seventeen states specified an internship requirement in terms of weeks (mean: 11 weeks). • Most states require a 12-week internship. One state specified a “semester-long” internship. • Three states specified semester hour requirements for the internship ranging from 2–8 hours. • Four states had “no specific literacy requirements” in fieldwork/internship. • Two states left the specifics of fieldwork/internship requirements up to the institutions (one mentioned CAEP standards). 	<p>SPECIAL EDUCATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seventeen states specified clock hours spanning between 30 and 800 hours. Thirteen states required fieldwork prior to internship spanning between 30 and 200 clock (mean: 118 clock hours). • Seventeen states specified an internship requirement in terms of weeks (mean: 11 weeks). Most states require a 12-week internship. • Six states specified a “semester-long” internship. • Three states specified semester hour requirements for internship ranging from 2–8 hours. • Five states had “no specific literacy requirements” in fieldwork/internship. • Two states left the specifics of fieldwork/internship up to the institutions (one mentioned CAEP standards). • One state specified at least two college-supervised student-teaching experiences of at least 20 school days each. • One state specified 180 hours of fieldwork for additional special education endorsements. 	<p>ENDORSEMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement information could be located for only five states. • One state required a minimum of 10 weeks for Early Childhood, Elementary, ESE, and Secondary. One state required 100 clock hours or six semester hours of reading practicum across P–12 grade levels. • One state specified 180 hours of fieldwork for additional special education endorsements.

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Results of Website Search of State Requirements in Literacy in Licensure Areas (Cont.)

Assessment Requirements		
<p>EARLY CHILDHOOD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six states required an assessment specific to reading instruction. • Of these six states, two states require a Praxis II Teaching Reading series and three states require the Foundations of Reading assessment, with one state requiring an assessment specific to reading instruction that is developed by a vendor specifically for that state. • In addition to the assessment specific to reading instruction, these states also require a more generalized assessment for early childhood, such as the Praxis II Early Childhood Content or other similar assessments. • Other states require the more generalized early childhood assessments only. Thirty-nine states currently require this type of assessment. • Of those 39 states, 23 states require some version of an ETS Praxis II assessment, and 16 states require a state-identified assessment procured to be offered by a private vendor. • Of those 16 state-specific assessments, 14 contract with Pearson and 2 contract with ETS. • Five states do not require any type of assessment for early childhood license. 	<p>ELEMENTARY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourteen states require an assessment specific to reading instruction. • Of these 14 states, 5 states require the Foundations of Reading assessment. Two states require the Praxis II Teaching Reading: Elementary Education. One state requires the Praxis II Teaching Reading. One state requires the NES Essential Components of Reading. • Three states require a state-specific assessment in which the state contracts with a vendor (Pearson or ETS). • Two states have this requirement in statute with a future start date (2016 and 2017). • All of these states require a more generalized assessment encompassing all areas of elementary education (in addition to the specific reading instruction assessment). • Other states only require an assessment that is specific to all areas of elementary education. • Thirty-nine states require a comprehensive assessment addressing all areas of elementary education. • Of these 39 states, 23 states require some version of Praxis II suite (Elementary content, multiple subjects, curriculum, or instructional practices). • Thirteen states require an assessment that is specific to each state and that is procured with a vendor (Pearson or ETS). 	<p>MIDDLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on middle school English Language Arts. • Three states require an assessment that is specific to reading instruction with three different assessments (state-specific, Praxis II Teaching Reading: Elementary Education, and the NES Essential Components of Elementary Reading Instruction). • In addition to the specific reading instruction assessment, these states also require an English Language Arts Middle School assessment. • The remaining 47 states require some form of an assessment related specifically to English Language Arts within middle school grades. • Of these 47, 31 require some version of the Praxis II Middle School English Language Arts assessment suite. • 16 states have contracted with a vendor (Pearson or ETS) to require a state-specific assessment related to middle school English Language Arts.
<p>HIGH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on high school English Language Arts. • One state requires an assessment that is specific to reading instruction and that assessment is state specific, where the state contracted with a vendor. • The remaining 49 states require an English Language Arts assessment. • Of those 49, 33 states use the Praxis II English Language Arts assessment suite. • The other 16 states require a state-specific assessment in English Language Arts. • These 16 states have contracts with vendors (Pearson or ETS). 	<p>SPECIAL EDUCATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Special Education licensure, seven states require an assessment specific to reading instruction. • Three states require the Foundations of Reading Assessment; one state requires the Praxis II Teaching Reading: Elementary Education; and three states require a state-specific assessment. • All of these states also require a general special education assessment in addition to the assessment specific to reading instruction. • Thirty-eight states require only a general special education assessment. • Of these 38 states, 25 require an assessment offered by Praxis II related to special education. • The remaining 13 states require a state-specific assessment where the state contracts with a vendor (Pearson or ETS). • Information for assessment requirements related to special education licensure could not be located for five states. 	<p>UNDERGRADUATE ENDORSEMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area was difficult to determine from the state information that was located. • Five states require an assessment specific to reading instruction for an endorsement at the undergraduate level.